



International Agriculture

Field Experiences from Bachelor Students 2022



► School of Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences HAFL

Foreword

What are students of the Major “international agriculture” doing during their 6-month internship? What are their experiences, what are their reflections in a context that is often very different from ours? The present document is not about the professional experience of the students. From their field assignment in Asia (Cambodia), Africa (Cameroon, Togo) and Latin America (Colombia, Uruguay) the students are reflecting about their real-life experience and impressions. They freely chose the topic of their article: anecdotes, local news, philosophical or political considerations. Some specific information about the field assignment is given at the end of each article (host organisation, topic of the bachelor thesis).

Vorwort

Was machen die Studierenden des Majors “Internationale Landwirtschaft” während ihres 6-monatigen Praktikums? Was sind ihre Erfahrungen, ihre Gedanken in einem Kontext, der zum Teil sehr anders aussieht als bei uns? In diesem Dokument geht es nicht um die berufliche Erfahrung. Die Studierenden berichten über ihre Erlebnisse und Eindrücke aus Asien (Kambodscha), aus Afrika (Kamerun, Togo), und aus Lateinamerika (Kolumbien, Uruguay). Das Thema der Artikel haben die Studierenden selbst ausgewählt: Anekdoten, lokale Ereignisse, philosophische oder politische Überlegungen. Einige spezifische Angaben zum Praktikum sind jeweils am Ende jedes Artikels zu finden (Gastorganisation, Thema der Bachelor Arbeit).

Préface

Que font les étudiants de la spécialisation « agriculture internationale » pendant leur stage pratique d’une durée de 6 mois ? Quelles sont leurs expériences, leurs réflexions dans un contexte souvent très différent du nôtre ? Dans le présent document, ce ne sont pas leurs expériences professionnelles qui sont relatées ; les étudiants qui étaient en stage en 2019, nous parlent de leur vécu et impressions en provenance d’Asie (Cambodge) d’Afrique (Cameroun, Togo) et d’Amérique latine (Colombie, Uruguay). Ils ont choisi librement le sujet de leur article : anecdote, fait divers, réflexion philosophique ou politique. Quelques données spécifiques sur leur stage pratique (organisation hôte, sujet du travail de bachelor) figurent à la fin de chacun des articles.

Nancy Bourgeois Luethi
Professor of international livestock systems
Co-heads of International Agriculture

Dominique Guenat,
Professor of agricultural economics

Cover photo legend (top left to bottom right):

Sofia Marcon (Cambodia), Katharina Ineichen (Togo), Gil Rudaz (Cameroon), Micha Fournier (Colombia), Jan Siegenthaler (Uruguay)

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Les opinions exprimées dans le présent document n’engagent que leurs auteurs et ne reflètent pas nécessairement celles de la Haute école des sciences agronomiques, forestières et alimentaires.

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Mixed-crop orchard (Author's picture).

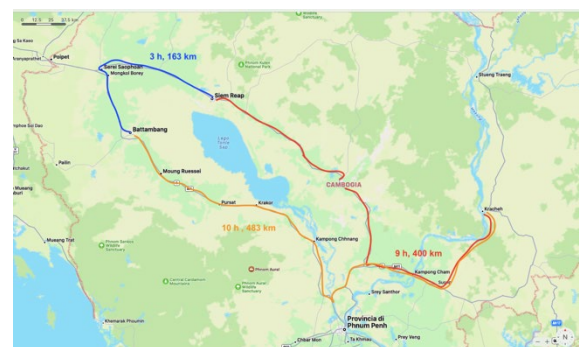
The beauty of spontaneity: unexpected, beautiful experiences!

In Cambodia, planning is impossible. Everything is organized at the last minute, even important things. How did I find my house? Once I arrived in Cambodia I called a real estate agent, the next day he showed me a house and a week later I was already signing the contract. Only ten days after the first call I was already crossing the threshold with my suitcases ready to settle in for good. As a true Swiss at first, this spontaneity and apparent disorganization surprised and stressed me. With time, I realized that this was how it worked there, and I learned to accept it. By embracing this new philosophy of life, I have been lucky enough to have the most unexpected experiences of my life.

