

Report on the European Geosciences Union General Assembly 2008
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The European Geosciences Union (EGU) held its General Assembly (GA) in Vienna, Austria between 13 and 18 April 2008. Every year it brings together scientists from all over the world into one meeting covering the wide variety of geosciences from the core of the Earth to the fringes of the solar system. Especially for young scientists the EGU GA provides an excellent forum to present our work and discuss our ideas with experts from outside our usually narrow disciplines. As year 2008 is an International Year of Planet Earth, this year's meeting was attended by an enormous number of around 12,000 participants.

I am deeply thankful to the Geochemistry Group for their kind financial support to attend the meeting. It was the second time I had a chance to take part in such a big conference, and the first time to attend the meeting covering most of the disciplines dealing with the geophysical part of the Earth System.

It is impossible to name all the excellent researchers who I had a chance to listen to presenting their results. Every day between 8:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m. 5 sessions were held in each of the 37 conference rooms in Austria Center Vienna. In addition numerous talks, workshops and meetings were held during the lunch breaks (luckily sandwiches, nibbles and bevereges were provided) and after the evening sessions. It took me the best part of the day before departure from Norwich to prepare the draft schedule which I planned to follow during the meeting. It is good to have a plan but sticking to it during such an event is a different story. After a day running from one room to another in order to follow my schedule and attend all the very interesting and important talks I earlier selected, I realised that the task was a bit overwhelming. I have changed strategy and stayed in one (two at most) room per session.

I have attended Ocean Sciences Division (OSD) business meeting where various issues were openly discussed by the Division members. This open business meeting was convened by Monika Rhein, OSD President and was briefly visited by Gerald Ganssen the EGU President. It gave an unusual insight into the EGU structure and also made me realise that even as a young researcher I have an opportunity to express my opinion concerning current issues such as internal funding, organization of the 2009 GA or design and content of the division's web site.

I have attended several Medal Lectures, most of which were outstanding talks given by extremely well established (within and "around" their disciplines) senior scientists. Only a few were vaguely related to my work, but that was an excellent overview of what has been happening within those disciplines over the last decade or so.

My own presentation “Near-real time maps of the air to sea CO₂ flux in the North Atlantic” attracted moderate attention of those interested in biogeochemistry and/or ocean sciences. I have presented results of my PhD project. The aim of this project (2006-2008) is to better model, document and understand the flux of atmospheric carbon dioxide from the atmosphere into the oceans, particularly to the North Atlantic. The direction and magnitude of the air-sea CO₂ transfer is mainly regulated by surface water partial pressure of CO₂ (pCO₂), due to its great temporal and spatial variability. The magnitude and variability of the CO₂ sink in the North Atlantic is a subject of controversy mainly due to the lack of in situ observations covering the entire basin for prolonged period of time. I combine in situ measurements with satellite data and model outputs. My attempt is to map the oceanic pCO₂ at a monthly and seasonal timescales. As a method I have chosen a neural network technique which is a new approach within the field.

EGU GA has presented the unique chance to communicate my research to high profile oceanographers, biogeochemists and modelers. It has also been a stand-alone opportunity to meet most of my peers in one location. This gave me (as an early stage researcher) a chance to initiate or in some cases to enhance contacts with scientists, collaboration with whom I consider important in context of further development of my career.