National Final Report

Austria

WP5 Activity 6: Reporting

Contents

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Introduction

The Vienna case *Biodiversify UBB* was developed and carried out by the young environmental association *Öko Campus Wien* with support from the partner organization *Gartenpolylog*. Within Öko Campus Wien, the new campus of the University of Vienna Biology Building (UBB) was defined as the main focus area. The project engaged students, university staff, local residents, neighbours, and landowners in an urban nature restoration process developed collaboratively from November 2024 onward. The imperative form of the project title (Biodiversify UBB) shows the attempt to activate, engage and collaborate in redesigning and restoring campus sites together.

Objectives

The primary objective was to restore and increase biodiversity at natural sites located on or near the campus areas in St. Marx and Alsergrund, and to contribute to strengthening local biodiversity overall in accordance with co-creative guidelines of the project, involving as many groups as possible. Synergies have an important role in the project.

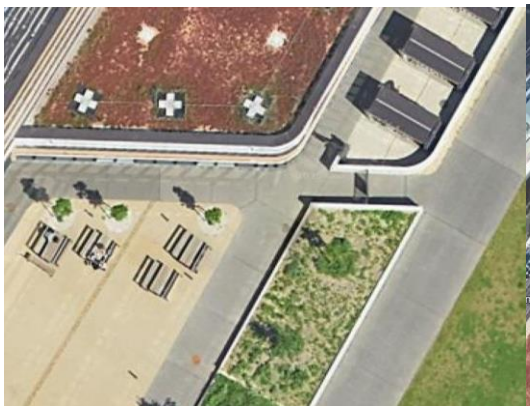
Geographic and demographic context

UBB Campus:

The Campus UBB is the main project site and as well naming the project: *Biodiversify UBB*. As many students of the team of Öko Campus Wien study Biology at the UBB the new campus complex of the University of Biology Building in St. Marx, Vienna (1030 Vienna) became a new focus of the restoration activities.

The UBB Campus itself is rather sealed and has just little green spaces included (images below). Mainly students and university members use the campus.

Closeby areas are greener and have high ecological value: urban forests, semi-arid grasslands and green spaces between housing infrastructure.



Main Campus

The second project site is the main campus of the University of Vienna and located in Alsergrund (1090 Vienna). This site has already been part of Öko Campus Wien projects

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and activities since 2021. This campus is of high ecological value with lots of yard-structured grassland habitats, that are full of wild bee habitats and semi-arid. The main campus is a huge complex and a lot of students, residents and university members use it as a learning site and public park. In this project and local case some activities have been as well taking part at the main campus area.

Initial state of urban biodiversity and green spaces

UBB Campus

The lack of green spaces at the UBB was initial for transformative hands-on biodiversity action and the project *Biodiversify UBB*. Two iNaturalist projects are documenting the local wildlife and biodiversity around the UBB, that are protected areas and part of the "Netzwerk Natur" (Vienna Species and Habitat Protection Programme) of the City of Vienna.

https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/near-ubb-wildlife

https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/ubb-wildlife

Main Campus

The main campus has rich wildlife and is as well part of the "Netzwerk Natur" (Vienna Species and Habitat Protection Programme) of the City of Vienna. Since Öko Campus Wien started a citizen science project on site, there have been more than 4000 observations made and more than 1000 species found:

www.inaturalist.org/projects/oeko-campus-wien

The conservation activities of Öko Campus Wien are ongoing since 2021. The association is trying to collaborate with various partners to strengthen and protect local biodiversity as there is a redesigning process of the University going on at the main campus` green spaces.

Key environmental challenges and opportunities identified

UBB Campus

- Lack of green spaces on the campus
- Rich biodiversity around the campus

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- Maintenance of biodiverse green space is insufficient
- New potential site for community action and hands-on restoration
- Start was already done earlier and we can take action and develop a (new) project
- Local partners could be STB Biology (student representatives) and MA22 Natural conservation department of the city of Vienna, as well as the University.

