Sheep and goats graze the Freiburg castle hill – and help promote research, teaching and conservation

by Nicolas Scherger

“Hillo!” cries Nicolas Schoof, moving two electric fence wires aside and entering the meadow – a slope on Freiburg’s castle hill, grassland below, forest above. Peace and quiet. Then a black goat stretches its neck out between the trees, glances around and struts down the slope to meet the visitors. Frauke is the alpha. A few moments later four more goats follow her down. “That’s the herd instinct,” says Schoof and smiles.

But all the same the PhD student from the Faculty of Environment and Natural Resources of the University of Freiburg hasn’t gathered all his flock yet. So off we go into the woods. There we find an old pagoda from the days when the area was still a park. In the shade lounging on the cool stone, three sheep chew the cud at their ease. So now they are all there, the eight custodians of the countryside working on behalf of conservation, research and teaching: this cooperation project with the Further Education Academy of the German Caritas Association that owns the area is expected to show the long term changes from grazing to flora and fauna, as part of its teaching work. The herd includes Waldschafe, a longew breed of sheep, Taurernscheck goats and one Nera Verzascasgoat – all farm animals at risk of extinction.

“I’m actively engaged in conservation, and so I had the idea of initiating a project at the University of Freiburg as well,” says Schoof. In June 2016 he found the right partner: Dr. Dirk Sichelschmidt, Deputy Director of the Further Education Academy and as such responsible amongst other things for its quality and environmental management. He was immediately attracted by the idea. In addition, the Student Council of the University of Freiburg gave the grazing project funding of EUR 1,700 and with it financed the electric fence that is powered by solar panels as well as the purchase of the animals from an adventure farm in Neckartal.

Even before they arrived, students recorded the vegetation on the site, in order to be able to compare data later. The meadow of almost waist-high grass and moss almost completely covering the ground was already starting to turn into forest – if it had been left untended, in just a few years shrubs and trees would have been growing. The forest itself had hollow trunks and dead wood which offer valuable ecological niches, but as a whole it was too dark there for many species.

Finally in April 2017 everything was ready. “It was lovely to observe how the animals straight away explored everything on the site,” remarks Sichelschmidt. They were especially pleased with the brambles, but nettles were less popular. And there were clear changes after just a few weeks: the grass in the meadow now looks as if trimmed with a mower, and the soil has been loosened by hooves walking on it, giving a chance again to seeds from other plants. Gradually, it is expected that the brambles and moss will recede too and wildflowers which are interesting to insects will start to grow in stead. In turn, they could attract animals such as smooth snakes, wall lizards or bats. So species of plants and animals which were originally native here and which are especially valuable for conservation, would return to the site.

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But that’s not all! “The project is creating a new adventure area for guests of the Further Education Academy and everyone from Freiburg and the region,” says Schoof. So far this is especially apparent at the Academy itself, which welcomes around 24,000 guests to conferences and for overnight stays each year. It is part of a pilot group of five Caritas organizations that in June 2017 received the European Union’s EMAS certification for environmental management – the grazing project played an important part in this as an example of careful, sustainable management of the land. “The animals are very much enjoyed by our guests as well as by our staff, and give rise to a wide variety of reactions,” comments Sichelschmidt. Amongst other things, he is planning to survey guests to gather more detailed information about their experience of the environment.

“The meadow is a small example of how we can demonstrate that in conservation and cultural terms the arduous and economically barely recognized work of shepherds and goatherds is incredibly valuable,” says Schoof. The team wants to install information boards to explain this to visitors. The project is also valuable for teaching about the environment. “Our animals develop relationships with people and have a calming effect, but they also differ widely in temperament.” For instance, Lewi the sheep, a cuddly tearaway, likes to butt his head against people’s legs to signal that he wants to be fussed. Franz the goat on the other hand prefers not to be touched - but at the same time is so curious that he will nibble at anything, even yew trees which are in fact toxic to him. Ideas for bringing people and animals together range from the possibility of students acting as temporary herders on the project for a full semester to an adventure space where children can learn about the environment. Schoof and Sichelschmidt relate, “The enthusiasm and the will to make the most of the potential of this project are massive for all involved.”
Honor the verses, lift up your voice

The new Tsvetaeva (Zwetajewa) Center aims to present and enhance Russian culture in Freiburg

by Rimma Gerenstein

Marias verses will be like precious grapes of a fine vintage, their place will only be recognized in the future. Her words sound hopeful, pleading and a little bit defiant. When Marina Tsvetaeva wrote those words in May 1913, neither the 21-year-old poet nor the 20th century had suffered the devastating caesuras the future would bring. A year later, the tsarist empire began to crumble. Millions died in the storm of bullets of the First World War. In 1917, the Bolsheviks violently proclaims the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ and Tsvetaeva, the daughter of a wealthy, bourgeois family became an enemy of the Soviet Union even as it was taking shape.

She fled first to Berlin, then Prague, and finally to Paris. In 1939, she returned from exile with her family. Her husband, Sergei Efron, was accused of spying and shot. Her daughter, Adriana, was thrown into prison and Marina’s sister Anastasia ended up in a Siberian labor camp. When the German air force, the Luftwaffe, dropped its first bombs on Russia in 1941, Tsvetaeva chose to take her own life. She left behind a young son and an opulent collection of poems, letters, diaries and prose.

“Within me are many souls, But my main soul is German,” Marina Tsvetaeva admired the land of poets and thinkers. As a young person, she spent happy times in Freiburg and the Black Forest. PHOTO: MARINA-ZWETAJEWA-MUSEUM MOSKWA

The new center founded in her name is to showcase Russian literature, music and art, support Russian artists locally, and to provide a platform for cultural exchange. Cheauré will lead the center. The researcher emphasizes that the institution bears Tsvetaeva’s name, “... particularly because she represents the close ties between Freiburg and Russia.”

Tsvetaeva spoke German during her childhood. She admired Goethe and Heine, and with her sister attended school in Freiburg for a year. She also spent some time in the Black Forest. Cheauré refers to Tsvetaeva’s famous poem An Deutschland in which the author is herself to a lost cause. In 1914 when her compatriots are consumed with hatred for ‘Germania’ she shows solidarity with the land of poets and thinkers, writing, “In love with you for as long as I live, I swear eternal loyalty.”

“You really have to admire the amazing courage that Tsvetaeva mustered,” says Cheauré. “In a time filed with hate, she lifted up her voice and argued in favor of culture as a force that binds all peoples together.” The center will continue this legacy. Cheauré goes on, “Particularly in politically tense times, voking culture can guard against blunt nationalism.”

Baden is a bastion of Russian speakers of different ethnicities and nationalities, she elaborates, whether ethnic Germans who have only now returned from Kazakhstan, Lithuanian Jews, Ukrainians, White Russians or Uzbeks. “We would like to bring all of them in contact with each other,” says Cheauré.

City-University partnership

The Tsvetaeva Center located on Stadtstraße 5 is the product of a cooperation between the university and the city of Freiburg. “What is important to Cheauré is that the center work together with the city’s cultural institutions. “We want to support each other and consolidate our resources,” says Cheauré. The center’s offering is to expand gradually. Currently, readings, concerts, lectures and language courses are on the agenda. As a gargantuan project set to begin in the autumn: one hundred years after the Russian Revolution, in October and November 2017 the center will offer events almost daily for seven weeks: ranging from exhibitions on the gulag in the University Library to concerts featuring experimental music from the 1920s and 1930s to a street art project.

The ‘place of recognition’ that the poet demanded for herself came late. Only in the 1960s, when the Soviet Union experienced a ‘thaw’ after the death of Joseph Stalin, was Marina Tsvetaeva rehabilitated and included into the canon of Russian literature. The only surviving member of the family, Ariadna, published the works her mother left behind. In 1992, the Marina Tsvetaeva Museum was opened in Moscow, in the last apartment where the poet had lived.

