

Istanbul, Türkiye October 10, 2016 to January 31, 2017

Report on my internship at “TAK”, the workshop for urban space design

Ladies and Gentlemen!

The funding from the Erasmus programme helped me to move into a context in which users, planners and experts design together. In addition to the opportunity to try out/develop myself and my qualifications in this context, I also had time to expand my knowledge of the Turkish language. I would like to thank you very much for this support and will give you an insight into this enriching period in the following.

I had a lot planned for my internship at TAK. The plan was to work on workshops and campaigns in close exchange with the other committed people, to grow from these experiences and ultimately to set up a campaign myself. But during the course of my internship, I had to admit to myself that my radius of action was smaller than I had previously expected.

First and foremost, I was limited by language and cultural barriers, which made it difficult to work with colleagues, some of whom only spoke Turkish, and the target audience. In addition, there are generally few activities in the winter months and those involved plan and prepare the programme for the summer months ahead. Since some of the employees will be opening another location in summer 2017, personnel changes were also pending.

In response to this initial situation, I developed a new project plan with my supervisor and looked for areas of responsibility in which I could act confidently despite restrictions. For example, I was involved in the planning of an international (=English-speaking) cooperation project funded by TANDEM. In collaboration with a Spanish partner organisation, artists from Madrid and Istanbul will work with local residents to redesign rooms and areas in Istanbul in the coming months. I was jointly responsible for supporting a Spanish cooperation partner, took part in (Skype) conferences and was the main person responsible for the visual communication of the project. For this I designed logos, posters and a website.

In addition to working on this project, I was primarily involved in the promotion, communication and documentation of in-house events. For example, I designed posters and graphics for a workshop in which concrete houses for street cats were developed and built together with residents of the district. Another example would be a series of architecture workshops and lectures that I documented photographically and the results of which were presented as part of an exhibition.

As part of my internship, I also had a lot of undefined time that I was able to fill with at my own wishes. For example, I developed an entry for the “Play the City” competition, which was about looking at urban challenges arising from migration in a playful way, or developed a font based on a hand-painted wall map near the TAK. I also took part in a multi-day workshop run by the German-Turkish Youth Bridge (Deutsch-Türkische Jugendbrücke), where people from the social sector, creative people and scientists worked together to develop new methods for German-Turkish youth exchange. Besides, had I have the opportunity to look over my colleagues' shoulders and exchange ideas with people in the TAK's orbit. In this way, I learned a lot about the advantages and challenges of a flat and open organisational structure, got to know a variety of artists and

began a collaboration with a local sculptor, who taught me how to use woodcut tools while I helped him to create his portfolio.

In addition to these professional aspects of my life in Istanbul, there were many valuable personal experiences. Parallel to my stay, for example, I read a book about cultural differences in time perception, which helped me to deal with intercultural misunderstandings more confidently and to get involved with the rhythm that surrounds me. In addition, I found it very valuable to be there as a private person at a time of political tension between the German and Turkish governments. Through my contact as a German with people from Turkey, and as well as a person residing in Turkey with people arriving from Germany, I had many opportunities to promote mutual understanding.

So I am looking back on four months in which I had the opportunity to learn a lot about myself and my qualities in new contexts as part of an internship. Inspired by all kinds of cultural, linguistic and disciplinary border crossings, I am now returning to Bremen and hope that this intellectual wealth will be reflected in my projects for a long time to come.

I would like to thank you again for your financial support and would be happy to answer any questions you may have.