Main Campus

- Conservational activities of Öko Campus Wien since 2021 on site
- Ongoing collaborations and partnerships
- Redesigning process of the University going on at the main campus` green spaces as opportunity and challenge

Co-Creation process

a) Stakeholders

The co-creation process was anchored by Öko Camps Wien, which coordinated the open community process, facilitated community involvement, and connected local groups. The whole process was accompanied by our partner Gartenpolylog.

After a broad analysis of stakeholder and possible partners starting already at the Co-Bio meeting in Athens, we tried to build local partnerships and use synergies for the work on UBB Campus to create a network of partners. The Öko Campus Wien team itself and the leading team of Isabella Klebinger (Isa Klee /Öko Campus Wien) and Cordula Fötsch (Gartenpolylog) have been the foundation of the project success. In an early stage we reached out to the student representatives of biology (STV) and their biodiversity group and won them as partners for UBB-focused projects.

A local housing company had a crutial role in the project as they gave permission to restore a closeby site on the campus, and became a strategical partner for the whole area. Students of the University of Vienna played a central role in the whole process, as through the collaboration with STV we had a huge digital outreach via Social Media and reached a lot of students. The Faculty of Lifesciences itself was as well partner in the project and made the set up of raised beds on the UBB Campus possible; the Sustainability Office of the University of Vienna is a general strategic partner for projects on campus sites.

As part of the project a huge international gathering was taking place in Vienna in June 2026, where a lot of University Initiatives for Biodiversity came to Austria to discuss biodiversity measures, see sites that Öko Campus Wien developed and restored and is caring for. There was a lot of internation exchange, learning and social connection taking place through this 3 day meeting. The meeting was organized by Öko Campus

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Wien as a member of the network of University Initiatives for Biodiversity as part of Co-Bio as a dissemination event – this combination was very fruitful in terms of inspiration, motivation and connection and future possibilities to cocreate more biodiversity. Furter partners were: Botanical Garden of the University of Vienna, MA22 (Natural Conservation Departement of the City of Vienna), MA 49 (Forstry Departement of the City of Vienna), MA 42 (Gardening Departement of the City of Vienna), Kindergarden, ÖH Uni Wien and many partners for the HIB Network like: Edit Student Group and PUT Poznan and many more.

The complexity and multilayer-partnership structure made it possible to implement many measures in short time. Therefor taking advantage of the synergies of existing networks in combination with new partnerships have been crutial for this project.

b) Implementation

- The project design itself emerged through a participatory process within the Öko Campus Wien team. A status quo assessment and shared wishes led to selecting the new UBB Campus as a strategic location to launch the new project. Several measures were also implemented at the main campus.
- An initial meeting took place in November 2024 at the UBB Campus, including the planting of geophytes and an idea workshop with eight participants. Proposed ideas were evaluated for feasibility. Several water-related proposals were excluded due to landowner restrictions.
- Throughout winter, event dates were planned and communicated to accommodate participating students. These dates were published through the university, the student representatives (STV), and Öko Campus Wien's digital channels. Flyers were also placed prominently at the UBB entrance and on the university's information screen.
- Most meetings were held at the UBB Campus, while some interviews and focus-group sessions took place in community spaces such as the Local Agenda office. A scything workshop and a workshop with a local kindergarten were held at the main campus of the University of Vienna.
- The project followed an iterative and highly flexible approach, allowing new cooperation opportunities—such as the raised-bed initiative—to be integrated dynamically.
- A communication strategy and cooperate design have been set up for *Biodiversify UBB*.
- A mailing list was created during the first meeting to communicate schedules, project updates, and reports on biodiversity-related activities.
- Social Media has been a key for the communication of the meetings, workshops and events.