Sofia Marcon, Cambodia

Thursday, 18th of August 2022, Battambang

I had been talking to my flatmates for several days about wanting to return to Siem Reap one last time and maybe even make it to Kratie, go kayaking and see the dolphins in the Mekong. Unfortunately, I didn't have much time as I still had to organise a few things for work. Also, the Siem Reap - Kratie route takes nine hours by bus and from there, to return to Battambang I would have to go via Phnom Penh: I would never have made it in a weekend. I left the thinking to the next day when I would leave for Siem Reap anyway. The weekend in Siem Reap was sensational: I visited the temples for the third time, this time in the company of an old secondary school friend of mine, also coincidentally in Cambodia for an internship. On Saturday night we went dancing and I had one of the best nights of my life. On Sunday, after a good night, we went for a rejuvenating massage to relax a bit. I have never been able to relax during massages; instead of clearing my mind I think about everything I have to do in



The itinerary Battambang - Siem Reap - Kratie and back to Battambang via Phnom Penh (Author's picture).

the days to follow. Lost in this whirlwind of thoughts, I realised that in the week ahead work would not be in the way as I could work remotely, and I decided to leave the next day for Kratie. Immediately after the massage I went to buy a one-way bus ticket to Kratie for USD 13. The lady at the bus company spoke good English and explained to me that I would be leaving the next day at 7:30 a.m. from Siem Reap on a big tour bus to Kampong Cham. The journey would take about seven

hours (including breaks). In Kampong Cham I would have to make a change: the following two hours of travelling to Kratie would be in a minivan. I was thrilled and proud of the decision I had made: I felt adventurous and free. For the first time in my life I felt like my own master: no one could tell me where to go and what to do. It was a wonderful feeling.

Monday 22nd of August 2022, 6:45 a.m., Siem Reap

The lady from the bus company had told me to be ready at 7:00 a.m. at a roundabout, not far from my hotel. I therefore decided to refuse the offer for a ride from the tuk-tuk in front of the hotel and walked there. After waiting half an hour at the roundabout, a tuk-tuk arrived and asked me if I should go to Kratie. I told him yes, he took my luggage and put me on the tuk-tuk. The couple who was already sitting in the tuk-tuk made a little room for me, though it was useless, we were cramped anyway. I introduced myself to the couple and vice versa. They were Spaniards on holiday in Southeast Asia, also on their way to Kratie. The tuk-tuk took us to a lay-by where there was a big tour bus. We left around 8:00 a.m. heading for Kampong Cham. The journey was smooth, we stopped a few times to go to the toilet and at 11:00 a.m. to have lunch. Once on the bus I realised that I had not even enquired about the hotels in Kratie. I decided to look at them during the journey, partly to pass the time and partly to make sure I had a bed for the night. Although I embraced spontaneity, I still wanted to make sure I had a roof over my head for the night. I found a cheap guesthouse and booked for two nights. For the rest of the journey I watched the view from the bus. From the window I could admire the Cambodian countryside, characterised by rice paddies, palm trees, pastures and unfortunately, rubbish. Cows have to graze on grass amidst plastic or rest beside a pile of burning rubbish whose black smoke not only smells unpleasant, but also irritates the respiratory tract and makes people cough. Children play barefoot among the plastic, thrown on the ground by their parents or even by themselves. The sadness I feel seeing animals having to select the grass they eat and humans ruining their land is indescribable. Will they be aware of their actions? Around 2:30 p.m., looking at google maps, I realised that we had already passed Kampong Cham and were heading towards Phnom

Penh. Worried that the driver had forgotten to stop, I went to the Spanish couple to ask what we should do. We decided to walk up to the driver and ask him when he would stop to let us off. Obviously the driver didn't know a word of English and we didn't know a word of Khmer. Helpless, we decided to trust him. Half an hour later he stopped and announced that those who had to go to Kratie should get out and head for the minivan across the street. The Spanish couple and I picked up our luggage and headed for the minivan. Seven hours of travelling had made me very tired and the idea of having to spend another two hours in a small, crowded, cramped minivan driven by rowdies did not appeal to me at all. Arriving in front of the minivan door, I grabbed the handle and opened it. The sight in front of me made me burst out laughing. Our means of transport was a true work of contemporary art. Instead of seats, there were ... PLASTIC CHAIRS.

The rear of the minivan had been emptied out



Instead of seats, in the back of the minivan there were plastic chairs. What a surprise! (Author's picture).

and some red, blue and green chairs had been added. Only three of the minivan's original seats had been retained, but they were immediately occupied by two ladies with a little girl. A Cambodian gentleman was already sitting in the back of the minivan. I left my luggage in the trunk (as far as it is possible to differentiate the trunk from the rest of the minivan, as there were no seats to separate them), climbed into the vehicle and sat on a chair. The Spaniards, like me, were also amused and aware that we were going to spend two very witty hours. Fortunately, Cambodia is flat: there are no hairpin bends and the roads are straight. However, the likelihood of flipping over in plastic chairs was not non-existent: when the driver was overtaking, you had to hold on to the walls of the minivan. The air conditioning vents had been removed, but

luckily we had the windows open. Without those, the journey would have been atrocious, as it was at least 32°C outside.

