

ERFAHRUNGSBERICHT ÜBER STUDIENERFAHRUNGEN IN BAYERN [Report on study experiences in Bavaria]

Herkunftsland [county of origin]:	Serbia
Studium in Bayern [program in Bavaria]:	von [from] 2020 bis [until] still ongoing
Hochschule in Bayern [university in Bavaria]:	Universität Regensburg
Studienfach [subject of study]:	History
Abschluss [degree]:	PhD

Arrival and Stay at the Place of Study

I arrived in Regensburg in October 2020 and started my PhD studies at the University of Regensburg. I am a historian writing a dissertation on *Informality and Corruption in Serbia 1815-1894*.

Arriving in Regensburg and receiving the documents was complicated by the situation in Corona. The institutions both at home and in Germany were slowed down at that time and there were fewer opportunities to travel. On the other hand, finding accommodation was easy as the Welcome Centre and the International Accommodation Centre at the University of Regensburg found me a room in the *Hiltnerheim* dormitory at a reasonable price.

Once the corona situation calmed down, Regensburg quickly became a very good place to live. The city is well connected by bus lines, which are free for students. Its historic centre, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and its green spaces are well worth seeing. The city is full of international students who are very friendly and sociable. There are many opportunities to meet other students and scholars and explore the city: Sprachcafé, activities organised by the Welcome Centre of the University of Regensburg such as guided tours and museum visits, social activities organised by dormitories.

Academic offer at the University of Regensburg

The University of Regensburg offers a wide range of courses for historians. I have attended various courses from general ones such as 19th century European History to specific ones like *Die Konstruktion moderner Nationen in Südosteuropa im 19. Und 20. Jahrhundert*.

The Faculty of Philosophy in Regensburg is a stimulating environment for historians researching Balkan history. One of the chairs in the history department specialises in the history of South and Southeast Europe. Thanks to this there is never a semester when there is a lack of lectures or expertise on the history of this region.

I am particularly glad that I took courses in environmental history. I wrote a master's thesis on two environmental organisations and plan to return to environmental topics in my future research. Environmental issues remain an important issue for me in academia and outside of academia. I completed a course *Südosteuropa und das Meer: Mensch-Natur Beziehungen seit dem 19. Jahrhundert*. I am currently taking a course in Environmental History and Anthropology.

The University of Regensburg offers a number of interdisciplinary courses. Several humanities have analysed the problem of corruption. Historians researching corruption consult theories from sociology, economics and other sciences. This is why I chose a course on corruption taught by professors from different disciplines- history, economics and linguistics. The course was titled *Who and what is corrupt? Interdisciplinary dimensions of corruption*.

Environmental issues are difficult to grasp using historical methods alone, and environmental history is a relatively young discipline. Environmental historians can learn a lot from other disciplines, and research on green issues benefits from interdisciplinarity. I attended the lecture *Interdisziplinäre Facetten der Nachhaltigkeit* at OTH Regensburg.

Language offer at the University of Regensburg

My time in Germany was essential for the further development of my German language skills. Although I have been learning German since primary school, my level improved significantly during my stay in Regensburg. I practised my speaking skills with good German speakers and native speakers, which I had not been able to do before coming here.

My student status allowed me to attend several German courses at the university, organised by the ZSK. I took a German course every semester and eventually passed the C1 course and exam at the university with success. I am currently taking courses on academic writing in German language. I expect them to be very useful as I have little experience in academic writing in German.

I had wanted to learn a third foreign language for a long time. As I was satisfied with the German courses organised by the ZSK, I decided to take the opportunity to learn another language at the University. I am currently taking an Italian A1 course. Italy is my favourite travel destination. The choice was also academically motivated as Italian historians have written extensively about Serbian history.

Research and academic development

I was always very satisfied with my supervisor, who supported me a lot. When I was considering coming to Regensburg for my PhD, he advised me to apply for the BAYHOST scholarship. After my arrival, his support went beyond advice on my topic and dissertation.

My project was thematically associated to three DFG projects on corruption in Serbia and Croatia over the last 200 years. My supervisor included me in the interdisciplinary team with three other colleagues and two professors. Over time other members working on related research joined the group, which we called the Regensburg Corruption Cluster. We held two conferences in Cres, Croatia, where we presented parts of our research and received feedback from experts in the field. The group had monthly meetings where we discussed our issues and research. Working with this group was very stimulating for the work on my thesis.

My supervisor encouraged me to join another international and interdisciplinary PhD group: The Graduate School for South and Southeast European Studies. The Graduate School is a programme for doctoral students from different disciplines who are analysing South and Southeast Europe in their studies. I was fortunate to become an associated member of the group.

The Graduate School offers a monthly colloquium on relevant and current academic topics. Speakers from a range of disciplines present their work. The Graduate School offers lectures for several humanities and there is a lot of content for historians.

Each semester, the Graduate School offers workshops on theory and methodology. I attended workshops on academic writing, strategies for writing a dissertation, and publishing in peer-reviewed journals. The theory and methodology workshops were very useful, so I decided to attend more similar workshops this semester. Until the end of the semester, I will attend the workshops: *Methods and Tools for Interdisciplinary Area Studies Research and Thesis Writing*, *Strategische Publikationsplanung* and *How to Write a Book Proposal*.

Each year the members of the Graduate School organise an annual workshop. In the summer semester 2023, I organised the GS annual workshop together with three colleagues. Since we shared an interest in green topics, we quickly decided to hold a conference on environmental issues. We titled the workshop: *Environmental Discourse and Practice in Eastern and Southeastern Europe: Facing Challenges and Opportunities*.

Social engagement

As Germany has an advanced green NGO sector, I wanted to get to know some of the main green organisations and learn about their activities. I became a member of BUND Regensburg, a branch of *Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland*. Besides dealing with modern issues such as climate change, BUND Regensburg also practices traditional species protection and the preservation of green spaces in Regensburg and its surroundings.

Plans after the BAYHOST funding

My main plan is to finish my PhD thesis. After that I would like to return to environmental history research. The draft title of my next major research is National Parks: Finances, Tourism and Nature Protection. I want

to increase my green activities outside of academia. As soon as I am back home for a longer period of time, I will start working with a green organisation Green City and Friends, a group of citizens whose goal is to increase the amount of green surfaces in Belgrade and other cities.

When I return to Belgrade, I plan to keep in contact and cooperate with the institutions and people in Regensburg who supported me during my studies here, including BAYHOST, my supervisor, colleagues and professors.

Studying at the University of Regensburg has been a very important episode in my academic life. Without the BAYHOST scholarship, I would never have come to Regensburg or started these studies. I am very thankful to the BAYHOST team for giving me this unique opportunity.