

The adventures of Nola



Nola goes Brussels

Day One

Nola's next adventure took her to Brussels. She accompanied the honours students in the Europe in the World programme on their annual visit to the European circus of Commission, Parliament and lobby groups.



Well prepared for the 'after hours' programme...on the other hand, this might be something to leave to the students. Let's see.



Where do rituals originate? In creativity, structure or just circumstance. Who knows but here's one for Nola: coffee at Starbucks to kick off a new adventure!



Brussels is really round the corner. In just over two hours Nola finds herself on the subway in Europe's capital.

The students seemed less curious about Nola, she could just hang out anywhere she wanted and nobody cared or asked questions. Just some friendly smiles as we moved from one meeting to the next.



First excursion visit:
the WWF Brussels office



Nola feels quite @home here, they even do mind mapping as in the Film as Text course, what fun!

so Lobbying for a better world



The agricultural lobbyist comes to meet the students...and 'the enemy' at his fortress. But the days of open battles between farmers and nature are far gone. Mutual interests colour the connections and a new one started here today as our speakers meet for the first time!



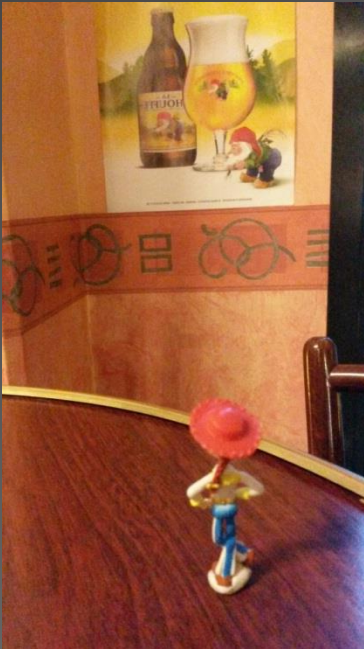
First challenge:
assemble 20 students
to go out for super
together at seven.



After walking around in
search of an affordable
restaurant that can sit 22
without reservation we end
up at Amadeo.....again!
Another ritual is born.

Day Two

Nola more easily got to know the students that were always on time: waiting for the rest.



Looks familiar.
But maybe not such a good idea at eight in the morning.



Nola likes this: journalists (Paul and Mikel) checking out the newspaper first thing in the morning.

80 European Commission
80 European caretakers



The second day is totally about the European Commission....security first in the Berlaymont building.



A little day dreaming:
Nola imagines Obama
standing there saying
something meaningful
about the EU.

Nola immediately starts checking out the media equipment while the students pose in the television studio, pretending to be in a talk show.



∞ Like



Next stop: the EC press room. Fred D'Hondt, head of EBS (Europe by Satellite) not only explains how it works with so many politicians journalists and spokes persons, - working with language and cultural differences- he also shares an interesting anecdote about a translator faced with a rude comment by a well know statesman. Unfortunately one of the cameramen was from the same country and heard what he really said 😊



The EC offers a lot of free information and footage online, good to know where everything can be found. There is so much more than ever makes the media.
Makes Nola think....about lots of things.



But after all of that there is lunch in one of the most popular places for EU employees: Exki. Healthy, eco and the place to be to meet or just observe people.
Another Brussels ritual, at least for the lectures.

Nola has found wifi and from the back of the room she was able to post her impressions on to facebook. She was not the only one online, some students reacted.



After lunch the EC train moves on to briefings on the Youth programme and Erasmus+. A topic that resonates with the students, they engage and ask good questions. For the lecturers this is an interesting topic too, especially the possibilities for funding and how everything, from exchange to 'life long learning' will be under the same umbrella: it all connect. Nola's just loves it when a plan comes together!

As Nola relaxes in some flowers over tea break, lots of students just carry on. Nola admires their perseverance, they can even come up with good questions after five when the topic is regional development: respect!

Nola was right about the students and the 'after hours' programme. So we ended up in a bar after supper. The students were totally relaxed with Nola around, in any place!



Meeting Brussels correspondents in the informal setting of a bar after supper. Bram, who knows the Brussels' scene, suggests Mort Subite. Nola feels another ritual is born!

Day Three

On day three Nola was in for a surprise. Waiting for the students, she saw someone who clearly looked like a lecturer too. And so honours from Leeuwarden and Utrecht met in a Brussels youth hostel. A good opportunity to reconnect with one of her NewOrleans friends: Renny from the NHL, who picked it up on facebook straight away: what fun!



Erik Prins from Hogeschool Leeuwarden is staying in the same hostel with his Law students.



A little easy riding to the European Parliament: the subway is by now 'going concern' for Nola and the students. And we haven't lost anyway....so far.



*Contrasting realities:
dynamic EP <-> boring media image*



Dutch press liaison officer Sanne de Rijck is our hostess at the European Parliament. She explains about the EP, the work of the MP's and the relationship with the media. The press room in the basement is impressive. So many good and accessible information and facilities, what is hindering good Euroreporting Nola wonders.

Meeting two Reuters' correspondents was a student initiative: well done and so inspiring. Just what we need in honours!

Informal talks with MP's from the Green Party and the Liberals. Some good debate on privacy and the relation between authority and individual makes Nola proud. All honours courses seem to contribute.

Nola looks back on a very good Brussels' fieldtrip. The engagement with the students was different than with the professionals in New Orleans, but it all related: meeting a fellow honours lecturer in an unusual place and reconnecting with friends from the previous adventure was an unexpected bonus to this adventure.



Work lunch on the last day. The lecturers evaluate the trip and set out lines for next year, some short term changes in the programme are discussed and Nola just wants to add that she had a great time too.



Now we can all really relax, buy some Belgian chocolates to take home and enjoy a well deserved sleep on the train back. See you next year Brussels!

so far, so good