As we drove along the Mekong, I admired the long stretches of water and fields beside me. The water gives me a sense of calm and tran-



The view from the minivan on the Cambodian landscape along the Mekong River (Author's picture).

quillity, it reminds me of my home: Lake Lugano. Lost in my thoughts, I did not notice that the minivan door was opening. Fortunately, a gentleman in front of me, with some difficulty, managed to close it again. This complication went completely unnoticed by the driver, who undauntedly kept his foot on the gas. Around 5 p.m. we arrived in Kratie, a small, typically Cambodian town. I did not have time to realise that I had finally reached my destination when a myriad of tuk-tuk drivers appeared at the doors of the minivan to sell us a lift. Throughout Cambodia drivers are characterised by their annoying insistence, but in Kratie the situation was particularly disturbing.

Despite the fact that the minivan had not yet stopped, tuk-tuk drivers were chasing us and calling out in a frenzy. I got out of the minivan and, surrounded by drivers continuously repeating 'Tuk-tuk lady', went to the boot to get my belongings. I was tired and just wanted to go to the hotel. I looked at the distance to the hotel: it was too far to walk there with my luggage, but close enough to pay only 3,000 riels tuk-tuk (USD 0.75). I immediately asked the driver how much he wanted and he offered me 10,000 riels (USD 2.5). I told him that I lived in Battambang, that I knew the real prices and that I would only give him 5,000 riels (USD 1.25). The driver agreed, loaded my luggage onto the tuktuk and my stay in Kratie began!

Through my experience in Cambodia, I have learnt to embrace spontaneity and limit the planning of my personal life. Life holds a multitude of unforeseen events that can ruin even the most meticulously thought-out plans. So why not decide at the last minute? After all, unplanned experiences are always the most beautiful.



Kratie (Author's picture).

Name: Sofia Marcon

Organisation, Land: Swisscontact, Cambodia

Titel der Bachelorarbeit: Cover crops implementation in mango and longan orchards. An analysis of the assessment in Battambang Province, Cambodia



See sight of Yaoundé (Author's picture).

Minkama! Six cent!

After a short telephone conversation, today's appointment was clear. "I'll take the mototaxi right away," I said to Emanuel. "I'll be with you in 15 minutes". So, I closed the door behind me and walked towards the petrol station, where the motorbikes were waiting to take me. At this very confusing intersection with lots of people and 1000 things happening at the same time, I had to decide on a mototaxi. I usually go for the most sympathetic one. The one there with the flipflops and the green cap seemed quite likeable to me. I could tell from the faded cloth with the driver's number on it that he had also been in the business for a long time and should therefore be competent. "Oh, le blanc! Tu vas où?" He shouted questioningly at me. Since I had already experienced the same procedure several times, I knew what to say. "Minkama! Six cents! I replied firmly. Minkama was the village where I wanted to go and sixhundert was the price I was ready to pay. The driver nodded, smiled at his colleagues, I elegantly swung my body onto the motorbike and we set off.

Gil Rudaz, Cameroon

Barely 10 metres into the ride, another guy standing in the middle of the road waved and said that he wanted a ride too. As is customary, I slid forward a little on the seat so that a third person could get some of the worn cushion under their buttocks. Funny, I thought, the guy hadn't even said where he was going yet. Normally, before you get on the moto, you say where you're going and what the budget is for it. An exception would be if you take a taxi out of town and there is only one street and one next destination anyway. But here it was different because we were in the middle of Obala and he couldn't know in which direction I and the driver were heading. In addition, there would have been many motorbikes ready to give him a lift, so he actually had no reason to ride with me. By the time I thought about it, we had already moved on a metre. The whole thing seemed a bit strange to me and so I asked the guy behind me where he was going. That way I could test what his intentions were. It could also be that I had just fallen into a trap and the two of them were in cahoots. So, I had to find out what their relationship was. I had to find out who was good and who was bad

A story of good and bad

The guy behind me answered "là-bas". This means something like there, which in this context meant nothing at all. As soon as I said it, the driver asked me if I knew the guy at all. I said no and made it clear that I had no idea who the guy was. I added that I thought he knew him, but he didn't. The driver now asked the other the same question. Slowly I began to suspect that the guy behind me was bad and the driver in front of me was probably good. The guy behind me immediately answered that he wanted to go where the white man was going, he said we were colleagues and we knew each other. I said I knew better and that I still didn't know him. Slowly but surely the driver got fed up and stopped at the side of the road. "If you don't know where you're going, you should get off. "No", the other guy replied, "we are colleagues", he repeated. I couldn't help but laugh, because unfortunately I couldn't move or get off in the sandwich between the good and the bad, in fact no one could get off if the person in the back didn't do so. The guy probably wants to rob me at my destination, I thought.

