

4TH NEW ENGLAND BIOLABS WORKSHOP ON BIOLOGICAL DNA MODIFICATION  
INNSBRUCK - IGLS (AUSTRIA), 2 TO 7 SEPTEMBER 1997

**Organizer:**  
**Dr. Wilhelm Guschlbauer**

**Igls, 3. September 1997, 8h45**

Dear friends and colleagues,

I take the liberty to welcome all participants at the 4th NEB workshop here in Igls. I am very happy to have so many people here to exchange their experience. I hope you shall enjoy your stay in Tyrol.



You find yourself in the very heart of Europe: the lines Oslo - Palermo, Edinburgh - Athens, (Plymouth) Paris - Beograd (Varna), Moscow - Lisbon, Vilnius - Malaga all cross in or very close to Innsbruck, on a very old trade-road between North and South, East and West. Trade and commerce, agriculture and mining were the base of the prosperity of this beautiful country. Perhaps the oldest dressed human being, "Ötzi", was found in the Ötztal, at the Tyrolian-Italian border and had fallen into a glacier's crevice some 5700 years ago. He is now in a deep-freeze in Innsbruck and is getting looked at by anthropologists and palentologists.

Tyrol is a rather odd country. It is the only place in Europe (and probably in the world) where slavery and serfdom have never existed - except during the Roman occupation. It is the country where the local assembly, the "Landtag", had already at the end of the Middle Age equal representation not only of the nobles and the clergy, but also of the burghers and peasants.

When the county of Tyrol came to the Habsburg family (in the 15th century), they moved the residence from Meran to Innsbruck. There always has been an antagonism with Vienna - after all Innsbruck was the residency of one of the most brilliant of the Habsburg emperors, Maximilian I, and thus the capital of the Holy Roman Empire long before Vienna (after Prague and Madrid) became the capital. Tyrolians are therefore proud, loyal, fiercely independent and quite conservative - and rightly so.

The fierce independence and loyalty of the Tyrolians found its apogee during the Napoleonic wars: Napoleon had given Tyrol to Bavaria in 1806 which resulted in the uprising in 1809 by Andreas Hofer, Speckbacher and their peasant friends against the French-Bavarian invaders and was crowned by the victory of the rag-tag army against Napoleon's troops at the battle of Berg Isel, just below here, where the Olympic ski jumping podest is today. Only after treason, Hofer was caught and later executed in Mantova.

In April 1945 American troops who had fought for months from Anzio to the Brenner across Italy, rolled down into Innsbruck without firing a shot, finding the city decked out with Austrian and American flags: Karl Gruber (the first Minister of Foreign Affairs of the New Republic) and his friends had deposed and incarcerated the local Gauleiter a week before.

Maximilian I built among other things the "Goldene Dachl" (the golden roof), a building in the center of the old town of Innsbruck, which you find on your badges and the Abstract book (which my wife Marie-Pierre has drawn for the workshop with the NEB butterfly settling on the "Goldene Dachl"). You should also see the "Schwarzen Mander" (Black men) in the Hofkirche, more than life-size statues of Kings, Great men and ancestors of Maximilian.

After this short history lesson, I would like to give you a few practical details. I shall intervene before some sessions, if necessary:

1) I have a little office here at the entrance in the Congress Center. With many people I have money questions to clear. If I don't organize this a bit, it shall be total chaos. Therefore there are three lists with a time table up at the entrance which I ask you to respect for rendez-vous in the afternoons.

2) Two **further lists** for signing up are on a table in the entrance hall: one for the **excursion** on Sunday which shall cost you about öS 150; we shall have lunch on an individually in a country inn in a village in the Ötztal, but we have to tell people how many are coming; the other list is to know how many people and which accompanying persons shall participate at the final **Farewell dinner** on Saturday evening here in the Congress Center. For the participants of the workshop the Farewell dinner is evidently free of charge. A contribution of öS 250 (including drinks, like Grand Cru wine from Saint Emilion) shall be asked for each accompanying person.

**Both lists** shall be definitive by tomorrow, **Thursday 5 P.M.**

3) I have a modem and E.Mail - Internet link on the computer in my office which you can utilize, when I don't use the computer. I have evidently to charge for the carrier charges.

4) Everybody is "colour coded". You all have white badges, the accompanying persons have green ones. Bernd Auer, my infatigable co-organizer without whose enthusiastic and devoted work this workshop would not have been possible, and I have red badges. Dr. Auer's two collaborators, Drs. Berghammer and Trockenbacher have blue badges. They are Tyrolians and can give you some information about Innsbruck, what to see and what and where to buy. They shall do their best to help you. Mrs. Wassermann, the other indispensable helper from the Congress Center Organisation shall be around too from time to time, but not permanently. She shall take care of any problems with hotels, transport, excursion etc. etc..

5) This is a Workshop, with "work" underlined. I ask the chairpersons to respect the rather tight time schedules of the oral sessions very carefully. I have brought a lab timer with me which I ask the chairmen to set to 18 min. to leave time for one question. There is plenty of time in the afternoons for discussion.

I was a little surprised and disappointed that not more contributions on epigenetics were sent in. If you have read the thought-provoking article by Richard Strohman in the March issue of *Nature-Biotechnology* or seen the latest issue of TIG, you know what I mean.

Finally, let me give you a short word of caution. The text on the 2nd overhead is extracted from a speech by one of the many Austrian emigré intellectuals (a special Austrian export good), Karl Popper, one of the most brilliant minds of this century. It is just a reminder of the humility necessary to do good Science.

**Overhead: Popper: Salzburger Rede 1979**

8. Jede Lösung eines Problems schafft neue, ungelöste Probleme. Diese neuen Probleme sind umso interessanter, je schwieriger das ursprüngliche Problem war und je kühner der Lösungsversuch. Je mehr wir über die Welt erfahren, je mehr wir unser Wissen vertiefen, desto bewußter, klarer und fester umrissen wird unser Wissen über das, *was wir nicht wissen*, unser Wissen über die Unwissenheit. Die Hauptquelle unserer Unwissenheit liegt darin, daß unser Wissen nur begrenzt sein kann, während unsere Unwissenheit grenzenlos ist.

**Karl R. Popper**  
**aus "Über die Quellen der Erkenntnis"**  
**Salzburger Rede, 27. 7. 1979**  
**in "Auf der Suche nach einer besseren Welt"**  
**Piper - München - Zürich**

8. Each solution of a problem creates new, unsolved problems. These new problems are that more interesting, the more difficult the original problem was and the more courageous the attempt of its solution. The more we learn about the world, the more we increase our knowledge, the more conscious, clearer and more solidly defined becomes our knowledge about what *we do not know*, our knowledge about ignorance. The main source of our ignorance resides in the fact, that our knowledge can only be limited, while our ignorance is without limits.

**Karl R. Popper**  
**from "About the sources of knowledge"**  
**Salzburg address, 27 July 1979**  
**in "In Search of a better World"**  
**Piper - München - Zürich**

I am very happy to greet Prof. Werner Arber here at this workshop who was material in persuading me to organize it. Without Prof. Arber's pioneering work, a lot of us would not be doing what we are doing now. I ask him now to chair the first session of this Workshop.

Thank you!