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c) Developed Solutions

Within the project *Biodiversify UBB* a series of concrete, biodiversity- and community-supporting solutions have been implemented and fostered following aspects:

Human:

- **Local collaborations** with other student groups and students, the University and residents as well as a kindergarden.
- **International collaborations** with PUT Poznan and the whole network HIB, that is as well engaging in campus activities fostering biodiversity, Europe wide.
- **Campus Network Meeting** (Co-Bio/HIB): with the support of Gartenpolylog we have been able to invite biodiversity initiatives form all over Europe to come to Vienna and share transformative and sustainable biodiversity practices.
- **Biodiversity-supporting cultural techniques:** scything has been tought in workshops and used as mowing technique
- **Integration of natural conservation** highlighting the relationship between Sicilian flora and local traditions.
- **Hands-on workshops and community learning** on scything, sustainable nature restoration, seed saving and seeding, planting actions, connecting scientific practices with traditional ecological knowledge, insect nesting infrastructures from natural materials, geophytes planting and setting up habitats such as: drystone wall and sand habitats for wild bees.
- **Community action days** involving students, local communities, neighbours and local residents and a local community garden.
- **Natural learning and testing sites for urban biodiversity:** a co-creative learning lab with peer learning.
- **Empowerment and hope**: an empowering atmosphere in the project that inspired to get active and restore nature with others.
- **Multispecies Campus**: the concept of a multispecies campus is developed by Isa Klee and Öko Campus Wien and as well got included in this project, with various formats and peer learning sessions to get into a deeper relation with nature and other species, by creating a multispecies campus and biodiverse more-than-human infrastructures.
- **Open peer learning and taxonomy** was an important part of the project as well.
- **Community building** and having breaks and snacks together.

Financial:

- **Cooperations and extra budgets:** projects like the set up of raised beds with plants in cooperation with the STV Biology (Students representatives) made it possible to access further money from the University of Vienna Students Union to implement measures to foster biodiversity.
- **Nesting boxes /swifts:** the hanging of swift boxes was as well a cooperation with the STV Biology and the University of Vienna, as well as the Bundesimmobiliengesellschaft m.b.H.

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- **Money spent on:** materials, tools, plants, substrates, raised beds, workshops and services of companies (hanging nesting boxes...)
- **Money saved by collaborations:** through the great and fruitful collaboration with the Botanical Garden we saved a lot of money and were able to reintroduce rare plant species to the project sites.

Ecological:

- **Creation of diverse habitat structures:**

  - An area of 75 squaremeters closeby the campus has been restored and diversified with different habitat types: Sand habitats, hedges and meadows, a pannonic area with open soil for wild bees and a drystone wall.

  - Invasive neophytes such as Ailanthus altissima have been removed with the City of Vienna (MA49).

  -Geophytes have been planted at various sites.

  - Three raised beds from high quality metal have been initiated and set up at the campus within the project.

  - A further already restored area has been taking care of within the project (100 squaremetres) and supplemented with nesting structures for wildbees made from native plant stems of various kind.

  - Around 60 plant species have been integrated planted or seeded in the project. Most of them survived until today and many plants have been able to establish themselves at the site.

  - Innovative nesting infrastructures for wild bees and hoverflies from natural material.

- **Conservational spirit and nature relatedness:** a major aspect of the project is the conservational spirit and the attempt to restore nature, but at the same time develop a wider understanding and nature-human-relation on a multispecies campus.

- **Edible Campus**: there have been edible native plants integrated in the project sites.
  Nesting boxes: ten nesting boxes for swifts have been installed within the project on the UBB Building.

- **Raised beds** have been implemented to green the sealed campus and attract pollinators.

- **Removal of invasive neophytes** with funghi injections took place in collaboration with the Vienna Forestry Departement (MA49) in the forests around the UBB, that are as well natural conservation areas.

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- **Citizen Science** has been included overall in the project and especially in terms of monitoring species on site with the app iNaturalist and an action day (City Nature Challenge):

https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/near-ubb-wildlife
https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/ubb-wildlife
https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/oeko-campus-wien

Material:

- **Ecological infrastructure** like tools and infrastructure to store tools for further maintenance.
- **A monitoring system** with iNaturalist.
- **Educational infrastructure** like signs about biodiversity and plant labels.
- **Digital campaign and information** as well as communication of events on Öko Campus Wien website as well as on social media (Instagram and bluesky).

These aspects together created multilayer solution framework for co-creation and biodiversity and restoration.

d) Community events and outreach

- Community events within the project on the UBB Campus have been taking place since November 2024 already and announced via website and social media.
All together there have been 20 public meetings and workshops taking place. These contained collective action days or afternoons – mainly at the Campus UBB, and further 3 workshops on the main campus of the University of Vienna, where the association is working for biodiversity since 2021 already.