There I sat on the bike laughing and amazed that the guy could hardly lie more obviously and still pull it off as if we had known each other for years and were the best of colleagues. After a long discussion, the three of us were still sitting there and the rider decided to turn around and join the other mototaxis. Fortunately, the other 15 taxis didn't argue for so long and told him very firmly and loudly to "fuck off". When he finally dismounted, I checked whether I still had everything in my pockets. When a driver noticed this, he immediately started shouting: "C'est un voleur! C'est un bandit! As soon as he said it, all 15 riders kicked their iron horses into gear like in a scene from a western movie and took up the chase with full speed and roar. Oops, I thought to myself, now there's going to be street justice and they're going to beat him up. Lo and behold, they had caught him. Now the number of mototaxis had already risen to 20 as they drove past us towards the police station. When we arrived in the yard of the police station, all the drivers tried to explain to the officer at the same time, one louder than the other, what the commotion in the square meant. I had to play along willy-nilly and went inside the station with the suspect. In a room with three other officers and other civilians I gave my testimony, the guy sat opposite to me and looked around in disbelief. As he told his version of the story, my eyes wandered around the room and then into the corridor which was full of people. Everyone was curious to hear and see what was going on and craned their heads to catch a glimpse of the scene. The other guy's story made little sense and to make matters worse he had a fake passport with him. For the audience and the officer, his intentions were clear, he was probably not the first of his kind. For the public he was guilty of attempted robbery and was loudly called a bandit and a thief, they demanded that he be arrested and put into jail. After the administrative practice, I was allowed to leave and the guy was not allowed to go anywhere.

As soon as I left, Emanuel called me. "Where are you? I'm waiting for you". "I'll be right there, Emanuel, I'm still at the police station," I replied. Emanuel took note of this without much comment and ended the call. When I reached Emanuel, I told him about the incident with my heart still pumping. His answer was a little sober, to say the least. He said I should be more careful, things like that still happen here often. I was a little taken aback. On the one hand, I had expected a more surprised answer and on the other hand, this was the first time something like this had happened to me in my four months in Cameroon. So, we went to the cornfield, and I was still able to ask Emanuel my questions.

Things can change so quickly. The mototaxis that used to hit me over the head with overpriced taxi tickets became my friends, policewomen who used to claim money for a favour became helpers and a harmless-looking guy who needed a lift became a hunted criminal. As so often in life, this situation showed me that you can't always have everything under control and that you can still rely on the good nature of others, but you shouldn't wander through life naively.



Motoriding in the countryside (Author's picture).

Name: Gil Rudaz

Organization, country: Institut Agricole d'Obala, Cameroon

Title of Bachelor Thesis: Effects of mulching with tithonia diversifolia on maize production systems and acceptability among smallholder farmers in the region of Obala, Cameroon.



El Masetro de los Maestros (Author's picture).

Les masculinités

Voici une semaine que je suis arrivé à Bogotà et il me brûle d'impatience de me mettre au parfum, de rencontrer du monde et de m'intégrer en Colombie. Cours de salsa, café de langues et salle de sport, je lance plusieurs lignes à la mer pour tenter de sentir l'atmosphère si particulière, dont on m'a tant conté, du nouveau continent.

« Ton cours de salsa est demain, rendez-vous à 16 heures » m'indique-t-on.

Micha Fournier, Colombie

Le cours de salsa

Génial, me voilà lancé dans une nouvelle activité : la danse. Je ne me suis jamais considéré comme un grand danseur ; mais à vrai dire, mon jeu de jambe n'est pas tant ridicule. Je me suis jusque-là toujours défendu lors de fête au « Cuba Bar » de Berne, ou encore à la HAFL, lorsque le jeune prodige et excellentissime Disc-Jockey attitré ressent que la jeunesse HAFLienne entre en transe un jeudi soir, c'est-à-dire deux fois dans l'année. Alors, je gravis les escaliers de l'école de danse. J'entre et aperçois mon prof de danse : Eduardo, 1m53, gomina, les yeux brillants, le regard fier, un sourire franc, torse bombé, chemise blanche large, pantalon bleu de cowboy large et chaussures à pointe. A côté de lui, mon futur camarade de classe : Yaviz, un grand turc, gel fixant ses boucles noires jais, les yeux scintillants, le regard fier, demi sourire, le torse bombé, t-shirt blanc, veste de cuir noire, jeans et chaussure ciré. Seigneur, dans quoi me suis-je embarqué ?

« Bonjour et bienvenue dans le cours de salsa, cette musique, cette danse va habiter votre âme. L'importance est de ressentir, s'amuser et écouter le rythme ! Nous allons voir les pas de bases et faire quelques enchaînements. Avec ça, vous aurez votre kit de survie à Bogotà pour danser et séduire les filles colombiennes. » Bon... Eduardo annonce la couleur. Je sens planer la testostérone dans toute la salle, bien qu'ils ne soient que deux. Exactement comme lorsque j'étais entré dans le vestiaire de ma salle de sport, et, que les mecs ne se parlaient pas, fronçaient les sourcils et marchaient comme s'ils avaient des oursins sous les bras. Les enchaînements commencent, je m'exécute, ne capte rien. Mes jambes font du tricot et ma tête réfléchit beaucoup trop, tel à l'examen « BLA114 Nutztierfütterung ». Bref, je suis naze, pas du tout naturel dans mes mouvements.

