

Austria's Dead River: The Destruction of the Green Mur River in the City of Graz

By [Daniel Vidic](#)

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Region: [Europe](#)

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In the 1980s the Mur was the only “dead river” in Austria. It was poisoned by many different kinds of chemical wastewaters, mainly from papermills. “Drink one glass of Mur-water and you will die.”, my teacher told me and my classmates in those years.

Then chlorine bleaching was forbidden, wastewater treatment became common and the river began to recover. In the late 1990s the water quality of our river which is called “the green Mur” in the Styrian anthem became much better.

The banks of the Mur are covered by trees – a lot of them are centuries old, with much more than one meter in diameter. The green ribbon of our Mur is – like the famous clocktower – one of the most important landmarks of Graz for residents and tourists alike.

The river is flowing fast with about 200 cubic meters per second and there is even whitewater (3rd degree) in the middle of the city. In summer we have a lot of people sitting on the big stones under the old trees, enjoying the sound of the wild water or surfing in the huge standing waves or simply relaxing. A beautiful place. It's one of the things which make living in our city nice.

Now the river is in danger of being killed again – this time not by poisoning, but through ruthless corrupted politics. The green oasis of trees and the original old face of the city are scheduled to be sacrificed in order to build a river power plant.

For only a little more than 10 MW of electrical power the beautiful, historical old face of the city will be destroyed. Three big powerstations in the vicinity (all together much more than 1000 MW) are working in a very low operating grade about 30%, another newly built gas power plant was closed due to a lack of demand but nevertheless officials who seem to be densely interlaced with the building sector tried to convince the citizens of the necessity of the river power plant.

Adviser firms have done their best to prevent the whole thing from looking like corruption, but the striking disproportion between a ridiculous little yield of energy and so much destruction of century-old nature and recovery space in my hometown does not allow any other conclusion than corruption at the cost of us, the people of Graz.

On the 21st of January thousands of protesters marched in our streets, to bring around the administration. But they continue their ruthless plan of destruction. To see that happen hurts like the loss of a beloved person. Politicians use the local media to twist what we say and to suppress what we feel.



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Hobbies: Canoeing, Hanggliding (flight instructor), climbing, mountaineering

Notes

1. Youtube-Video: Mur-march (04. jan. 2017)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8S_FpeJ7JM8

2. Youtube-video 4000 marching people to save the mur

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PPKfeojHgIM>

3. Website "Save the Mur"

<http://www.rettetdiemur.at>

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