- Voluntary participants (unpaid) supported with practical help and one person brought a further idea in and was even together with Isa organizing a further project with raised beds on the campus within the project. Throughout the project Biodiversify UBB other volunteers have been: walking and analyzing potential project sites, drawing and designing biodiversity measure, taking out monoculture of shrubs at the beginning, digging up the soil, implementing insect nesting structures with wood and various stems, removing invasive species, collecting waste, planting and seeding, weeding, learning from each other, watering, mowing, creating a sand habitat and building a dry stone wall for wild bees and other insects as well as setting up raised beds close to the University building.

- As part of the project a huge international gathering was taking place in Vienna in June 2026, where a lot of University Initiatives for Biodiversity came to Austria to discuss biodiversity measures, see sites that Öko Campus Wien developed and restored and is caring for. There was a lot of internation exchange, learning and social connection taking place through this three days meeting. The meeting was organized by Öko Campus Wien as a member of the network of University Initiatives for Biodiversity as part of Co-Bio as a dissemination event – this combination was very fruitful in terms of

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inspiration, motivation and connection and future possibilities to cocreate more biodiversity.

- There have been as well several informal meetings with different (potential) partners taking place to discuss the project and further activities. These partners are: Sustainability office University of Vienna, Botanical Garden of the University of Vienna, ÖSW Housing, the dekane of biology, university administration (resource management), STV Biology (student representatives) and Öko Campus Wien itself as association.

- The events all included social gatherings and break together and social elements (drinks, snacks like nuts, or bread with cream, fruits, cookies etc.) to strengthen community building and give new energy for working together.

- Communication: the communication was taking place via Instagram with a own communication design for the case, that was as well shared by the partners of the students representatives. There have been as well emails before every community action. Participants documented the event for dissemination on social media and for sharing with EU partners. A specific mailing list has been used to invite interested persons to events, workshops, gatherings and action days of the project.

Key outcomes and lessons learned

a) Environmental Impact

The project significantly enhanced local habitat types and created ecological value by reintroducing pannonic and local plant species. The ecological measures implemented are beneficial for generalists as well as for specialized pollinators and other different taxon. The raised beds are important for humans and pollinators, as they offer nectar and pollen and create a greener atmosphere for students with benches.

Furthermore the implementation of nesting boxes for swifts can help to support local populations of swifts in the area. The biodiversity area next to the cafeteria that has been restored was full of exotic shrubs before the project and now consists of various habitats such as sand habitats, open soil, hedges and edible plants and insect nesting structures with stems. With a drystone wall element, a small pit and little soil hill the new topography of the site helps to create additional diverse structures that foster biodiversity. The ongoing community-actions will take care of the sites and possibly next year initiative and realize new habitats as an outcome of the project.

b) Social Impact

The process created stronger local networks and inspired new collaborations between members of Öko Campus Wien, student associations and representatives, the university administration itself, local residents, associations, university initiatives and

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further partners and local initiatives. Students and participants as well got to know new people and make new friendships in the run of a year *Biodiversify UBB*.

The participatory and democratic approach made it interesting for students and local residents to participate and be part of the project., bring in their own ideas and have a stake in the restoration of urban surroundings of their university and living area.

Empowerment, social connections among participants, a better self confidence of participants have been some of the outstanding impacts on a social level of this project.

Synergies with existing networks have been used to disseminate the approach to restore campus sites for example within the HIB Network (University Initiatives for Biodiversity).

c) Challenges

- Permissions and negotiations have been taking a lot of time, effort and motivation in the project and weighing up the effectiveness and effort involved in the measures was a challenge.

- The project logistics and financial part was challenging, and it wasn't possible to transport materials without fossil fuel driven cars due to many small meetings and gatherings with a lot of logistic requirements and specific tools to realize the projects: specific sand for wild bees, upcycled bricks for the dry stone wall, tools transport and plant transport.

- Time was adequate to implement measures but too little to have enough time for real community work and more collective action and networking. Coordination and time management have been challenging throughout the whole project.

