

Young Danube Research Workshop: Beyond Spreadsheets



Figure 1. Peter Lieberzeit on navigating the line between responsible application and academic misconduct when using AI in academic research. Photo: Melissa Hiltl

Since the beginning of the year, PhD researchers in Vienna working on topics connected to the Danube have been meeting up to provide a forum for exchange and connection across disciplines and institutions, with support from the Austrian Committee for Danube Research. The 'Young Danube Research' events are organised voluntarily by researchers at BOKU University and University of Vienna and respond to needs identified by early career scientists, including social meet-ups, sharing experiences of methods and tools as well as the academic world more generally.

On Wednesday, 7 May 2025, the first workshop organized by the Young Danube Research Group took place at the Wilhelm Exner Haus of BOKU University. Under the title 'Beyond Spreadsheets', this half-day workshop offered an opportunity for PhDs to explore a variety of digital tools beyond traditional excel spreadsheets, focusing on how these tools can support us in conducting research, publication writing, and teaching.



Figure 2a and b. Impressions from the summer picnic on Danube island, Vienna. Photo: Daniela Hatzenbühler

Early-career scientists discussed with peers and senior researchers the potentials and challenges of applying digital methods, especially Large Language Models like ChatGPT.

Laura Ganglgruber and Peter Lieberzeit (University of Vienna) opened the floor with insightful talks on how AI tools can be integrated responsibly into the academic workflow – raising important questions about the ethical and legal boundaries, which led to a lively and thoughtful discussion.

Further contributions by Johannes Kowal, Martin Tschikof, Katharina Bauer, and Diana Hatzenbühler (all either current or recent PhD researchers at BOKU or University of Vienna) showcased a wide range of research tools, including ecological network analysis, fuzzy cognitive mapping, participatory GIS, and working with R. These talks inspired lively breakout

sessions, being used by participants to discuss methods in more depth and for exchange on experiences.

A big thank you to everyone who joined us, shared their insights, and made this event such a great first workshop, and we're excited for what's next!

In summer 2025, a visit of the Simmering Waste Water Treatment Works was organized, as well as a workshop on academic publishing, and a summer picnic on the Danube island. More information and an opportunity to join the mailing list for updates on events can be found on the ÖK IAD website here <https://oek-iad.boku.ac.at/young-danube-research/> or by emailing youngdanube@gmail.com – we welcome anyone interested in joining us.

Katharina Bauer, Diana Hatzenbühler, Melissa Hiltl, Christoph Novotny, Samuel Roudbar.

46th IAD conference will take place from August 10–14, 2026



A Danube oxbow in Gemenc. Photo: Katrin Teubner

Dear Colleagues,

We are pleased to announce that the 46th IAD conference will take place from August 10–14, 2026 in Baja, Hungary. The conference's theme, which celebrates the IAD's 70th anniversary, is 'The Socio-Ecological Future of the Danube: Integrating Riverine and Terrestrial Systems for a Sustainable Danube.' Welcome to Baja!

Conference schedule:

- Three days are devoted to conference sessions
- One-day excursion to the Danube-Drava National Park
- One day will be dedicated to EU projects, including a half-day section and a half-day workshop.

The conference website will be available in early 2026.