

SUMMER SCHOOL WAGENINGEN



Summer School "Climate Information for Adaptation" Wageningen University and Research, The Netherlands

My name is **Elena Bondarenko** and I am attending the **Landscape Planning academic program** at **Czech University of Life Sciences (CULS)**. I graduated from Lomonosov Moscow State University, Faculty of Soil Science in 2012.

My graduate and post-graduate experience helped me understand how important it is to be able to **predict and anticipate problems using landscape planning**. That's why in 2020 I've started my education at CULS and later, I participated in the ERASMUS program at **Wageningen University & Research (WUR)**.

I see landscape as a complex, socio-ecological system which continually asks for an **integrative approach** to interventions. Although **cities** provide enormous economic, technical and cultural **opportunities**, they also became places of **social conflicts and segregation** as well as **environmental and health problems** - impacting the climate and liveliness of people and the wild life. The importance to understand the **impacts of climate change**, the ability to develop programs of **mitigation climate change** as well as increase the **resiliency of urban areas** has obtained a new definition and seriousness. That's why in July, 2023 I visited the **Summer School "Climate Information for Adaptation"** at **WUR**.

With this letter, I would like to share my experience in participating in Summer School and the ERASMUS program at WUR.



About the Summer School

The Summer School Climate Information for Adaptation at WUR helped me to learn about various aspects of **urban resilience** from an environmental, using different tools, **scientific methods, and analysis, including programming**.

The importance to understand the **impacts of climate change**, the ability to develop program of **mitigation climate change** as well as increase the **resiliency of urban areas** has obtained a new definition and seriousness. It's happened due to numerous **natural hazards** – such as earthquakes, floods or droughts that are either currently ongoing or expected to take place in the near future. One of the main **purpose** of the Summer School was **understanding these projected environmental scenarios that do not even exist**.

During the Summer School we was **working in a creative team thinking** together about the ways of integration information about climate change into the **decision making process**. We was working on a **case study** about a **climate change adaption** issue such as droughts, extreme temperatures, flooding, storms, water scarcity, etc. in agricultural sector **in Switzerland**. We was be asked to make the **presentations** with our ideas and **work in a team** on designing new ideas.

The training turned out to be very interesting as well as intensive. We had five full training days, in the first half of the main day there were lectures, and in the afternoon - practical tasks. One full day was set aside for the **symposium**. It was interesting to find out what projects scientists are engaged in, what difficulties they face and what ways they are trying to solve them. One of the participants of the symposium spoke about his project aimed at **visual presentation of climate information**, which is more accessible to everyone, and even to children. One of the aims of the project is to create fairy tales for children about climate change and its consequences. The symposium proved to be a very motivating and inspiring event.

During the Summer School we had be guided by the staff of the **Chairgroup Water Systems** and **Global Change of Wageningen University Chair in Climate Change Adaptation** as well as professors of Wageningen University who provided the needed mentorship.

At the end of the Summer School, we presented all the work done. We explained the results about our case study such as who are the **potential decision-makers**, which **decisions have to be taken** and which information is needed in terms of the **climate service approach**.

In addition to the topics aimed at obtaining information about the climate, one of the topics of the Summer School worked with the observation of the audience (**participatory approach**). We have chosen step by step as a selected target audience how we should conduct meetings with the audience, how we should motivate people to actively participate in the process and how to keep people occupied so that they should trust the organizer and disclose their wrongdoing.

This is a very interesting and important practice that can be applied in various applications, including landscape design. It is very important to be able to listen and hear the information that you need to use in your future projects.



About Wageningen University and Research

'To explore the potential of nature to improve the quality of life'

Wageningen University & Research is one of the **best university** in the Netherlands and one of the leading international universities in the field of **healthy food and living environment**. The educational institution regularly invites foreign students to participate in **exchange programs** and organizes **various joint events**.

The training system at WUR is slightly different from CULS. The academic year is divided into **6 periods**, 4 long periods of 8 weeks and 2 short periods of 4 weeks. During long periods only **2 subjects** are taught - one in the **morning** and the other in the **afternoon**. During a short period, only one subject is studied in the morning and afternoon classes. **Subjects are studied every day**, which makes it possible to be more focused on the subject and more detailed immersion in topics.

All training consists of **practice** - working on **projects**, writing an **essay** expressing a point of view on the problem posed, and other **creative tasks**, such as creating games and podcasts. For example, I have made and recorded my **first-in-life podcast** about the **delight of landscape** where I was able to speak to like-minded people about the issues I care most about. Moreover, I have been lucky to join **the participatory design team for the foodscape** for the Kortenoord district in Wageningen, which is currently being implemented. The first months of study at VUR were emotionally difficult, and "nothing worked out" in terms of studies. But at some point, I realized that I need **to do what I want**, to reveal my topics through projects, and not try to follow the instructions of teachers. The purpose of study is to **unleash the potential of students**, to stop following what is already there.