University of Freiburg Gets Top Grades

In the Thomson Reuters’ ranking of Europe’s Most Innovative Universities 2017, the University of Freiburg again took first place among universities in the state of Baden-Württemberg. The university has therefore occupied its place for the third time within the last five years. The CHE-Ranking 2017/18 ranked the university’s research in the field of law in first place. With respect to department size, no other German university graduates more Ph.D. students in law. Freiburg also ranked first in terms of acquired funds per professorship in the state of Baden-Württemberg.

Vice presidents take up second term in office

The Senate of the University of Freiburg has confirmed that the two non-executive vice presidents will remain in office for an additional three years. Prof. Dr. Gisela Riescher and Prof. Dr. Hans-Jochen Schiewer have both been re-elected. Both have been non-executive vice presidents of the University of Freiburg since 2014. Their new period in office begins on 1 October 2017. Riescher is planning to issue a guide on academic integrity and an information portal to provide more information and guidance. Zacharias wants to expand start-up and technology transfer skills as part of a comprehensive process.
The right routes
The ‘Silk Road’ is a romanticized view of historic trade relationships – Sitta von Reden explains why we need to rethink history.

Stretching more than 10,000 kilometers – the distance from Rome to the ancient Chinese Xi’an, the home of the Emperor – the Silk Road was a network of trade routes that from ancient times linked Europe with Asia. Freiburg ancient historian Prof. Dr. Sitta von Reden is researching the lively trade that blossomed back then between the empires which had access to these routes. The academic believes China’s current initiative of a ‘new Silk Road’ is a bogus claim. Verena Adt spoke with her.

Was it essentially a trade in luxury goods?

In the region of the Black Sea and around the Red Sea a lot of grain was shipped too. From the ‘old’ Silk Road.

The idea of building up a trade route with one’s own resources and organizing it politically was totally alien to the powers of ancient times, “Sitta von Reden believes that China’s present-day politics are being played down in the concept of the ‘new Silk Road’.

‘Beyond the Silk Road’

The European Research Council (ERC) is funding Sitta von Reden’s project ‘Beyond the Silk Road’ with an Advanced Grant. This award is one of the most prestigious European research awards and is endowed with EUR 2.5 million. Von Reden and her international and interdisciplinary team are hoping to develop a comprehensive model of the exchange between empires in ancient times, and to research the relationship between economics, cultural exchange and migration as well as the significance of border regions.

Ten Million Francs in Funding for Center of Excellence

The GeoH N. Endress Foundation has pledged to provide up to 10 million francs in funding over the next ten years for the joint project “Quantum Science and Quantum Computing” at the Universities of Basel and Freiburg. Under the umbrella of EuroC – The European Campus, the new center of excellence will consolidate the pioneering role of the two universities in quantum physics. At the heart of the new project is an international cluster for postdoctoral researchers and two doctoral programs in Basel and Freiburg. The positions will work on joint research projects and will also be designed to train outstanding doctoral candidates and postdoctoral researchers, thus preparing the future workforce for the emerging market in quantum technologies.

Eucor awards “Seed Money”

With “Seed Money”, Eucor – The European Campus has created its very first significant own funding instrument and will award 300,000 euros annually from 2018 to 2020. The goal is to finance new cross-border projects that foster the development of Eucor – The European Campus and its scientific network. Two lines of funding are planned: “Research and Innovation” and “Teaching”. Each year between five and ten projects will receive a funding of between 5,000 and 30,000 euros each. Online applications are now being accepted via the Eucor Website until 2 October 2017. The financing will begin on 1 January 2018 at the earliest and runs for a maximum of 18 months.

University election results

In the university elections on 4 July 2017, enrolled students and postdocs at the University of Freiburg voted for their representatives on the senate and faculty council. Participation in the senate elections was around eleven per cent. For the faculty councils it was approximately eight per cent. From 1 October 2017 the members of the senate will be: Josefine Morgan from the JUSO university group, Samuel Wunderlich from the RCDS & LHG list, Philipp Stöcks from the BVS A list and Iris Kimizoglu from the BVS B list. The senate represents all areas of the university. Elected members hold office for four years, while students hold office for one year. The faculty councils have similar duties and functions at faculty level as the senate for the university as a whole. Five or six members are elected to each of these bodies.

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Old fat increases weight gain

Roland Schüle is seeking active substances against severe obesity – and has activated a critical gene

by Jürgen Schlickinger

The older you get, the easier it is to put on weight: fat cells change appearance and function over the course of your life. So, old fatty tissue increases the build up of subcutaneous fat more than young. Professor Dr. Roland Schüle, the scientific director of the Department of Urology at the Freiburg University Medical Center is researching the molecular background of this change. He is looking for ways to treat and prevent obesity with pharmaceutical agents. Now, he has succeeded in artificially activating a critical gene using substances. This makes fatty tissue stay young for longer.

Beige becomes white
Young fatty tissue consists mainly of beige fat cells. "They can burn fat for heat," says Schüle. In cold weather, beige fat cells keep the body warm. They slow down the growth of subcutaneous fat by burning fat when there is too much available. However, as you age, more and more beige fat cells turn into white fat cells. These store fat instead of burning it. "The white fat cells in old fatty tissue are larger and continue to subdivide," explains the biochemist. The risk of obesity is growing. Schüle has shown that the level of the Lsd1 enzyme is responsible for this: it falls as age increases. In parallel, beige fat cells dwindle.

"Lsd1 is our favorite protein," says the head of Central Clinical Research at the University Medical Center. Schüle's team discovered it twelve years ago. Lsd1 works epigenetically. It activates genes by loosening their repressive power. Schüle and his colleague Prof. Dr. Delphine Duteil looked for this mechanism and found the Lsd1 gene. They were able to demonstrate that when the level of Lsd1 falls, less Pparα is produced. In parallel, beige fat cells become more activating, "We have discovered that interneurons are also subject to such plasticity," says Bartos. "They change their structure and their communication, and we believe that this capacity influences the learning process."

Bartos and her team are focusing on the plastic changes of interneurons and their role in the learning process in the motor cortex and in the hippocampus. While the motor cortex is critical to learning new movements such as playing tennis or cycling, the hippocampus is responsible for storing memories. The fact that interneurons play an important part in this is evident from the function or number of inhibiting cells being changed in many neurological disorders such as schizophrenia or Alzheimer's, Bartos explains.

So how can inhibiting nerve cells help to store information in the brain? Bartos compares the interneurons to the conductor of a large orchestra: they set the tempo, say who plays what together with whom or who takes a break. PHOTO: THOMAS KUNZ

Marlene Bartos compares inhibiting neurons to the conductor of a large orchestra: they set the tempo, say who plays what together with whom or who takes a break. PHOTO: THOMAS KUNZ

In every learning process, information must pass through the brain many times. The strength of the synaptic connections between the excitatory and the inhibiting nerve cells can permanently change and increase or decrease. Strengthening results in better interlinking and therefore consolidation of memory. "It is especially reinforcing when nerve cells are active together several times," Bartos reports. And the interneurons are crucial in forming memories and leaving traces of them in the brain. "There is still a lot to do," says Marlene Bartos. "There is the feeling that, after a period of minimal consolidation, inhibiting neurons are now coming to the attention of science.” And Freiburg has been involved from the start.