- « Et ! Micha, ta tête ne doit pas réfléchir, c'est ton corps qui doit être en contrôle, il faut sentir, regarde Yaviz il y arrive.

- Oui, prof, c'est simple, j'ai déjà pris des cours avant, pour moi ce n'est pas compliqué.
»

L'avènement des alphas

Oh là là ! Et je les vois les deux-là, plus le cours avance plus leurs torsos sont bombés et leurs visages graves. J'ai l'impression qu'ils se regardent danser ! haha, je n'en peux plus sortez-moi de cet endroit ! Je recommence à nouveau et enfin j'arrive à comprendre les pas basiques. Maintenant, viennent les enchaînements ! D'humeur taquine et cherchant la petite bête, je demande s'il faut danser à deux. La question tabou hahaha ! « -Non non non ! La salsa c'est une femme et un homme pas deux hommes non non non ; vous faites seuls les pas et enchaînements ! ». Je sens que je viens de jeter un pavé dans la mare là mais je me retiens pour ne pas lui rire au nez. Eduardo me demande : « Micha, comment vous faites en Suisse pour séduire une fille. C'est comme ici en Colombie ? ». Il est bien sympa mon Eduardo mais ce n'est pas facile de répondre à ça. Je lui réponds avec l'assurance d'un enfant de 13 ans : « Alors heuu... il n'y a pas de règle en particulier mais il faut d'abord être sympa et partager des moments cool avec, être attentionné, gentil, blabla... » Au fur et à mesure de mes explications alambiquées, je voyais clairement s'installer dans ses yeux le vide, et, à la fin, j'avais définitivement perdu son respect haha ! Il n'a rien ajouté, juste : « Bon, on reprend le cours ! ». Et c'est reparti pour 20 minutes de souffrance psychologique tant je suis naze. Plus les enchaînements se compliquent, plus

la salle se transforme en joute dansante de mâles alphas. Et puis, il y a moi, le mâle bêta. Sur le coup, ce n'est pas tant agréable à vivre, mais avec du recul je me tape encore des barres rien que d'y repenser ! En bref, je venais d'assister à une démonstration de virilité et ça faisait belle lurette que je n'y avais pas été confronté.

Inversion des rôles

Enfin, je vous dis ça mais, virilité selon les points de vue. A la fin du cours je remarque que le père Eduardo a les ongles bien soignés, voir bien trop soignés. Amusé, je lui lance dans un espagnol approximatif : « Bah alors Eduardo, ils sont bien beaux tes ongles ! Tu te les vernis en transparent et colore les bouts en blanc ? ». Tout fier, il me les montre : « Oui merci, regarde c'est ma sœur qui me les a faits. Comme c'est vendredi, je me suis préparé pour aller danser ce soir ». Haha alors ça, je ne m'y serais jamais attendu ! S'il s'était confronté aux machos du vieux continent, c'est lui qui aurait perdu leur respect ; comme quoi, chacun ses codes de masculinité !



La vie nocturne dans le quartier de Chapinero, Bogota (Author's picture).

Name: Micha Fournier

Organization, country: Swisscontact, Colombie

Title of Bachelor Thesis: Analyse de la chaîne de valeur amont du cacao de spécialité à Huila, en Colombie



Roads of Lomé after the rain (Author's picture).

Finding Beauty in the Slow Lane: A Tale of Rain, Roads and Reflection in Togo

People who have been to Togo told me before I left to be aware that everything can take longer than you expect. Back then I didn't take it that seriously and couldn't really understand or imagine what people meant by it. Well - after six months in Togo, I totally agree.

Katharina Ineichen, Togo

Things, everyday activities as well as professional tasks, certainly take more time. However, don't get me wrong, it is not in a bad way, it is in a decelerating way that allows time for enriching encounters and enchanting moments. For sure a contrast for me, as I'm coming from a country where people are so shy of encounters that they are irritated when someone sits down next to them in a four-seat train compartment, even though there is another four-seat compartment next door that is completely empty. Then they sit in front of each other for hours without exchanging any word and avoiding eye contact, to be sure the person sitting vis-à-vis does not get the idea of starting a conversation. Coming from a country where we are so trimmed on time efficiency that people get nervous if the bus is not in sight one minute after the scheduled departure time. 18. June 2022- I was in Donomadé, a small village in the Southeast of Togo where I worked and stayed at a research and model farm for sustainable agriculture in Togo. Donomadé is nearly a 3-hour road trip from Lomé, the capital city of Togo, where I also lived for a part of my six

months abroad for my field assignment. 3 hours road trip - one imagines a distance from Lucerne to Geneva which is 265 kilometers, but it is not like that in Togo. Donomadé to Lomé is a distance of about 100 kilometers. The first 30 kilometers from Donomadé to Tabligbo lead over a bumpy gravel road, made of red natural material, which takes you along beautiful green fields on which different crops such as corn, papaya or cassava can be marveled at as they're thriving. Every now and then you pass through small lively villages.



