

Podcast - How to Hochschule VOICES



Show transcript

Anna-Lea Koßbu

00:00:00: Stephan Hanf: A quick disclaimer: this episode of VOICES is entirely in German.

00:00:03: Stephan Hanf: So if you have any problems with the German language don't worry there is an english transcript available on our How to Hochschule blog.

00:00:11: Stephan Hanf: - Intro Music -

00:00:21: Stephan Hanf: Welcome to How to Hochschule Voices. This monthly bonus feature to the main podcast features full-length interviews, personal stories, and a collection of conversations with people from Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences, Kleve, Kamp Lintfort, and the entire Lower Rhine region. In today's episode, we meet Anna-Lea Koßbu, a student at Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences.

00:00:38: Stephan Hanf: Together with her fellow students Jule Pannen and Shirley Gander, she took over a cafe on Kavarinerstraße in Kleve. We talk to her about her inspiring story, about student life and entrepreneurship in gastronomy and at Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences.

00:00:56: Anna-Lea Koßbu: I'm Anna-Lea Koßbu, I'm [00:01:00] now 26 years old and I'm studying here in ... In the final years My bachelor's degree in sustainable tourism.

00:01:09: Stephan Hanf: exactly can you very briefly say where we are right now, because you can

00:01:11: Stephan Hanf: doesn't see it after all

00:01:12: Anna-Lea Koßbu: Yes, exactly, sorry, we are in my cafe right now, and that is the Numero drei here in Kleve, in the Kavarinerstraße, which is certainly known to many of you as the Koffie Kompanie. I have now taken over together with two colleagues to 1.4.2023, and there we sit right now in our event room and chat comfortably with each other.

00:01:37: Stephan Hanf: Exactly, it's a very large room. I was also surprised myself because I went in the front.

00:01:42: Stephan Hanf: It's really, really nice here, but before we talk about this cafe, can you tell very briefly : How did you find your way to Kleve?

00:01:50: Anna-Lea Koßbu: It's actually related to the trip, and I actually did my high school graduation in the summer of 2016 and applied [00:02:00] for an aupair job in New Zealand during my high school graduation and then I got that and then after that I just come back here and look what I'm doing with my life, and yeah, this one year in New Zealand kind of turned into three years of traveling around the world, so

00:02:20: Stephan Hanf: where have you been

00:02:21: Anna-Lea Koßbu: boah?

00:02:22: Stephan Hanf: Where have you not been?

00:02:25: Anna-Lea Koßbu: Actually I traveled quite a lot around New Zealand so really New Zealand, Samoa, then I was in Australia for a year and then America for a short while, then again Asia also for a short while and last but not least actually here in Europe a good bit, especially kind of Spain, Portugal, but then also England, Ireland, so the corner.

00:02:51: Anna-Lea Koßbu: When I returned to the small village after three years, everything seemed even smaller to me than [00:03:00] before, and I thought, well, what are you doing somehow? I always knew that I wanted to study something, but I never really knew what. And then I sat down and just googled what you could possibly do with tourism, and of course I first came across tourism management in the classic way, and I also found it quite appealing that it was mainly taught in English.

00:03:29: Anna-Lea Koßbu: But when I searched a little bit deeper or further, I came across sustainable tourism here and I was more interested in sustainable tourism than in studying it in English and that's how I ended up here in Kleve.

00:03:46: Stephan Hanf: Did you know then that Kleve was such an international university, actually?

00:03:49: Anna-Lea Koßbu: Not at all. I've never heard of Kleve before, never heard of the university. I didn't know that ... that Kleve existed exactly [00:04:00] and then I actually only really got to know the university itself and the Lower Rhine when I moved up here.

00:04:09: Stephan Hanf: Theoretically, you could also do a world tour here when you visit different WGs. That's I think, I don't know, all your countries that you've visited....

00:04:16: Anna-Lea Koßbu: Definitely! Yes.

00:04:18: Stephan Hanf: But many definitely.

00:04:19: Stephan Hanf: You weren't still waitressing on your world trip. On the side?

00:04:23: Stephan Hanf: Maybe you can talk about gastro in general, it's such a classic student job. Why is it actually like that?