Inhibiting nerve cells make up only a fraction of the human brain – but their function is far more important than previously thought

by Claudia Füßler

Marlene Bartos cares about minorities: the object of her research is what are known as inhibiting nerve cells, which make up barely ten per cent of the nerve cells in the brain. The remaining 90 per cent are excitatory nerve cells, that transmit their signals using glutamate, while inhibiting nerve cells use gamma-Aminobutyric acid, or GABA for short. "Until now science has mainly focused on the function of excitatory nerve cells," says the professor, who heads a team at the Institute of Physiology. However research is currently undergoing a transformation: scientists are realizing that the inhibiting nerve cells, known as interneurons, fulfill important functions. Bartos and her team hope that their research will make a decisive contribution. Together with scientists from Kiel, Berlin and Austria, they are deciphering the complex role of interneurons.

Nerve cells, both inhibiting and excitatory, can be found throughout the central nervous system. They ensure that people receive information from their environment, can process, store and where necessary recall it. The activity of nerve cells, their strength and the distribution of the synapses that connect them change over the course of your life. Experts have shown that nerve cells network and intercommunicate more to encode information together. This capacity is called cellular and synaptic plasticity. It is a key mechanism and fundamental to the learning process, and has already been found above all in excitatory nerve cells. "We have discovered that interneurons are also subject to such plasticity," says Bartos. "They change their structure and their communication, and we believe that this capacity influences the learning process."

Lsd1 falls, less Pparα is produced. In parallel, beige fat cells become more activating.

"Pparα can be easily stimulated by specific small molecules," Schüle explains. Duteil administered the appropriate substances to mice with low levels of Lsd1. The animals retained their beige fat cells far longer. Schüle and Duteil had patented for the loss of Lsd1. "The activators are now in the clinical phase," says Schüle. He estimates it will still be some years before a marketable active substance that prevents fat cells from aging can be developed, "We also want to try to stimulate precursor cells into producing beige fat cells." Schüle wants to continue to research the aging process and identify other elements of the signal chain. "It would go a lot faster if more public research funds were available," he complains. Stanford University in California receives as much funding as all the universities, colleges and polytechnics in Baden-Württemberg together.

In addition, Schüle wants to follow up the findings made in mice on humans. There are already a few parallels: mice form greater quantities of beige fat cells in cold conditions. The Inuit who live in the Arctic cold of the North Pole have more of them than Spaniards or Greeks. However the effect declines with age. It looks as if there is an optimal timeframe for cryotherapies, medications and other factors that influence fatty tissue. "Life after death definitely has an influence," says Schüle. Mice that eat too many calories forfeit their beige fat cells prematurely. So is the perfect age to adjust to a sensible diet and plenty of walking in the snow? Schüle adds, "No one can be sure. But I would guess the younger the better." It certainly can’t be a bad idea to follow this advice.

The strength of the minority

Roland Schüle is seeking active substances against severe obesity – and has activated a critical gene

by Claudia Füßler

They slow down the growth of subcutaneous fat more than young. Fat cells change appearance and function over the course of your life – so old fatty tissue increases the build up of subcutaneous fat more than young. ILLUSTRATION: SVENJA KIRSCH

"Lsd1 is our favorite protein," says the head of Central Clinical Research at the University Medical Center. Schüle’s team discovered it twelve years ago. Lsd1 works epigenetically. It activates genes by loosening their repressive power. Schüle and his colleague Prof. Dr. Delphine Duteil looked for this mechanism and found the Lsd1 gene. They were able to demonstrate that when the level of Lsd1 falls, less Pparα is produced. In parallel, beige fat cells become more activating.

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Sniffer dogs can detect explosive materials with great precision – and at the same time protect people’s privacy

by Thomas Goebel

W hy would you have a sniffer dog at a football stadium? Maybe it’s nosing around the fans and hunting for fireworks. Emotionally-charged derbies especially are often seen as high-risk games, so police get the fans to clear out the stands. But is it a good idea to use dogs in such volatile situations? For instance, how do football fans such as ultras respond to the animals? How successful are the dogs at detecting explosives? And what special care should the dog handlers take at work?

Dogs can perceive even the smallest traces of scent – but we still don’t know how they do it.

Cultural anthropologist Martina Biebert is interested in questions like this. She works at the Centre for Security and Society of the University of Freiburg on the EVADEX project, which aims to assess the many systems for detecting explosive materials – in every area except the strictly regulated aviation safety. Together with André Biermann, Biebert is responsible for ‘ancillary sociological research’; her colleague looks at technical resources, she looks at sniffer dogs.

Human and dog are a team

One of Biebert’s jobs is to determine the factors contributing to acceptance: what is the effect of the dogs on the people that they are supposed to be controlling? ‘Technical research has shown that use of certain methods can also have unintended consequences.’ For instance, use of the body scanner is effective, but it has given rise to resistance – many people feel it is a massive intrusion into their personal privacy.

A dog appears to intrude on people’s privacy less,” says Biebert. Whilst each deployment must be considered on its own, on the whole she draws a positive conclusion, “The dog is a very well-established tactical tool for deployments.” This is not just a result of the tradition of the police dog in Germany that stretches back more than one hundred years, but also of the thousand years of shared history of humankind and dogs. Both mammals once lived together in a kind of symbiosis, “The dog cleaned up waste, kept the herd together, warned of danger and in return was taken care of by humans.”

Biebert has held numerous interviews with police dog handlers and industry safety managers, with team leaders and private security services, with ultras and those responsible for the fans. She has accompanied a dog handler and his German Shepherd dog on patrol outside an exhibition hall before an AGM, and she has observed the Bundesliga game between Werder Bremen and the Hamburger Sportverein. Whilst irritated fans are entirely capable of kicking a screening machine apart, ultras told her that they tended to feel sorry for the dogs because they assumed the situation was stressful for them.

In addition, the project team is undertaking fundamental research into dogs’ sense of smell, “We know that they can perceive traces of scent down to absurdly small levels but we don’t know exactly how they do it,” says Biebert. In experiments with a cooperating Swiss dog team, Biebert and the scientists at the Fraunhofer-Institut für Chemische Technologie in PfInztal near Karlsruhe are investigating what exactly happens when a sniffer dog is on an operation. The joint work is amazing, says the cultural anthropologist, “The dog is a multidisciplinary object of study.”

Great need for standardization

On the other hand Biebert detected a certain skepticism amongst team leaders and security managers about the use of sniffer dogs: they generally felt that technical tools were more reliable or predictable – which Biebert puts down partly to the individual relationship between dog handler and dog but also to the lack of uniform standards.

The project also aims to contribute to developing such standards. Fear of terrorist attacks has massively increased the demand for explosives sniffer dogs at major events. Biebert hopes that her results will be incorporated in the Deutsche Institut für Normung’s revised standards for security service providers, “The demand is there – and there is loads of potential for standardization.” For example, fear or disgust reactions during checks can be reduced if certain breeds and muzzles are used; also, operational processes could be more standardized, which could training and testing the dogs.

Junior research group receives 1.4 million euros

Since 1 August 2017, a new junior research group headed by Dr. Andreas Hartmann at the Faculty of Environment and Natural Resources has been investigating water stress in karst landscapes and how to provide sustainable water supplies in these areas. The German Research Foundation is providing a total of 1.4 million euros from the Emmy Noether Program over the next five years. Karst is formed when carbonate rock weather, Karst aquifers currently supply around one-quarter of the world population’s drinking water.

A new research group at the University of Freiburg and the Freiburg University Medical Center aims to conduct fundamental and clinical research into acute myeloid leukemia (AML), a type of blood cancer diagnosed in around 3000 people a year in Germany. The German Research Foundation (DFG) has agreed to provide 4.2 million euros in funding for the project over the next three years. The group spokesperson is Prof. Dr. Michael Lübbert from the Department of Medicine 1 of the Medical Center – University of Freiburg. He will be responsible for coordinating the project together with Prof. Dr. Christoph Plass from the German Cancer Research Center in Heidelberg (DKFZ). “The approval of funding for this research group is a great success and further proof of the University of Freiburg’s prominence as a center for epigenetic research,” says Rector Prof. Dr. Hans-Jochen Schiewer.

