Early Career Researchers in Austria and Europe: “Freedom is just another word for...”

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Scientific freedom & young researchers: A personal view from humanities

- 1995-2000 Study of Egyptology and Classical Archaeology, Univ. of Vienna
- 2001-2007 PhD programme in Egyptology, Univ. of Vienna (2003 DOC-programme of OeAW)
- 2004-2012 Univ. Ass. at Institute of Archaeology, Humboldt University Berlin
- 03/2011-07/2012 Ass. Prof. at Institute of Egyptology, Univ. of Vienna
- 10/2012-03/2015 PI of ERC AcrossBorders/START project, OREA, Austrian Academy of Sciences
- since 04/2015 Professor for Egyptian Archaeology, LMU Munich

- Traditional “Magisterstudium” with much freedom and little time pressure
- Traditional “PhD programme” with much freedom; partly funded
- Researcher position with liberal boss/open possibilities/limited teaching load with flexibility
- Large BA classes with mostly “minors”
- PI at research institution with major grants & own working group (no teaching)
- BA & MA students; structured PhD programmes; Graduate schools
Example for "freedom in scientific research"

Interdisciplinary work beyond common borders of Egyptology

European hieroglyphs on the obelisk in Schönbrunn Castle, Vienna (1777), monograph 2005, funded by the Hochschuljubiläumsstiftung der Stadt Wien
Unexpected, unplanned, very rewarding – and obviously read/cited/used
AcrossBorders – An Egyptian microcosm in Ancient Sudan

ERC project with “fashionable” research questions:
- Daily life
- Identities
- Acculturation
- Interdisciplinary approach
- Endangered site (planned dam projects)
Inter- and multidisciplinary approach of modern archaeology

Team with various specialists

iNAA, Sr isotope analyses

Physical anthropology

Excavations, core drillings, GIS, SFM etc.

Traditional Egyptological study of artefacts and texts

Archaeometry; microarchaeology
Danger for fundamental research on a broad level

- Humanities with less “fashionable” topics
- Disciplines with less focus on technical trends/new methods
- Excellent proposal but not “relevant” enough?
- In general long-term planning almost impossible
- Next generation/young researchers
Bright and dark sides of PhD programmes

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<th>Bright Sides</th>
<th>Dark Sides</th>
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<td>Increased number of funded PhD positions</td>
<td>(often) no free choice of PhD topic</td>
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<td>Structured PhD programmes with clear time schedule (in average faster than in old times)</td>
<td>No positions available after PhD</td>
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<td>Impact on Brain Drain (motivation)?</td>
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→ in humanities (& science in general) motivation & enthusiasm essential for high quality, innovation and commitment to stay in the field!
How to brighten things up?

• Talk about it – scientific community, public & state/funding agencies
• Interdisciplinary approaches & exchange
• Encourage & support young researcher despite BA+MA+PhD system
• Be as flexible as possible within BA+MA+PhD system (as teacher, supervisor, mentor)
• Fight for discipline specific regulations to prevent major problems in future
“Freedom is just another word for...”

“... nothing else I’d rather do!”

Thank you!