00:04:29: Anna-Lea Koßbu: That's a good question. So I think that could actually be several factors, because with playing in first of all at the beginning, you don't need any training or anything, so if you have someone who takes you by the hand for a little bit, explains it to you and stuff like that, then you should actually be able to do it pretty well and secondly I think that it's also just an enormously cool job because you're just kind of with people all day and right now, okay, this is [00:05:00] more related to the cafe here, but people also come here to relax and to allow themselves a little time out from their everyday life and of course that also means that people are more relaxed and then you can have a chat here and there and just kind of chat with each other and that's just a cool atmosphere, which makes me think that relatively many people are interested in working there or working in the gastro.

00:05:26: Stephan Hanf: Back when you started working in gastro, did you also work with a lot of other students?

00:05:33: Anna-Lea Koßbu: Actually not at all. I'm actually originally from Hesse, so a whole corner away from here, small village, somewhere in no man's land between Frankfurt and

Fulda. That's exactly where I grew up, I was in a hotel, at that time, that was a small, family-run hotel, so a lot with the family itself, and they had two trainees at that time, with whom I then just a lot [00:06:00] worked together with them and other things that always came up, probably more the people who grew up in the country can relate, but if there are celebrations or birthdays or something, then people are always wanted who are somehow willing to wait tables or stand behind the bar. Or something like that, and I was always there.

00:06:23: Stephan Hanf: Was it then easy for you when you came here to Kleve to start your studies to say, okay, I want to work in gastro again or sure, Kleve is not a village now, but they say the Lower Rhine is very village-like.

00:06:37: Anna-Lea Koßbu: That's right.

00:06:38: Anna-Lea Koßbu: Janein, so I actually didn't have a concrete idea that I said to myself, Okay, here we go. I'm going to get a job at the gastro. I was actually lucky enough to stumble across an ad by chance where they were looking for waiters on the golf course here in [00:07:00] the vicinity, they took me on and then I actually worked there for two years and then, um, yeah, sorry, mentioning that now, we're all sick of it.

00:07:12: Anna-Lea Koßbu: But then Corona came and then everything fell asleep a bit. So sure, people then couldn't come to play anymore. A service was simply no longer needed to the extent that it had always been before. And then I actually thought, okay, I've had enough with gastronomy, so it's, it's an incredibly cool job and all, but somehow always being friendly to your customers, somehow communicating with people all day. It gives you an incredible amount, but it can also draw strength. And after the two years on the golf course I was actually in such a core point where I thought so, nah, now I'd rather [00:08:00] first do something standard in the office or something and that's what I did and pretty quickly realized that I'm not. So I need that, I have to be in contact with people, I have to be on my feet all day and run back and forth, and how often do I come home in the evening and my feet hurt, but it doesn't matter, because it's fun, and I think for gastronomy you have to be made a bit.

00:08:24: Stephan Hanf: After you had an office job, that was probably when Corona was over again.

00:08:30: Anna-Lea Koßbu: Exactly.

00:08:30: Stephan Hanf: Did you come here right away?

00:08:31: Anna-Lea Koßbu: Yes, actually flying change. I started here in January as a temp, then at the end of February a staff meeting was called, and then the then managing director announced that he simply can't continue for health reasons and that they are now looking around to see if somehow a new tenant comes into question, if anyone has desire and ambition to continue the store [00:09:00]. Yes, in the first moment I thought to myself so yes,

doof gelaufen, now I must look for a new job. Then we were sitting together one day, the three of us here, and the room where we're sitting right now was packed, people were everywhere, and we just thought, it can't be that the store is closing now, that it's, people like it here, we feel super comfortable here, and if we're now even in the position where we can also give the whole thing our own touch, then it can only get even cooler, somehow, and that was then the moment where we said, so, what do we have to lose? Well, we are all still enrolled students, we have more or less finished all our courses, we are just about to finish writing our bachelor thesis, but at the same time that gives us the security. So we now had the opportunity to take over this store relatively safely, to see, can we get it done, how can we get it done and still have as a small [00:10:00] safety net our student status, and then we actually Holterdiepolter had only our own cafe, and we got the promise on March 14 that we can take over the store and from 4/1/2023 it was then ours. So we then somehow managed that in two weeks, to found a company, to take over staff, to come up with a completely new concept and to continue.

00:10:31: Stephan Hanf: So is your plan to do this full time or already?

00:10:34: Anna-Lea Koßbu: Yeah, we're also doing right now actually so, I've never been a person who's good with pajamas, I learned that really quickly here.

