

Final Report

Internship at the Saint Petersburg State University

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My internship at the Saint Petersburg State University (SPSU) started at the 4th of April, one day after the horrible terrorist attack in the Saint Petersburg metro system. Beside this sneaky act of violence right in the beginning of my semester abroad, it was a pretty hard start to get into the normal city life. Even if I'm not sure that my life at the university has been ever a normal city life.

To be honest the first challenge was definitely the language. In other foreign countries you're normally used to it, to talk in English and use it as a language which almost everyone understands. But especially because of some historical reasons, English isn't that common in the normal Russian population. But as soon as you found the first friends in the university, everything got to be easier and also my Russian skills increased from time to time.

My internship at the SPSU was thought as an introduction on how scientific work works. Therefore I worked three month together with Prof. Dr. Nikolai Bobylev. He and Irina Vasilieva have been my contact persons in St. Petersburg. Prof. Bobylev works in the department of environmental security and sustainable development of the regions. His research is based on the concept of the idea of Urban Underground Space. Which risk it takes and how it could be used. This topic was the main reason why I wanted to work with Prof. Dr. Bobylev.

For me is the work of Mr. Bobylev so innovating but still not too futuristic like many other concepts for a smarter use of public space. The idea of using the things we already have and at the same time to stimulate natural growth of the city without sealing more green spaces or open fields, is smart, sustainable and ingenious as well.

During my stay at the SPBU, Prof. Bobylev took me to different events and conferences. Those events have been great places for networking, talking and discussing with different researchers. The conversations introduced me to new perspectives and paradigms. The time I had in St. Petersburg and at the SPBU gave me new ways of thinking and I'm extremely happy about every day I had spent there. Decisive for the new point of view, I received, have been the conferences I could participate in, but also all those interesting discussions I had with students of the same department as I worked in. To receive new knowledge about a topic you're interested in and also to have the opportunity to discuss about it with people from different places with different backgrounds has been very beneficial for me.

Unfortunately, I wasn't able to participate in different courses during my stay, but Mr. Bobylev took me to several classes of the courses he gave, so I had the chance to get in contact with a lot of intelligent and open minded students. In my first class with Mr. Bobylev I gave a small presentation for his students about Berlin and my home university in Berlin. It was impressive how interested those students have been about topics like green spaces (which are in comparison to Berlin not so common in Saint Petersburg) and also the start-up-scene we have. I was/am also glad, that I could help some of those students with their bachelor thesis in form of translation of German scientific articles and books and also with the normal knowledge I received during my years of studying at the Freie Universität Berlin.

I'm really glad that I had the chance to work and research together with Prof. Dr. Bobylev about different topics of city planning and especially about the idea of urban underground space. It was also an impressive opportunity to live for three month in a foreign country. It taught me a lot and I'm thankful for every day I had in this beautiful city.

For me it is now important to share those experiences with other students therefore I will highly recommend this program to everyone who searches for an experience in a foreign country and an exchange on sustainability topics. I appreciate the whole program and everything it gave to me (experience, knowledge, contacts and friends). I want to thank all persons who made it possible for me to enjoy this time and also who helped me during my stay in Saint Petersburg and I am sure that I will never forget those three month.

For my future study and researches I will try to take advantage out of my gained experiences in this time.