Junior research group

German Research Foundation DFG supporting new Research Training Groups

The Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) has approved fifteen new Research Training Groups to further support early career researchers in Germany. At the University of Freiburg, the training groups “MeInBio – BioInMe: Exploration of Spatio-Temporal Dynamics of Gene Regulation Using High-Throughput and High-Resolution Methods” and “Statistical Modeling in Psychology (EMPI)” in which five universities are involved, have been established. They will receive around 4.8 million euros while the training group for statistical modeling in psychological theories will receive around 4.9 million euros.

Developing Therapies for Older Leukemia Patients

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A new research group at the University of Freiburg and the Freiburg University Medical Center aims to conduct fundamental and clinical research into acute myeloid leukemia (AML), a type of blood cancer diagnosed in around 3000 people a year in Germany. The German Research Foundation (DFG) has agreed to provide 4.2 million euros in funding for the project over the next three years. The group spokesperson is Prof. Dr. Michael Lübbert from the Department of Medicine 1 of the Medical Center – University of Freiburg. He will be responsible for coordinating the project together with Prof. Dr. Christoph Plass from the German Cancer Research Center in Heidelberg (DKFZ). “The approval of funding for this research group is a great success and further proof of the University of Freiburg’s prominence as a center for epigenetic research,” says Rector Prof. Dr. Hans-Jochen Schiewer.

Junior research group

German Research Foundation DFG supporting new Research Training Groups

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Mnemonics and networks

by Alexander Ochs

Start-up Meditricks’ visual aides-memoires simplify learning for medical students

by Lara Kirchberg

Many medical students know the problem: an excess of difficult-to-learn terms and nomenclature. Simplifying learning is important for practising doctors, says the medical student, “because the subject is also teaching many areas as possible. We still want to do a lot on pharmacology, because the subject is also important for practising doctors,” says Seifert.

Scholarship for the founders

The two founders have now set up a small team of doctors, illustrators and IT specialists. Recently, the young company received an EXIST start-up scholarship from the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi), which brings with it 1 EUR 137,000. “It’s great when many enthusiastic and talented people come to us and say: we think that’s great, we’d like to join in,” Seifert remarks. “It’s a nice idea being able to take these people on permanently and continue to grow. Now we have the chance with the scholarship.”

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Freedom on two wheels
The team from Bike Bridge teaches female refugees to cycle

by Sarah Schwarzkopf

S浩rhzad Mohammadi had to ask one of the basketball players on the sports field at Bisslerstraße whether any women lived at the refugee home too. She had watched him and his friends jumping and dribbling for some time and had not seen any women anywhere. The man explained that they were in the apartments. “He told me that there were no leisure activities for women. Then I had a long talk with his wife,” Mohammadi, a PhD student in Sports Science and Physical Education at the University of Freiburg, explains. That was the birth of Bike Bridge.

Bike Bridge teaches female refugees to cycle. The aim of the project is to reduce the social isolation of female refugees and facilitate social inclusion. “We increase their mobility and put them in contact with local women,” says Mohammadi, whose dissertation focuses on gender aspects of sport. Following her experience in the refugee home, she and her co-organizers Clara Speidel and Lena Pawelke found out that there really were no sport-related projects for female refugees. The trio wanted to fill the gap. But why specifically bicycles?

“In my country the culture doesn’t allow me to ride a bicycle,” explains a Yazidi woman who prefers not to see her name in print. She has lived in Germany for two years and learned to cycle with Bike Bridge. “In many Islamic countries such as Iraq or Syria women are forbidden from cycling,” adds Mohammadi, “the pressure comes from society there. In Iraq it is even prohibited by law. In Germany, however, bicycles are very important, particularly in Freiburg.” So cycling not only offers participants mobility but also integrates them into society. “It’s given me a lot of freedom,” confirms the Yazidi woman. First walk, then pedal

The project had its pilot phase in 2016 at the largest refugee home in Freiburg on Bisslerstraße. A course with Bike Bridge takes three months. Ten participants meet twice a week. Every woman gets a tandem partner as a trainer to accompany them. The groups learn the rules of the road and how to cycle, and get language lessons. In the beginning they ride without pedalling, with the women simply pushing the bicycles with their feet to get a feel for it. They also learn how to repair the bicycles. “The participants love the repair workshops they learn and they practice – it’s wonderful,” Mohammadi says with delight. In the third month the group goes on cycle tours. How often they go and whether they go to a park or a museum is decided by each group itself. Wherever they go, the women have a picnic, chat and learn a bit about that part of town. At the end of the course they can keep their bicycle.

So far there have been four courses in various residential homes. Participants have ranged in age from 20 to 65 and come from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia and Cameroon. The common language is English. German – the woman translates if there are communication problems. The trainers include former participants. “The group can profit from their language skills and it makes them feel safe. When we don’t just wave goodbye to the women at the end of the season,” Mohammadi explains. That was the case for the Yazidi woman from Iraq, for example. She speaks Arabic, Kurdish and German, and is now helping to give her first course working together with German-speaking trainers.

Donations for bicycles and helmets

The project has already won a few national and regional awards. But the waiting list is long. And there are inquiries from Hamburg, Frankfurt and many other cities which would like to introduce the idea, but so far the project has lacked capacity. “We are trying to build up a good base in Freiburg first,” explains Mohammadi.

So far Bike Bridge has financed bicycles, helmets and locks from donations. But organizing the equipment for bad weather the season is anything but easy. “We don’t just wave goodbye to the women at the end of the season,” Mohammadi explains. That was the case for the Yazidi woman from Iraq, for example. She speaks Arabic, Kurdish and German, and is now helping to give her first course working together with German-speaking trainers.

Sounding the horn

Students bring the sound of the wild to the former Herder press building

by Stephanie Streif

It’s a Wednesday evening in May. As the evening rush hour traffic winds its weary way along the Habshüberstraße, sixteen hunting horn players in green polo shirts stand on the lawn in front of the former Herder press building. All is peaceful. Not a sound. Then the order is given “Raise your horns!” And now the horns are at everyone’s lips, sounding out against the engine noise and humming of the tram. Suddenly, it’s as if the forest is around us.

Fundamented by two students of Forest Sciences, the group of hunting horn players comes from the Univer- sity of Freiburg. One of them is Val- entin Platten. Three and a half years ago when he came to Freiburg to study, he had already decided to join the hunting horn players. He knew from his uncle, who had studied For- est Sciences at the University of Freiburg before him, that there were to be such a group. So Platten went looking for them. And found – nothing. Not one hunting horn player to be found far and wide. So in 2014, together with his fellow student Pat- rick Zaglauer, he founded a new horn player group on the spot.

Both believe you need a little tradi- tion. Why? “It’s a little bit of history that shouldn’t be forgotten,” says Platten. “Without hunting horns,” Zaglauer adds, “hunts could never have been organized in the past.” Back then, signals such as ‘Start beating’ or ‘Dead pig’ were sent through the forest by horn. “There were no mobile telephones, and the hunters had to communicate with each other somehow,” says Platten. One important custom was ‘Sounding the kill’, when the game had been bagged at the end of the hunt and the hunters took up the horn to honor it for one last time.

Any time the forestry students celebrate anywhere, the horn troop are there, at Christmas or Summer parties for instance. Last year they even played together with the Dreisamtal hunting horn players at the Wasserschloßle festival of Freiburg’s energy supplier Badenova.