Road towards the farm in Donomadé (Author's picture).

Followed by another 70 kilometers to Lomé on a paved road which can be traveled at a fairly brisk pace all the way close to the city. The last few kilometers into town are usually jammed with traffic. You will hear more about this trip Donomadé to Lomé later but for now, let's start at the begin. I lay in my bed next to Vivienne, who works at the farm as a chef and makes the best breakfast omelets with fresh eggs, tomatoes and herbs from the farm. Still dozing a bit, I eavesdropped the insects and frogs from the forest close by. It sounded a bit like an audio recording from a documentary about rainforests. Hardly have I inhaled the idyllic moment my alarm went off. 05.45am - no time to think about whether to get up right away or to press snooze since I had to be ready by 6am, I had an appointment with Tata. Tata works at the farm and gave me a ride to Tabligbo with the farm motorbike. As soon as we headed off, dark black clouds in the sky were visible, you could tell, sooner or later there would be rain. Not just a bit of rain though - a lot of rain. Doomsday mood, this is what the sky looked like. Passing by the maize fields halfway through on our way to Tabligbo the rain started. Tabligbo is a larger village where the paved road towards Lomé starts.



Road from Donomadé to Tabligbo (Author's picture).

Luckily my North Face bag is waterproof so I didn't have to worry about my laptop inside my bag. Therefore, the rain didn't bother me that much. But to be fair, this is also easier said since I was not the driver and was sitting behind Tata who got surely more rain into his face and had to fight for his sight to somehow navigate our way around the wholes and bumps in the road. Tata dropped me off at the gas station in Tabligbo where next to it the shared taxis wait. The easiest way to get around in Togo are shared taxis. You just pass along the taxi queue and the drivers shout the city/village where they're heading to and you search for the one you need, fix

the price with the driver, enter the car and wait. Once the taxi is full, which is in Togo around seven people per car (yes, we're talking about a good old station wagon, not a van or minibus), the driver starts to drive. Certainly, a concept that we should implement in Switzerland when looking at all the half empty cars driving around. I arrived at the taxi station and found a taxi driver heading to Lomé. I was already the second passenger and shortly after, the taxi driver found a few more customers and we started our ride. I shared a backseat with a guy who visited his family in Tabligbo and was on his way back to Lomé where he works as a waiter. We had a nice small talk about our lives. Lucky me - he seemed not to be annoyed at all by my rudimentary French skills. The rain started to get heavier and heavier, the driver stopped at the side of the road to move our car window up by hand to prevent us from getting hit by the rain as the window always rolled down a bit by itself. The taxi driver himself did not have a car window left anymore in his door (by the way, the side mirror was also not existing anymore). However, he managed with a hanging T-Shirt curtain to not getting soaking wet from the rain entering the open window. Once we arrived in Lomé, the taxi driver just headed towards GTA, a large circle at which the shared taxis wait. On our way there, the driver just stops wherever he gets asked by the passengers to stop on the side of the street. From there you just search another shared taxi heading to your neighborhood or if you can afford it, a motorbike taxi. I asked the taxi driver to stop at the corner where I have to turn right towards the direction for my neighborhood. It was still raining heaps, like not even under the shower would you get wet as fast as with this rain. I left the car, was standing next to the street and didn't really know what to do with my life, looked around, not quite sure whether to search for a dry shelter or just to search for a motorbike-taxi, even as I knew a moto taxi in this strong rain might not be the smartest idea. Due to the unbelievably strong rain I felt like I was left all dressed up with nowhere to go. Before I could make up my mind, two men waved at me and gave me a sign to come under their shelter. Within seconds I was already soaked, but I didn't hesitate at all and gladly accepted their offer. I passed over a little wood over a ditch, about one meter wide and one meter deep. The two men opened the grid door. It was a little shelter where they stored mattresses to sell.

Maybe a 3x3 meter space was left next to the mattresses with a bench. A woman was sitting on it holding a baby. Another man was watching soccer on his mobile phone. I got offered to sit down as well. There we were, five of us, plus the baby, sitting on the bench in the little shelter – all of us watching the rain. The man sitting next to me was the baby’s dad and the shop owner. The other man and the soccer-game-watching-man – I was not quite sure if they already knew each other or if the shop owner had just offered them a shelter as well. Even though they all seemed to get along with each other pretty well, I assumed the latter option. We exchanged a few words and continued to watch the rain. In the meantime, the one-meter-deep ditch I passed by filled up and formed a small, brownish stream.