- Working with students made the project interesting and vivid but as well required a lot of flexibility in this project. More flexibility and time for biodiversity action would be good in further projects. (2 years time)

d) Strengths and Lessons Learned

- The main lessons learned are the importance of strong partnerships and communication as well as creating a space of comfort and trust, so that partners can come into the process of co-creation, know their role and can take the chance to transform urban sites in biodiverse areas, that are ecologically valuable and divers.
- Students are very motivated to change something by themselves and need spaces of empowerment and inspiration to make things happen, even by themselves.
- Empowerment is one of the key strengths of this project that already lead to new cooperations and projects with other University groups and members.

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- Small consequent steps lead to success, tools can break, but the community can help carry out and realize a vision, even when there are downsides or obstacles. Planning is key and a plan B can help. And never forget to celebrate success together and create even more capacity to transform sites towards more biodiversity.
- Even if there are conflicts with landowners of partners, you can reach the goal to create more biodiversity.
- Creative processes need structure and chaos.
- Participation and co-creation take time and are definitely worth it.

e) Long-term perspective

- The project sites will be further maintained and Öko Campus Wien will try to do further workshops there after the end of the project and maintain the sites efficiently. The restored area will develop over the next years and is an example of urban restoration.

- Local engagement at the site is expected to continue in the overall area and new partnerships and opportunities might arise soon, together with new projects. The case has a very positive impact of many young people`s daily lifes, in terms of living quality at the whole area but especially at the UBB Campus.

-The empowerment in the project was huge for participants and the experience to redesign the campus and surroundings gave some people hope and meaning, as well as new precious experiences with nature and likeminded people.

- Partners of this complex project might as well be partners in the future, which gives a positive international perspective on the future and the opportunity to do more projects. (Botanical Garden, STV Biologie, Gartenpolylog...)

- As part of the project there will be a future project to set up an orchard with residents and a local housing company close to the campus and further projects to maintain local biodiversity in the future.

- There is the plan to communicate the measures to inform the public and create visibility for the actions taken in the project and raise awareness for biodiversity.

Conclusion

The case that Öko Campus Wien carried out in Vienna shows how fruitful iterative and participative processes can be and how much effect self-organised, community-driven hands-on projects can have on local biodiversity and institutions such as the university. The community aspect was crutial for the success of the project. Both openness and flexibility as well as the clear structure, a participatory process and early defined aims have been important for the success of the project “Biodiversify UBB”. The co-creative process with students recreating their own campus gave hope to the participants and created a climate of perspectives and opportunities to realize own ideas: students got

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empowered by the project and initiated new projects by themselves with partner organization such as the University of Vienna. The project already effected other university groups and initiatives and created new biodiversity-collaborations for the future within University of Vienna and beyond.

Additional materials

- Supporting documentation:

Figure 1: Biodiversify UBB Social Media Image _Graphic: Isa Klee

Figure 2: Biodiversify UBB Social Media Image _Graphic: Isa Klee

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Figure 3: Campus workshop_ Credit: Isa Klee

Figure 4: Biodiversify UBB action_ Credit: Isa Klee

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Figure 5: HIB/ Co-Bio Throwback _Credit: Isa Klee

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Figure 6_ HIB/ Co-Bio Throwback _Credit: Isa Klee

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Figure 7: HIB Network/Co-Bio_Credit: Isa Klee

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Figure 8: Campus Walk: Multispecies Campus HIB Network/Co-Bio_Credit: Isa Klee