Applause from passers-by

Whenever the weather allows, the hunting horn players like to take their rehearsals into the garden of the Herder building. Above, the foliage of beech and lime – and in front of them passers-by, who sometimes even stop and applaud. To begin with it was just Platten and Zaglauer. But now between 15 and 20 students play with them, in- cluding three women and one non-for- estry student: Leopold Pflüger is study- ing Renewable Energies, but he also has a hunting license. He joined the horn group because he loves hearing something out together. “Young hunters playing hunting horns, that’s cool,” he says.

When he joined the troop he could hardly get a sound out of his little Fünf Piess horn, but within just two years he worked his way up from third to second horn. But not without difficulties: barely a year ago his neighbor rang his bell one evening, thinking that the horn player might be please stop playing, because he just couldn’t hear any improvement. Pflüger slugged on. Other horn players from the group get their horns out sometimes when they are stuck in traffic on the A7. “It’s great practising in the car,” says Leonard Kloeß.

The atmosphere is cheerful. A lot of chatter, a lot of laughter, and in the breaks between practising the cold beer is opened. Now and then as the troop are standing around chatting, the warm summer evening wind blows a page of sheet music from the stands and the group is suddenly silent. Then there’s a merry chafe after it.

When classic tunes from the German repertoire such as ‘Ein Jäger aus Kurpfalz’ or ‘A uf, auf zum fröhlichen Kurpfalz’ are played, the audience joins in. “Hunters’ march number three,” announces Zaglauer. “Keep in time, please, loud, soft, soft, loud. And ... raise your horns.” What has now become is almost instanta- neous. The players raise the horns rest- ing on their right thighs to their mouths. And then note follows note. A woman is walking along the path on the other side of the street. She approaches the group, raises her hand and waves. And marches off in to the music ringing out in the summer evening.

Join in!

Anyone who would like to join in is welcome to play with the horn group – you don’t have to be studying Forest Sciences. A Fürst Piess horn is provided for a try-out.

https://bikebridge.org
“Great Britain, humor, rain and heart”

What the game ‘Concept’ reveals about people’s thoughts

by Sonja Seidel

In the “Abgezeckt!” series, members of the uni/laben editorial team meet with University of Freiburg researchers to play a game. The aim is to shed light on board games from an academic perspective. Or something like that.

The Game

‘Concept’ is ‘Taboo’ for the taciturn: the teams explain terms to each other by linking up various symbolic pictures that represent individual significant aspects. Is the answer an object or a person? Fictional or real? Big or small? The players put a marker on the right symbols. They aren’t allowed to speak. But that’s not the case either. ‘Concept’ says a lot about how people think about the world.

The Players

Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Freitag, Saliha Soylu: Epistemology and philosophy of science
Judith Burggrabe, Rimma Gerenstein: Press and publicity work

Players place the markers next to the picture that fits what they are trying to describe.

Wolfgang Freitag and Saliha Soylu try to explain a term without words. In an ideal world team mates know what they are describing and agree how to describe it. PHOTOS: PATRICK SEIDER

The Analysis

All of this becomes clear whilst working: preventive medicine, or promotion while promoting while working

Study Health Promotion while working

For all those who have a Bachelor’s degree or professional training in the field of health promotion, prevention or rehabilitation, and would like to obtain a further qualification in the field, there is a new course on offer. Starting winter semester 2017-18 Furtwangen University and the University of Freiburg will teach a joint program on Interdisciplinary Health Promotion. It culminates in a Master of Science degree. Its special feature is that participants can take the full Master’s program or individual modules from it. They can also choose the speed and intensity of studies which suits them.

The Process

Some things are especially important in ‘Concept’, for instance:

if you want to explain a term, you need to know it first. It’s even better if you share the same idea of what you are describing to the other players. Unfortunately, in the Freitag/Soylu versus Burggrabe/Gerenstein contest, this isn’t always the case.

Freitag and Soylu disagree from the start. They have to explain the concept ‘Yellow Pages’. In front of them is a board with a lot of colorful images organized in columns. For their first symbol both use a book. But what comes next? They could choose the picture ‘Ear’ or ‘Mouth’. Which body part is more important when telephoning? Soylu and the ear win out. ‘An audio book?’ Gerenstein is on the wrong track. A marker is placed on the square for the color yellow, and one on the symbol for ‘User’. Burggrabe has got the clue, ‘A telephone book is yellow. Yellow Pages!’ However Freitag hasn’t done with the question of whether telephoning is mainly about speaking or listening. “I was visualization an old telephone with a mouthpiece. Ms Soylu was thinking more of a mobile and listening.” So, ear or mouth is a generational question.

Gerenstein and Burggrabe attempt to do the classic 1960s British TV series The Avengers. The team opts for the image of a camera, and for one with a raincloud. “I’m singing in the rain!” Burggrabe puts down a marker on the symbol for ‘Eat’. Well, sometimes you’ll eat your hat. Can Freitag/Soylu get the idea? Blank faces. Gerenstein summarizes the other pictures again, “Great Britain, humor, rain and heart.” Freitag suggests a Mills & Boon author. Not exactly! “Charlie Chaplin?” Then Burggrabe intervenes, breaking the rules, “And what does Chaplin wear on his head?” The point sinks in for Freitag/Soylu. Appreciative laughter for Burggrabe’s idea about the bowler. Why was it so hard to guess the title? “It’s just that our TV knowledge is limited,” spines Freitag. “I think my knowledge in that area is excellent,” jokes Soylu. “I’m just too young to know the series.”

But the game does offer one other insight – that is, that modern people think in parallel. Quite unlike earlier times. “If we had played ‘Concept’ with the ancient Greeks the board would have looked quite different. The ancient Greeks thought hierarchically. They would have organized the individual associations of a term systematically and not just placed them side by side on a par.”

But can people make themselves understood only using such images – a sort of visual Esperanto? “I don’t think it would work; you need a lot and give tips to explain the terms,” Soylu remarks. Freitag adds, “Human thought is far too complex to communicate just using images.” So we can’t really do without words.

The old town of Freiburg – with the synagogue, theater, St. Martin’s Gate, the Old University, and Collegiate Building IV – which was then the university library – in a kind of 3D snapshot from 1920: this 1:275cm scale model, constructed of painted paper and cardboard, is now on display as part of the permanent exhibition at the University of Freiburg’s Uniseum. Model maker Fabian Maier used city maps, postcards, and photographs in books and the Badische Zeitung newspaper to create the image. He modeled the buildings in every possible historical detail in an area of approximately 1.3 by 1.8 meters. Fabian Maier, born in Freiburg in 1991, has been building models as a hobby for 20 years. His latest project is an Eiffel Tower made of matchsticks.

A paper-and-cardboard Freiburg

Advantage Museum Studies for Professionals

Overseeing, Collecting, Exhibiting, Teaching, Marketing, Managing and Digitizing: “museOn – welterbildung & netzwerk” (museOn – advanced training & network) has developed an advanced learning module for each of these areas of a museum. Having completed a one-year last phase, starting in the winter semester 2017/2018 it will become a semester 2017/2018. It will become a regular course of study with 26 courses that are categorized according to each module. The advanced training is designed for professionals working in museums or in the area of exhibits and collections who wish to professionalize their work and expand their skill sets. It is also designed for people who would like to respond to the changing external and societal circumstances and cultural diversity or to the structural impact digitalization is having in order to further develop their abilities in the workplace.

Approximately 1.3 by 1.8 meters: Fabian Maier used city maps, postcards and photographs from books and the Badische Zeitung newspaper to create the model.