A few moments passed and I started wondering if the rain would calm down a bit at some



Somewhere under the water is the one-meter-deep ditch (Author’s picture).

point so I could make my way home. Well, not yet. The rain was still as strong as if the whole world was one fire and the little stream changed into a mid-sized stream carrying little things such as pieces of wood, corn remains and rubbish. I guess we were all thinking the same thing: hopefully the stream does not further grow, come into the shelter and destroy all the mattresses. Nevertheless, the rain did not affect the mood in the shelter, we still laughed a lot and the baby was the perfect entertainment program. Constantly raining cats and dogs the water got closer and closer to the door still. The shop-owner

started to dig with a little bowl into the soil to prevent the water from coming into the shelter. Straightaway it was clear to all of us to help him and try our best to ward off the water. Even the soccer-watching-man stopped watching the game and helped. Luckily the rain seemed to calm down a bit and the stream stopped growing. There we were, the five of us, plus the baby, sitting on the bench and feeling the joint success of saving the shelter from the water. It turned out that the football-watching-man was a moto driver and could give me a ride home. We still waited a bit to let the rain calm further. After some time, the moto-taxi driver and I looked at each other, nodded, went up and said goodbye to the others with a hug. I still didn’t know if they knew each other before or not. However, I felt like we all knew each other for a long time, although we just had spent a few hours together. On the way home we crossed roads which became small lakes and rivers due to the rain, only now I know what a motorcycle can actually do. Afternoon at 4.30pm., finally I arrived home. I left Donomadé at 6am, normally I would have reached home around 10/11am. Nevertheless, I was home safe and sound, thankful for the help I received at the shelter, happy for the possibility to return the favour with fighting the water, happy for the enriching encounters and moments shared in the taxi, shelter and agreeing with the statement that things in Togo can take longer than you expect.



Lomé after the rain (Author’s picture).

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Title of Bachelor Thesis: A market potential assessment for pineapple, passionfruit and oil palm of the village Donomadé, Togo



Mastrinder am Grasens auf extensiven Weiden in Uruguay (eigene Aufnahme).

Recycling, ein ungelöstes Problem in Uruguay

Wie immer sammelt sich auf einer Farm Abfall an. Daher war das Ziel, den alljährlichen Gang zur Mülldeponie zu bestreiten und den Betrieb wieder aufzuräumen. Leider fiel dieses Jahr besonders viel Abfall an. In den nächsten Absätzen erzähle ich von einer Erfahrung, die ich während meines Aufenthaltes in Uruguay gemacht habe

Jan Siegenthaler, Uruguay

Für mein 6-monatiges Auslandsemester im Rahmen meines Bachelorstudiums reiste ich im April 2022 nach Uruguay. Uruguay ist ein kleiner Land in Südamerika umgeben von den beiden grossen Nachbarn Argentinien und Brasilien. Es ist bekannt für die Rindermast auf extensiven Weiden sowie der politischen Stabilität

Der Sturm

Wir befinden uns etwa im Zentrum des Landes nahe der Stadt Trinidad auf dem Familienbetrieb La Escondida. Im Dezember fegte ein Sturm mit Windböen bis 230km/h über Uruguay. Da das Land eine hügelige Topografie hat und nur wenig Bäume vorhanden sind, können solche Stürme grossen Schaden anrichten. Doch selbst Bäume hätten meiner Meinung nach nicht mehr geholfen. Das Haus sowie das Vordach von Thomas besteht aus

Sandwichpaneelen. Am Tag des grossen Sturmes sah man bereits aus der Ferne das sich etwas zusammenbraut. Blitze, Donner, Hagel, Regen und Wind alles gleichzeitig und in voller Stärke. Am nächsten Tag wurde dann der Schaden inspiziert.



Der Tag nach dem Sturm (eigene Aufnahme).

Der Sturm hat das Vordach abgerissen. Das Haus blieb zum Glück verschont, hatte jedoch einiges an Schaden erlitten.

Teile des Vordachs hat man noch in einem Kilometer Entfernung gefunden. Holzbalken von 80 kg Gewicht wurden aus der Verankerung gerissen und lagen 200 Meter vom Haus entfernt. Auch in der Stadt Trinidad hat der Sturm grossen Schaden angerichtet, mehrere Häuser wurden zerstört sowie hunderte Bäume entwurzelt

Aufräumen nach dem Sturm



Über die Zeit sammelt sich einiges an Abfall an (eigene Aufnahme).