00:10:44: Anna-Lea Koßbu: You really underestimate what's going on in the background, so you always think yes okay, then I go to a cafe and just drink my coffee and eat my cake, but what's behind it all logistically [00:11:00], whether it's really just the personnel planning, as I said, we're all three students and then from one day to the next we went from just being students to being bosses of eight employees. So there's so much behind it that you don't really see at first glance, and those were definitely huge challenges, and I think the first two months it was very, very, very rare that we ever left the store for less than 14 or 15 hours, so you have to be willing to sacrifice sleep and you have to want to do it. If you don't feel like it, then it's not going to be anything or nothing, a little bit.

00:11:46: Stephan Hanf: You already had a little bit of armor.

00:11:49: Anna-Lea Koßbu: Exactly, yes, and StartGlocal really helped me a lot back then. I was part of Batch 3 [00:12:00] of the StartGlocal Academy back then. I pursued my idea of "Stay All Eco", a booking platform for sustainable accommodations, and apparently I did that okay, so that I actually won the academy in the end and in the course of this academy you really got these basic, basic, basic cornerstones, so now in retrospect I know that they were really the most necessary basic cornerstones, but that's when you heard about everything for the first time. You were able to get a taste of everything somewhere, whether it was how the hell do I even start a company in Germany or what do I have to consider in terms of marketing? Or how do I calculate anything in general? What are the general points to consider for any kind of foundation? What do I have to look for, who can possibly help me [00:13:00] with various things? The question alone: what kind of company do I want to set up if I'm somehow privately involved in it? Should that, that be a pure corporation. Where do I go, with it in such a way and alone to know, even if one could take then perhaps not even the whole knowledge of the Academy or something, one knew to the luck at least everything is

clear. There is again this instance at the university, which can help one with so questions just further, for which I am incredibly grateful.

00:13:35: Stephan Hanf: So what are some of the biggest changes you guys want to make?

00:13:37: Anna-Lea Koßbu: So we also offer events now, so if you say we would like to have a birthday party here somehow or actually, we also have the beautiful registry office here, right next door, so really from birthday parties, christenings to weddings, the venues are available here. And [00:14:00] two very, very, very big changes that we have already introduced is that we have Monday as a day off, but we are now open on Sundays for brunch. This is now also very well received.

00:14:14: Anna-Lea Koßbu: And another huge change, which probably most of the studies are just happy about, is that we have open end on Friday and Saturday night, with full bar operation, so that you can really get cocktails and all kinds of things here and also at a fair price.

00:14:35: Stephan Hanf: Did your studies help you a little bit, to think more about these things?

00:14:40: Anna-Lea Koßbu: Yes, alone what the question is, so the customer Journeys concerns, that is now what very sustainable tourism lastiges, but to really just think about it, what do the customers expect when they come here, because the customers come here not only decisive for their cup of coffee. We have our [00:15:00] standard mommies who are always here with their little kids, so really young families, all the students, but then also old-established Klever people who come here and know, they just get a super delicious coffee and a cool piece of cake to go with it and that's, that's really nice, you walk through this store sometimes and you kind of hear like five different languages and everybody's together and we want to have a nice experience here and by ourselves, that we have now designed our event space so nice and cozy or even the outdoor area had increased enormously, so when we started, or when we took over directly from the Koffie company, the coffee operation there were four tables with seven chairs outside and alone that we have now purchased the complete outdoor seating and such I think that are already great and good changes.

00:15:56: Stephan Hanf: All three of them study at Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences!

00:15:58: Anna-Lea Koßbu: Exactly.

00:15:58: Stephan Hanf: Can you briefly say what the [00:16:00] others are studying?

00:16:00: Anna-Lea Koßbu: Yeah sure, Shirley and Jule are both studying Bio-Science, so a completely different subject area. All three of us started studying at the same time. Shirley also has years of catering experience. I think she's been working in the restaurant business since she was 16, on and off, but also continuously, and for Jule it was really the leap into the open cold sea. So, Jule had no previous contact in any way with gastronomy, which makes her a bit noticeable here in the way we have divided ourselves, so Jule has retrained as a pastry chef, so to speak, who is now always busy in the kitchen and bakes all our cakes that we offer here. Whereas Shirley and I are more involved at the front, somehow, [00:17:00] actually take on more of this waitress work, and the three of us do everything that kind of comes up in the office.

00:17:08: Stephan Hanf: What advice would you give to other students who might be considering taking a similar entrepreneurial risk , i.e. starting up?

00:17:17: Anna-Lea Koßbu: Yes.

00:17:17: Stephan Hanf: Like you!