PHOTO: MAX ORLICH

Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Freitag, Saliha Soylu:

Judith Burggrabe, Rimma Gerenstein:

Press and publicity work

www.museon.uni-freiburg.de

www.unimuseum.uni-freiburg.de
Mangold’s a veg
A visit to the Münstermarkt farmers’ market becomes a German lesson for foreign students

by Alexander Ochs

The colorful stems with the large leaves radiate candy yellow, crimson and ruby. “What’s the fruit of one of the group, who comes from India,” Mangold asks the vendor. “Mango?” they echo. “Nowt like! Mango?” says Peng think of something: “Kabel – sower cream,” she pronounces carefully and deliberately. Peng repeats after her, “Sow – sower cream.” He lives in Freiburg for almost four years, and as a philosopher he is very highly interested. As they pass the stalls selling lettuce and other salad vegetables, Nicklas explains the expression: ‘Da hast du den Salat!’ – ‘What did I tell you!’ This makes Peng think of something: “Kalbel – salat!” – cable spaghetti. However he didn’t learn it on the German course but on the Internet.

Walking Dialogues
The summer range on offer at the market bewitches the senses. Radishes, raspberries, savoy cabbage: it’s easier to pick up vocabulary in real life than in a lesson.

by Martin Jost

We’re simply saying: avolatte. It’s a Latte Macchiato served in avocado hulls. There are already 705 pictures of avolattes on Instagram. But that still does not make it a trend that will revolutionize the world just yet. However avolatte is what we might be watching if we don’t soon stop polluting the world with paper cups. Or else we might have to sip our coffee from an oily fruit husk.

We don’t want to put anyone off their coffee on the way to the lecture, or even during the lecture. And it’s impossible to meet the demands of student or academic life without caffeine today anyway. (Rumors that the Bologna Process was a triumph for the coffee lobby are however excessive and unsubstantiated.) Fortunately it is extremely easy to enjoy a coffee while out and about during a lecture: just keep a thermos beaker in your bag at all times.

So, enjoy your coffee either sitting at the table or during a lecture: just keep a thermos beaker in your bag at all times.

Uni’cum
Enjoy substance with style

uni’cum
Stationery, bibs, rubber ducks: The University of Freiburg’s uni shop supplies a wide range of goods not just for everyday life on campus but also for every other kind of situation. In this series, uni’life presents a few of its products and there is a prize draw for coupons.

Win one of two 25 euro coupons
Enjoy substance with style

The logo of the uni’shop – and they are designed to last.

Insulating to keep hot
Presenting the Freiburg Uni thermos beaker in a new design and new quality. It is snowy white with choice of blue or red detailing and a printed logo. The inside of the new model has a double-wall in stainless steel, to keep contents hot for a very long time. The silhouette is clean and ergonomic. You can open and close the sipper with just one hand using the button on the lid. When the sipper is closed, the cup is absolutely leak-tight, so it could fall over in your bag without soaking your books and laptop.

If you are an old-school consumer and like to take time for your dose of caffeine at the kitchen table or desk instead of drinking on the go, the uni shop also has something for you: porcelain cups in two different styles. The slightly larger cup is shaped roughly like a tumbler and has a capacity of 350 ml, while the smaller cup with a triangular handle holds 250 ml and is white on the outside with a choice of red or blue inside. All the porcelain cups feature the emblem of the university printed on the outside.

So, enjoy your coffee either sitting comfortably or go when you like. But please invest in a sustainable cup – and give the avocado goblet a miss this time.
Oh no, he’s calling again!

How employees can cope with constant availability – and how companies can improve the situation

Christian Schlett: My private mobile isn’t even set up to receive work e-mails.

Why is it important to be unavailable to your employer in your free time?

Nina Pauls: We know from our research that if you don’t it can become difficult to switch off and separate work from private life.

Schlett: If I were always on call and wondering if someone was going to ring or if an e-mail was coming, I would find it harder to relax in my free time. As a result I wouldn’t rest as well and be able to recover from work. So I’d be neither here nor there.

Maybe some people are afraid of losing out and remain perpetually set to receive a kind of cowed anticipation?

Pauls: An employer doesn’t and shouldn’t expect this. But depending on the corporate culture such feelings may be encouraged. One’s own performance standards also play a part: you want to do good work so you continue working at home if you don’t manage it all during regular working hours. It’s often a sign of overworking.

But aren’t there also advantages in freely arranging your time between work and private life?

Schlett: Only if I decide for myself. If I’m always being driven by my work, the result can be stress, burn-out and physical problems such as sleeplessness.

What practical solutions have you come up with?

Pauls: Working with selected companies, we developed rules for how employees can divide up work and leisure better. Before new projects are started, for instance, a company looks to see whether it has any capacity for them, so that no one is forced to take work home with them.

Schlett: Our studies have shown that two-thirds of employees are uncertain whether they have to respond to work inquiries in their free time, and how rapidly. We worked on clarifying these expectations: if something is really urgent, a text message can be sent asking for them to read an important e-mail. And if someone has tried to reach an employee three times you have to assume that it’s really important and call back.

Can individual employees also arm themselves better mentally against over-demanding work conditions?

Pauls: Yes! In cooperation with the Freiburg software company Haufe-Lexware we have developed web-based training that reinforces mental resilience.

This ‘resilience’ isn’t innate, when you are on holiday or at weekends?

Schlett: It’s a measure but part of operational management.

Such as?

Pauls: Anyone who is often distracted and absent-minded at work and therefore unable to deal with really important things can benefit from mindfulness training. With guided exercises in focusing on our Internet platform, people learn to notice when their mind starts to wander. Conscious perception enables a conscious decision: to stop wandering off the point and focus on the substance.

Nina Pauls and Christian Schlett are trying out new approaches to dealing with constant availability. PHOTO: PATRCIK SEEGER

Exercise at your desk

Sitting motionless, eyes fixed on the screen: often students and office workers will stay put like this for hours.

And then as deadlines and exams get ever closer, there’s no chance at all for relaxation. No surprise then that as time passes this frequently leads to backache, stiff neck, headaches or just plain discomfort because of a sluggish circulation. But it isn’t really that hard to gain relief. In this series, Freiburg business psychologists Dr. Nina Pauls and Dr. Christian Schlett together with colleagues from other universities they have carried out two research projects to develop tools to promote mental resilience, and working with companies have trialed new approaches for dealing with constant availability.

Sitting for hours at a desk is no good either for your musculo-skeletal system or for your circulation. In the long term you become tired and listless. Your back aches and your feet grow cold. It’s no crime to stand up from your office chair now and then. And if you want to do something really good for part of your body, we recommend this dynamic exercise which strengthens the musculature of your lower back to your thighs and reinvigorates you for a period of sitting. It makes use of the buttock muscles, the rear of your body, we recommend this.

To do this exercise, stand up and lay your forearms on the desktop. Slightly bend one leg and push it back and upwards. Take care to keep your hips level and not to twist. While doing the exercise you can keep the leg you are standing on straight or bend it slightly too – whatever suits your own flexibility. Repeat this exercise with both legs 15 to 20 times each. Try to keep the movement as steady and smooth as possible throughout.

Philips and the University of Freiburg have launched the website www.resilire.de which includes courses on healthy leadership.