Thomas versuchte auf der Farm sowie in der näheren Umgebung möglichst alle weggefliegenen Teile zu sammeln und zu lagern. Wir haben es ausgenutzt und alles nach möglichen Abfall durchsucht. Da Thomas noch eine kleine Wertstatt betreibt, sammelt sich natürlich auch Abfall aus den Reparaturen an. Zusammengekommen ist alles Mögliche: Sandwichpaneelle, Autobatterien, Altöl, Kraftstoff sowie einiges an Altmetall, Glas und Plastik. Alles Materialen aus wertvollen Rohstoffe zum rezyklieren. Doch dazu mehr später. Wir sind zum Nachbar und haben uns den Anhänger geliehen. Natürlich hat uns dieser auch noch einiges mitgegeben: leere Pestizidbehälter, Aluminium und so weiter. Da war der Anhänger schon halbvoll. Man hilft sich hier natürlich gerne. Zurück auf dem Hof ging das Aufladen weiter. Glücklicherweise sind die Verkehrsbestimmungen nicht so streng und der Platz auf dem Anhänger sowie dem Pickup wird möglichst ausgenutzt.



Ladung spielt keine Rolle. Was Platz hat, hat Platz (eigene Aufnahme).

Die Fahrt zur Mülldeponie

Die Fahrt zur Mülldeponie dauert ca. 1 Stunde über Kiesstrassen mit einigen Schlaglöcher zum Leid der Aufhängung des Autos. An der Mülldeponie angekommen wurden wir freundlich begrüsst und uns gesagt, wo wir alles entsorgen können. Die Kosten für die Entsorgung: Keine. Die Deponie auf den ersten Blick von aussen: Ein eingezäuntes Areal mit Wegen, Bäumen und kleinen Tümpeln. Eigentlich ein schöner Eingang. Wir fahren mit dem vollbeladenen Pickup zum Ende des Weges. Beim genaueren Hinschauen bemerkte ich das etwas nicht stimmt. Überall sieht man Reste von Plastikbehälter, Glassplitter und Altmetall. Alles überwachsen von Unkraut sowie Bäumen. Und am Ende des Weges angekommen dann die Realität:



Die Mülldeponie nahe Trinidad in Uruguay (eigene Aufnahme).

Alles wird einfach hingeworfen. Man fährt Rückwärts hin, ladet alles ab und geht wieder nachhause. Mein erster Gedanke: «Kontamination des Grundwassers, Schwermetalle im Boden und für immer verseucht». Auf der Mülldeponie wühlten Schweine im Abfall. Hunde und Vögel suchten im Abfall nach ess-

baren. An einigen Orten stieg Rauch auf. Entsorgt werden kann alles. Beim Herumlaufen sah man viele wertvolle Ressourcen, die noch weiterverwendet werden könnten. Die Stadt entsorgt zum Beispiel den gesamten Grünschnitt auf der Deponie. Eine Ressource, die kompostiert werden könnte, um wertvollen Kompost zu gewinnen. Natürlich war es mir klar, dass es nicht wie in der Schweiz funktioniert. Früher, vor meiner Zeit, wurde auch hier noch einfach alles vergraben. Und doch tat es weh dies zu sehen, da die nötigen Technologien und das Wissen vorhanden ist, wie man es anders machen könnte. Dennoch, vergraben ist günstiger. Wir luden nun den ganzen Müll dort ab und ein weiterer Gedanke während dem Abladen: «Wenigstens wird alles an einem Ort vergraben». Dann kam ein älterer Herr und fragte uns, was wir so dabei hätten.

Unsere Antwort: «Alles Mögliche von Batterien bis Altmetall». Er begann den Abfall zu durchsuchen, nahm die Autobatterien sowie die Kupferkabel mit. Auf Nachfrage erzählte er mir, dass er dies in der Stadt probiert zu verkaufen. Glas und Aluminium könne hingegen nicht verkauft werden. Auch mit diesem weniger schönen Erlebnis konnte ich wertvolle Erfahrungen und Begegnungen in Uruguay erleben. Die weiten Landschaften und das gemütliche Leben auf dem Land führen zu einer inneren Ruhe. Wieder zurück in der Schweiz fiel mir die Sauberkeit sofort wieder auf. Ich verspürte eine grosse Dankbarkeit, dass diesem Thema hier viel Bedeutung gegeben wird. Aber auch, dass es weltweit noch viel Kraft braucht, um dieses Problem in den Griff zu bekommen.

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Title of Bachelor Thesis: Pecans in Uruguay: Sustainable strategies for the farm La Escondida.



The School of Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences / Hochschule für Agrar-, Forst- und Lebensmittelwissenschaften (HAFL) is a department of Bern University of Applied Sciences (BFH). It offers Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes, conducts research and provides services in the fields of agricultural, forest and food sciences.

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