00:17:18: Anna-Lea Koßbu: Is it so individual, so purely out of the gut I would say try it, because what is the worst case? Yes god, it, it doesn't work, dumb luck. In the worst case you have lost some money. At some point you have a job again where the money comes back in and you have the experience one way or another, nobody takes it away then, so if it's in, a foreseeable or a small risk, then I would say do it, just do it, so don't think about it so much and I, God, I definitely know now [00:18:00] from my own experience how daunting German bureaucracy is, but in the end it's not as wild as you think and I think if you ask for help you'll get the help and do it! Don't think about it so much. Just try it out, try it out and do it if it goes wrong, you have learned something and why does one way have to be the right way and the other a wrong way. Everyone goes his own way and no idea, maybe you look back in 20 years and think so wow, that was a stupid decision or you just think in 20 years so yeah cool, one of the best decisions of my life. Like this. The business went bankrupt maybe five years later, but I had a mega time Just try and try to stay more with yourself and not always just listen to what others say and think. Such a chance or a chance you may not get again and just because I [00:19:00] now just put my focus on the cafe, that does not mean that I do not finish my studies or something and just for such cases there's also leave semester or you just take this time off and I always have the feeling that many people then equate this with Oh, she breaks off your studies or ah God, if you are now once working, then it will not be finished anyway, yes why not? So, if, I've made up my mind that I'm going to finish my studies and whether I do it a year earlier or later is of no interest to anyone ten years from now, but I've just now been given this chance to take over this store, so I'm taking advantage of this opportunity and yes, I'm now in the happy position that I say I just have to write my bachelor's thesis in quotation marks, but I still think, or I know, that I would have done it the same way if I had only been in the fourth or [00:20:00] third semester, so I think that's just a personality trait, probably also, or also a bit of attitude towards life.

00:20:10: Stephan Hanf: Will the cafe play a role like in your bachelor thesis?

00:20:12: Anna-Lea Koßbu: Probably so.

00:20:13: Stephan Hanf: So you don't know what yet, do you?

00:20:15: Anna-Lea Koßbu: I actually had a conversation circa. Two hours ago with dear Mr. Reiser, and I think we decided that I will write my bachelor thesis in some way, no idea yet what it will look like, but about coffee tourism.

00:20:34: Stephan Hanf: Okay!

00:20:35: Anna-Lea Koßbu: Exactly.

00:20:36: Stephan Hanf: So there is a connection then after all.

00:20:38: Anna-Lea Koßbu: Yes!

00:20:38: Stephan Hanf: Yes, that's great.

00:20:39: Anna-Lea Koßbu: Yes.

00:20:40: Stephan Hanf: For people who want to work in the restaurant industry, students, but maybe in general people who are going to hear this, what would be some advice that you would give?

00:20:51: Anna-Lea Koßbu: Just go for it. Gastro doesn't thrive on writing [00:21:00] the most elaborate application or something, but just really come by.

00:21:02: Anna-Lea Koßbu: And it's always helpful if you've ever had a tray in your hand so and otherwise it's really easy, you have to be open, so if I somehow have a problem with approaching people, talking to people, then sorry, but is gastro not for you, but if you have fun there, somehow communicate with people, is a bit on your toes, then now not just related to our cafe, but in general I would always suggest, just go by, talk to people, ask directly. Hey, are you looking for someone right now? I think that's pretty, pretty important in the gastro, just to be open and direct, exactly.

00:21:44: Stephan Hanf: Are you actively looking for people?

00:21:45: Anna-Lea Koßbu: Yes, yes, we do but under the condition of wanting to work as a working student, so not just temps, but we're actually looking for people [00:22:00] who work between 35 hours.

00:22:04: Stephan Hanf: Who would be eligible to work here as a plant?

00:22:07: Anna-Lea Koßbu: All students, so what you have to fulfill to be a working student is to be enrolled as a student somehow.

00:22:16: Stephan Hanf: Okay, but he's specifically looking for people now, I don't know. What could fit? Taxation and Law for example. Who will help you with the taxes, or....

00:22:26: Anna-Lea Koßbu: Then maybe not with the taxes, but if the person has had enough of sinking his head into the books all day, then this person is also welcome here and if he is up for it, to communicate a bit with the people here and to actively participate in the daily business. Always here with it, welcome![00:23:00]

00:23:01: Stephan Hanf: Thank you very much for listening. We appreciate any feedback and are always open to suggestions for improvement. You can reach us directly at podcast@hsrw.eu in the show notes you will find links and more information about today's topics and guests. My name Stephan Hanf, Thanks for listening, see you next time! Bye.