A leg up: this exercise strengthens the back muscles and refreshes you when you are sitting. PHOTO: KLAUS POLKOWSKI

Are you sitting comfortably? Strengthening the back muscles

by Petra Völzing

Getting started

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Exercise:

A leg up: this exercise strengthens the back muscles and refreshes you when you are sitting. PHOTO: KLAUS POLKOWSKI

Try this exercise: contact the Fitness & Health Center or ask PausenExpress about booking regular exercise appointments in your office.

www.fgz.uni-freiburg.de www.gesunde.uni-freiburg.de/angebote/projekte/pausenexpress

NEWSPAPER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FREIBURG      www.leben.uni-freiburg.de
A blazing hot afternoon at the Botanic Garden of the University of Freiburg. A crooked old dame stands beneath a birch tree, a black scarf over her head. Turning her besom she pokes the stick towards the elderly man standing before her. “The birch emanates a powerful magic, a protective magic,” she whispers and looks with narrowed eyes at the group. A brief silence, then a grin by Sonja Seidel

A group of thirteen Freiburgers has gathered under the leadership of the biologist for the ‘Witches, Ghosts and Genetics’ guided tour on medicinal plants and science. These guided tours of the Botanic Garden are a tradition and have been offered by the association of friends and supporters of the Botanic Garden of the University of Freiburg for more than ten years now. Up to four times a semester, biologists roam the grounds and glasshouses with guests. For Gruber it’s her premiere: in real life she pokes the stick towards the elderly man standing before her. “The birch emanates a powerful magic, a protective magic,” she whispers and looks with narrowed eyes at the group.

She takes the role of the wise old woman. “The birch had a spiritual significance back in Germanic mythology. But you can drink a tea of birch leaves or birch juice as an elixir for all sorts of ailments,” adds Gruber, starting to move on to the next plant. But an elderly man from the group contradicts her. “Until the 20th Century they used to hang yarrow, a window in the forests of Bavaria, to keep the plague from the house.” Konrad Müller is an expert on the plague and has already written many books on the Black Death. He knows enough to give at least one guided tour of the Botanic Garden.

To conclude the tour Gruber wants to cast a spell herself, and so she has brought a blend of herbs with that are traditionally burned at midsummer and in mid-June. The longest day of the year is a mystical date which was celebrated with feasts by the Germans and the Celts. Gruber burns oak bark, sage, mugwort, fleabane, frankincense and myrrh in a small metal bowl, a blend that is supposed to capture the energy of the sun and attune one to the second half of the year. In addition, the dried leaves and crumbs of resin protect travelers from impending disaster. “This passes the energy of the herbs to us,” explains Gruber, fanning the rising column of smoke towards the group which stands there sniffing and has already written many books on the Black Death. He knows enough to give at least one guided tour of the Botanic Garden.

Another herb that can be found in every kitchen cupboard has unimagined powers. “Bays are mind-expanding, but only if you burn it, not if you stir it in your spaghetti sauce,” Gruber reports. “The priestesses of the Oracle in Delphi slept on laurel leaves and inhaled the smoke from burning bay and laurel, to fortell the future.” The 21st Century priestess also uses it, not least to enchant her sweet heart. “Yarrow on the other hand is a rather boring plant from a witch’s point of view. It can be found in the Botanic Garden in one of the eight round themed plots that are organized by region and period. “Yarrow has no special magical powers,” says Gruber, starting to move on to the next plant.

Discover the Botanic Garden

There is an autumn walk with head gardener Dirk Rotheder at the Botanic Garden on 23rd September 2017. Meet at the main entrance of the Botanic Garden, Schönleinsstraße 1, 79104 Freiburg, at 2 p.m. Admission costs EUR 3.00. Children and teenagers aged up to 16 can take part free of charge. No need to register.

www.botanischer-garten.uni-freiburg.de/thuende-und-sorcerer

Knowledge breeds trust

The German UI5, a group of fifteen universities with a wide spectrum of subjects including traditions, major medical schools, and world class research, has published a magazine, Wissen schafft Vertrauen. “The humanities and social sciences and cultural disciplines are highly valued in Germany. They enable people to critically interpret the world and the changes it is undergoing and to position themselves in it. In this way they create social resistance to dangerous oversimplifications – as well as faith in the future of our society; particularly in the face of rising challenges from strengthening nationalism, from climate change, terrorism, even integration,” says Professor Hans-Jochen Schiewer, University of Freiburg Rector and chair of the German UI5. Fifteen researchers, including Freiburg historian Ulrich Herbert, hope their contributions to the magazine will stimulate a reasoned and constructive debate.

Dressed as a witch the biologist Henriette Gruber shows a tour group of the Botanic Garden the benefits to health that can be obtained from blossoms and leaves. Photo: Patrick Sieger
Feedback after 100 days

Petra Engelbracht is developing a personnel development concept for the University of Freiburg

by Rimma Gengerstein

If you run until your legs smart and your arms feel limp, you still should never be so out of breath that you’re unable to speak. Mute sweating should only happen when you sprint. If you want to make progress, you breathe and you talk. How are the children? Where are you going on holiday this year? Have you read the new thriller by Jussi Adler-Olson? Petra Engelbracht has put on her trainers many times for half-marathons with her running team of sixty – in Leipzig and in Remich, Luxembourg.

Sports lore has already helped the 52 year old to reach the finishing line after 21 kilometers. The economics graduate also uses it in her job. This year she has to manage a mammoth task at the University of Freiburg: to create a personnel development concept for all 2,000 employees from administration, service and technology – from the caretaker to the department heads. “You need stamina for this job,” laughs Engelbracht. “You have to keep making a fresh attempt, adjust your pace and always communicate.”

Four stages

Since arriving in Freiburg in early 2017 she has not stopped communicating. Engelbracht buzzes from department to department, talking to the management and staff about working conditions, organization, their wishes and difficulties. The final goal is an understanding that brings together all the information and measures and integrates them into the four professional work stages of recruitment, integration, development/retention and retirement/discharge. The area of management and strategy is also covered. However the concept is just one element: together with its equivalent thoughts on the academic side, it will form the personnel development concept for the entire university.

Engelbracht is highly qualified in this area. She invited him to audit the present personnel development at the University of Trier. “To begin with there was just one page of A4 with six CPD events. That was it,” she recalls. Engelbracht upped the pace, expanded CPD, developed training courses for management, carried out and assessed staff surveys and gained the first-ever ‘Family-friendly University Audit’ certificate nationally for the University of Trier.

But the recipe for successful personnel development can’t simply be transferred from one campus to another. The University of Trier, a spring chicken from the 1970s, has about 14,000 students and 1,200 staff. It’s a considerable bit smaller. But in fact Engelbracht finds the size and variety of the Freiburg super-tanker exciting. She has a free hand, like an architect planning a building floor by floor, “There are many excellent provisions and measures here already, but so far there’s no overall concept.” She was surprised to find this was the case at such a highly-regarded university. So it was time to turn up the pressure. Particularly with the upcoming excellence competition.

A warm welcome and a hot goulash

Engelbracht called the assessment she gave to the staff meeting in July her “100 day feedback.” She used it to set out the strengths of the university, also suggestions for development. In her expert view, there are opportunities when employees leave – the motto is “secure knowledge” – for individual career planning, for selection of personnel and for communications. “For instance, there is a mission statement of the Central University Administration, but there’s almost no sign of it in the building itself.” Why not put up a poster in the conference rooms? “You can waste a lot of time with that,” she says with a smile. “I’m a southerner, I don’t think it’s necessary in response to a chatty southerner.” It doesn’t hurt to remind people now and then about the values of their institution.

However Engelbracht doesn’t cavil with her praise: she is very enthusiastic about the training and CPD opportunities and highlights the university’s family friendliness. And one special strength struck her: the appreciative and welcoming culture. “I have been received openly and warmly everywhere. Even when staff were on half an hour on a bench in the Columbiapark. I expect there are a lot of people in front in busy – the view of the Art Nouveau palace takes her far away from the noise. In her spare time she trains for her next half-marathon: in October 2017 she and her running group will be meeting in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Until now Engelbracht has trained on her own in the south. But I’m sure I’ll soon find companions.” And the motto will be: breathe and talk, talk and breathe.