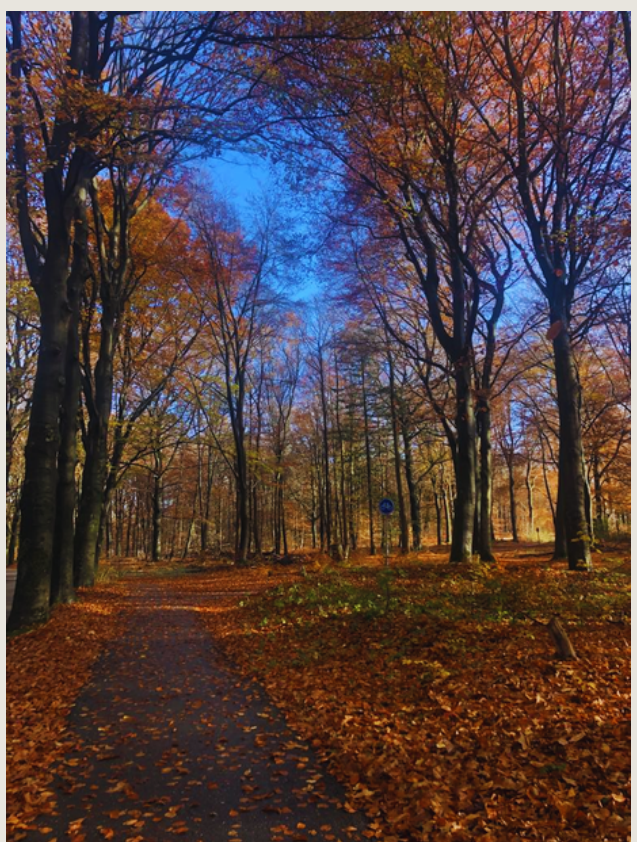
By the way, **Dutch teachers are very strict** and try not to give high marks, because "everyone has an area for development." At the end of the semester, we usually presented all the work done.



About Wageningen town

Wageningen is located in **Gelderland province** along the **Rhine river**. Wageningen is a **small student city** - absolutely comfortable in order to be focused on studies. Within 15 minutes by bike, you can explore everything. Due to **large international student community** this city is so **lively and cozy** at the same time. There are a lot of places to spend time with your friends, **shops, cinemas and bars**. Wageningen is **surrounded by nature** such as the **Rhine's floodplains, meadows, heaths and forests**. There are multiple places to take a walk, cycle or have a picnic with friends in nature and **reduce your stress level**.

There's a market the **open-air market** in Wageningen. It works twice a week on Wednesday morning and Saturday. The products are often **cheaper than in the shops**. However, it's not only a place for the food, but also a place for **gathering with friends**.



About cycling culture

I cycled every day in Wageningen. This is not just a great **mode of transport** with all the infrastructure for movement, it is an ideal **tool for time management**: there are no traffic jams, distances in the city can be covered on average in less than 15 minutes and they are easy to calculate regardless of the time of day, because there are **no traffic jams**.

You just need to make sure that the **tires are inflated and the brakes work**, and otherwise, if you **left on time, you arrived on time**. No delays. The Dutch, by the way, are very **sensitive to time**, so it is difficult to meet those who are late.

In winter, however, cycling is sometimes more difficult due to **rain and strong winds**. Have you tried cycling an exercise bike in the shower? Throw in an imaginary powerful fan in the face and you can imagine how fun it is to **cycle during the windy winter months**. However a good quality **raincoat, a scarf around the neck and an incredible ability to enjoy sunny days** without sensations come to the rescue.

You can **rent a bike** in the city for a different period - from a couple of hours to a couple of days. It's also possible to **buy a supported bicycle** of student who graduated and leaving the city.



About weekend travel

My discovery was a trip to **Antwerp**. A few hours on the road and **Belgian waffles and oysters** in front of the City Theater at your feet. It's good to go to Belgium for the weekend. My second favorites are **Ghent and Bruges**. Bruges is especially **fabulous at Christmas** - fairs, gingerbread houses and Christmas lights create an **atmosphere of magic**.

The Netherlands, in principle, is ready to provide a full range of day trip options in any direction: **Leiden, The Hague with Scheveningen beach or Utrecht**. My personal choice within the country is **Dordrecht and Maastricht**. Cozy, not overcrowded, **beautiful authentic cities with very decent city museums and cathedrals**.

You can go for the weekend to **Texel Island** - look at the **pens with sheep**, go to the **lighthouse to the north of the island** and **walk along the dunes**. Great idea if you need to **isolate yourself from city noise**.