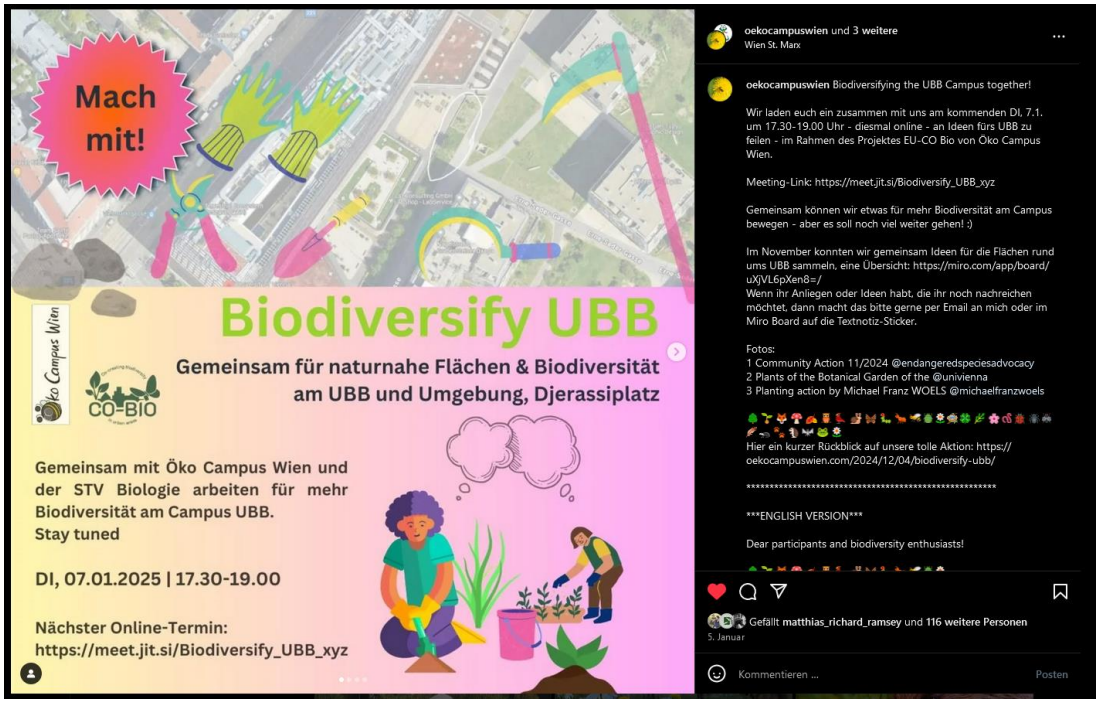

Figure 9: Biodiversify UBB Social Media Image _Graphics: Isa Klee

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Figure 10: Social media image HIB Co-Bio Network Meeting June 2025_Graphics: Isa Klee

Figure 11: Social media image scything workshop_Graphics: Isa Klee

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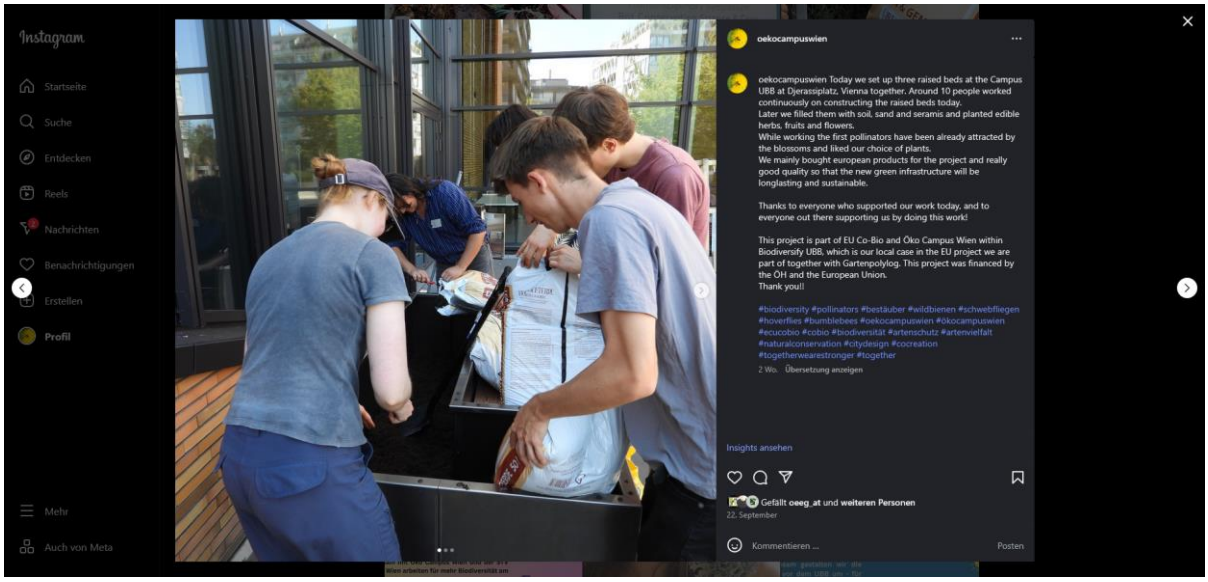