All the world’s a stage

Freiburg literature scholar Simon Sahner is an actor, poetry-slammer and author

by Julia Dannenh

When you stand on a stage to show people the best you can do, it’s always a bit of narcissism about it,” says Simon Sahner. He has no problem admitting to the desire to present himself and receive affirmation, or with talking about the fact that he is a southerner. To him, it is all a part of what makes him the person he is.

The 27 year old regularly goes on stage: in the university theater, at poetry slams and with ‘Laut und Lyrik’, the spoken theater group of the Department of German at the University of Freiburg. He is studying for a postdoc at the ‘Factual and Fictional Narration’ Graduate School on the subject of the Beat and Underground Literature of 1960 to 1990. He also writes short stories, spoken word pieces and sometimes musical pieces. His activities on the stage give him a welcome break from academic work. “At a poetry slam the performance is of enormous importance. Even the best texts don’t work if they are presented badly. So – unlike at the university – rhythm and sound are often more important to me here than linguistic nuances.”

As a teenager he was convinced that he would be a great writer one day. Since he wanted to write important novels, true to style he bought himself a typewriter. After leaving school, he liked to sit with an intense look on his face in cafes, writing down his thoughts in notebooks. Today he laughs about it. “Eventually, I realized that I was just playing the part of the great artist for myself. Just how I imagined creative people to be back then.” He has long since given up trying to act out any clichés, but no longer takes himself so seriously, allowing his creativity to be guided more by enjoyment than dreams of success.

Simply audition

Stage plays always interested him, even at school. So one day he tried it out – things went well and he enjoyed it a lot. Looking back, he says that slaming never stopped him doing anything. If he hadn’t got stuck on consonants now and then, he wouldn’t be the person he is today. For instance, he joined ‘Laut und Lyrik’ because he did speech therapy with the leader of the group. Wilfried Vogel, who invited him to audition. That was back in 2011. Sahner is still a part of the group. “Articulation and breath play a major part in our appearances,” he explains. Many of the exercises have helped him in day to day life too.

“The feeling of standing on stage is a mixture of fear and euphoria which nothing else brings. On the one hand there is the tension: you know there’s no going back, that nothing can be allowed to go wrong. At the same time you enjoy showing what you have prepared and positive responses from the audience bring out huge feelings of joy.” Anyone who has stood on a stage wants to do it again. And, for Sahner, producing art means knowing oneself better and lasting one’s limits.

At a poetry slam, for instance, he doesn’t play a fictional character but just stands there on stage as himself. “It refrine and exaggerate, but basically it’s still me.” This is a vulnerable thing to do, and it doesn’t always attract a positive reaction – but that isn’t just okay, it can even increase self-confidence. “Once you’ve made a complete fool of yourself in front of 200 people then you know that you can manage to give a lecture at a conference.”

Anything, so long as it’s not boring

Sahner would like to continue to go on stage regularly in future too. Every new theater production gives rise to such tension and dynamism that it is never boring. However he will be cutting back on the poetry slams, “I’m lacking for the poems. Anyway, it’s time for something new.” His next project is the literature podcast ‘Buddhistischer Literatur in der Mangel’, which starts in autumn 2017.
Faculty News

The University of Freiburg has conferred the University Medal on Karin Endress and Margot Selz, Endress, President of the foundation board of the Georg H. Endress Foundation, for their outstanding research, and the European Campus of the Georg H. Endress Foundation for their outstanding research. The University Medal for the foundation's extensive support of the Technical Faculty, Freiburg. With effect from 1 April 2017, the rector has appointed Prof. Dr. Matthias Eder, Institute for Medical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases, professor of Medical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases. Kern has been on the board of ESCMID since 2009 and is now the program director of the annual conference, which is one of the largest international events in the field of infectiology and clinical microbiology.

The University College Freiburg (UCF) has awarded the sociologist Jülicher Model. He is leaving the University of California, USA, to teach at the University of Freiburg. He will be asked to teach at the University of Freiburg.

With effect from 1 July 2017, the rector has appointed Prof. Dr. Olaf Groß, Technical University of Munich, professor of Experimental Neuroneurology.

With effect from 1 April 2017, the University Teaching Award for outstanding teaching achievements to Dr. Anna Vlasch, Heidelberg-Heine-Universeit Düsseldorf, professor of Neuroanatomy.

With effect from 1 January 2017, the rector has appointed Prof. Dr. Olaf Groß, Technical University of Munich, professor of Experimental Neuroneurology.

With effect from 1 January 2017, the rector has appointed Prof. Dr. Michael Reth from the Institute of Molecular and Cell Biology at the Max Planck Institute for Immunobiology and Epigenetics, Freiburg.

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Pädiatrische Infektiologie has awarded the Young Scientist Award 2017, which is endowed with EUR 20,000, to Dr. Roland Elling, Elbing, Hirth impressed with their ‘DeepVA’ (Deep Video Analysis) and other inflammatory processes.

The winners of the first phase of the annual meeting of the International Association for Dental Research in Freiburg. The University of Freiburg, which has been awarded EUR 45,000. Reardon will be working on Big Data in the life sciences at the University of Freiburg. The winner has awarded Prof. Dr. Bernhard Schöne, President of the Georg H. Endress Foundation awards with EUR 6,000 and was presented at the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities. It is awarded annually for a work in the field of humanities, social sciences and economic sciences. Awarding aims to resolve environmental problems.

The biology Prof. Dr. Milena Bertolotti from the University of Freiburg, San Raffaele in Milan, Italy, has received the Humboldt research scholarship from the Humboldt Foundation for postdocs. With its scholarship, the foundation aims to support the mobility of highly qualified scientists from abroad at the start of their career. Bartolotti will be using a new method to investigate the localization and interaction of receptors on B-lymphocytes and B-tumor cells on the molecular scale at the University of Freiburg. She is hosted by Prof. Dr. Michael Reth from the Institute of Molecular and Cell Biology at the Max Planck Institute for Immunobiology and Epigenetics, Freiburg.

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Pronounced

Freedom or Freiburg

Off into the wide wide world: taking a semester abroad is very popular with students. Many even claim that time abroad is essential if you want to get ahead these days. But are they right?

Rimma Gerenstein (pro) and Nicolas Scherger (con) argue the point – a little.

Picked-up

A Sparkling Discovery

The university employs a staff of animals on Freiburg’s castle hill: sheep and goats are grazing an area of grass and forest on behalf of the Faculty of Environment and Natural Resources (see title page). But the quadrupeds aren’t alone there. Recently a magnificent crystal was discovered there too. Max Orlich bade it welcome

uni’leben: Hello, beautiful crystal. How does it feel to be wrenched from your natural enviroment?

Crystal: To begin with I was a bit annoyed. I very much enjoyed being a microhabitat for amphibians, reptiles and insects.

Who thwarted your plans?

Well, you know, scientists won’t leave us stones alone, they’re so curious. A group of students dug over the woods for stones – and since I’m not that mobile, I was dug up along with them. Although I did very cleverly manage to lie with my crystal side down on the mossy ground.

You wanted to remain unrecognizably?

Yes! I don’t really like to sparkle. When 3.5 kilograms glitter, it can be a little showy at times.

When 3.5 kilograms glitter, it can be a little showy at times.

She ran screaming with joy through the forest with me! I was utterly shocked! But okay, if you are just planning to build homes for insects and find me instead, I suppose that can make you jump for joy.

So you aren’t cross any more?

No, we get on fine. At present I’m even living at her place. It’s quite a contrast, I tell you – after sitting outside in the wind and the rain for such a long time, to be dry and cozy on a comfortable shelf – it’s pretty good.

All the same there is still one question: are you a true amethyst?

You think I’ll tell you? First of all I let you see: I’m still here! I’ll leave the hard work of finding out who I really am and how I found myself in the forest to the experts.