Figure 12: Set up of raised beds/ Instagram posting Credit: Isa Klee

Figure 13: First action day at UBB Campus_ Credit: Isa Klee

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Figure 14: First explorations at UBB Campus_ Credit: Isa Klee

Figure 15: Scything at the campus with the team of Öko Campus Wien

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Figure 16: HIB Co-Bio Meeting in Vienna 06/2025 Credit: Cordula Fötsch /Gartenpolylog

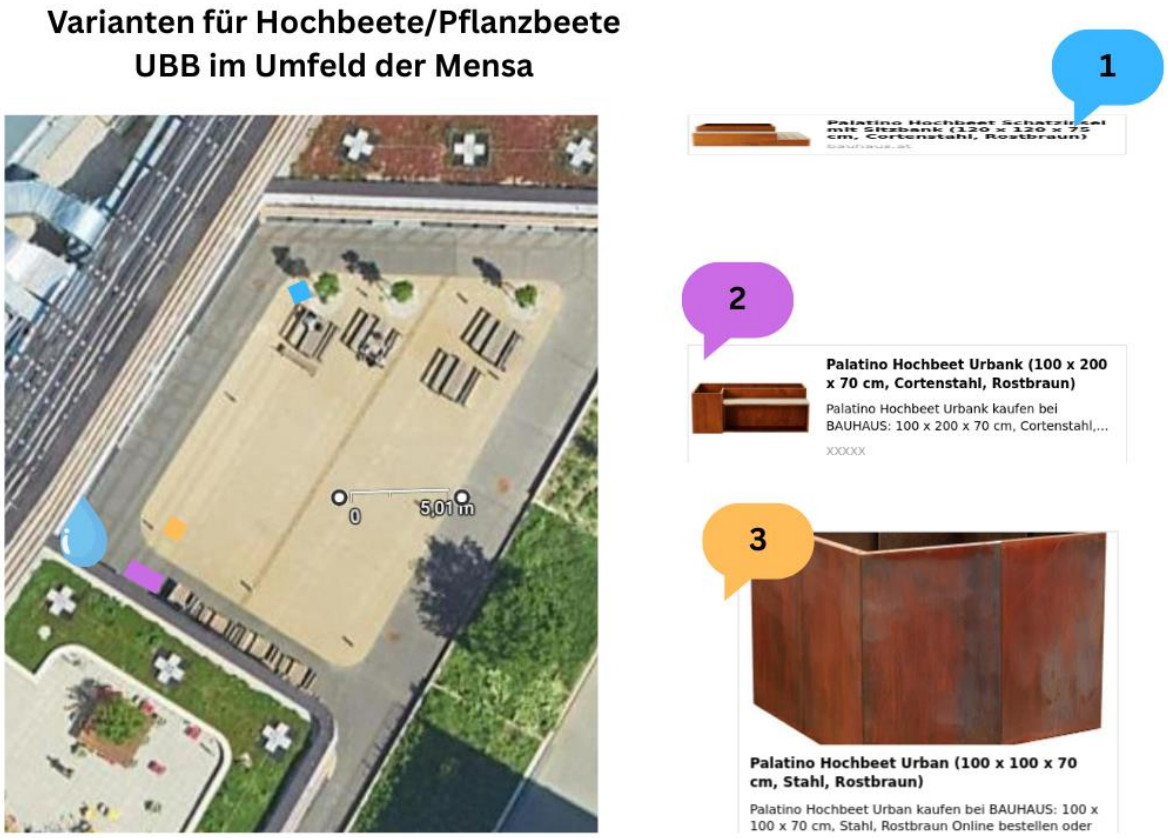

Figure 17: Plan for raised beds at the campus: Isa Klee

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Figure 18: First summary ad posting of the local Austrian case

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