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Seminar: A House for Everyone: Be a Part of the mosaique!

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Project Report
MosMag – mosaique erzählt

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I. Introduction

As part of the seminar „A House for Everyone: Be a Part of the mosaïque!”, students at Leuphana University had the opportunity to develop projects in cooperation with the “mosaïque – House of Cultures”. I was part of the “MosMag”, a continuation of the “mosaïque erzählt” magazine, which was published by students of the last semester. The magazine is 82 pages long, which includes an English and a German version of the content. It is about the mosaïque and the topics that it deals with: These include, for example, interculturality, life in Lüneburg, people in Lüneburg, culture, integration and inclusion. With the magazine we wanted to present the mosaïque, give an overview over current events there and talk about related issues. We also reported about the projects of the other groups of the seminar and introduced different initiatives in Lüneburg.

Our group work was distributed evenly. Because our project was a magazine, our tasks differed a little to those of the other groups. We had one person responsible for communication concerning the magazine in general and the weekly news email, Laura, and one for coordination, Yannic. Arie was responsible for most of the English translation and editing and we also formed a layout team that did most of the design and graphics in the end. In turn, the layout team contributed not as much to the content of the magazine as the others. Apart from that, everyone had their assigned articles and was individually responsible for communication and organization concerning those. In terms of pictures, we assigned photographers for the articles individually, depending on who was available and who was experienced in photography. The parts also shifted a little during the process and everybody helped out with tasks that were due. For example, we did not have one German editor, but everybody read through the final version and made necessary adjustments.

In the beginning we met once a week to discuss our articles and whether we needed any help or advice. For those meetings one person would always write a protocol about the current state of the process and questions or problems that we needed to solve. As time went on, we did not meet as regularly anymore, because everybody had to work on their respective articles, but we still kept in touch via Facebook and shared our finished documents via Google Drive. When all the articles were finished, the layout group worked for a couple of days on the graphic design and the other group members dropped by occasionally to look at the progress and assist with possible questions concerning their articles.

I was part of the layout group, together with Cherie and Kristina, and also responsible for the “mosaïque compass”, the “women and children day” report, the “energy dance” report and the “cultural calendar” and recommendations.

II. Importance of the Project

The mosaïque – House of Cultures is a special place in Lüneburg which has a lot to offer: There people can meet in a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere, learn about and get to know one another. It provides a space for events that can inform, inspire or simply entertain. Where people just relax or make themselves useful. A place that everybody can visit and be a part of, no matter what age or what social or cultural background. Here people can offer their help and guidance and other people can get help and guidance.

Especially for people that had to leave their homes in other countries and are trying to build up an everyday-life in Lüneburg, a place like the mosaïque can be very helpful. Here they can form relationships that can help them integrate and make them feel comfortable in a new place. The mosaïque also offers the opportunity to be part of something and to make oneself useful, which creates a feeling of belonging. This feeling of community and belonging in a place, is as big a part of local integration as attaining the legal rights to seek employment, own property or acquiring citizenship are.¹ This social aspect of the process of integration is dependent on both refugees and the people already living in the host country.² Hopefully our magazine can contribute to it, by raising awareness about that topic and by spreading the word about the mosaïque.

Hanna Arendt writes in her well-known essay about the difficulties of settling in in another country as a refugee, “We refugees”: “Man is a social animal and life is not easy for him when social ties are cut off. (...) Very few individuals have the strength to conserve their own integrity if their social, political and legal status is completely confused.”³

It is important to have places where a person can feel welcome and has the opportunity to connect.

Of course, the same things are true for people who have lived in Lüneburg for a longer period of time: A place where one can make new experiences, get to know different perspectives, has the possibility to contribute to something or simply to have a cup of tea in an open environment, is an enrichment for everybody’s life.

¹ Hovil, Lucy (2014): Local Integration. The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies, Oxford, Oxford Handbooks Online. Online unter: <https://bit.ly/2vaDomM> (08.09.2018), S.2

² Crisp, Jeff (2004): The Local Integration and Local Settlement of Refugees: A Conceptual and Historical Analysis. New Issues in Refugee Research, UNHCR Working Paper No. 102. Online unter: <http://www.unhcr.org/407d3b762.pdf> (10.09.2018), S.1

³ Arendt, Hannah (1994): We Refugees. In Marc Robinson (Ed.): *Altogether Elsewhere. Writers on Exile*. Boston/London: Faber and Faber, S.116

Since the mosaïque is relatively new in Lüneburg, the magazine will hopefully be a good way to reach a lot of people, clear up possible ambiguity about the project and make them interested in coming by. Especially for somebody who cannot or does not want to use the internet, where a lot of information about the mosaïque can be found, the magazine might be helpful. Magazines also have the advantage of being tangible objects on which one can focus his or her whole attention. Print media usually consists of well thought of concepts and content, since it is limited to a specific format. This often makes it appear as a more reliable and trustworthy source than articles online. Additionally, with online media is easy to be distracted or overwhelmed by the constant overflow of new information.⁴

III. Goals of the Project

As just mentioned, the goal of our project was to inform about the mosaïque and to represent topics that relate to it, to spark people's interest and to provide thought-provoking impulses about issues that we found important. By doing that, we hoped to work towards the mosaïque's vision of a diverse and open society. We decided to distribute the magazine for free and to publish it in English and in German, so that as many people as possible will be able to read it. There will also be an online version, so that people outside of Lüneburg can have access to it as well. Our target group includes everybody: whether old or young, whether they have lived in Lüneburg all their life or just came here a couple of weeks ago.

Apart from a section that would cover the mosaïque and the events there, we also wanted to give information about the refugee crisis and talk about racism in everyday life, in connection with the "coraci - festival contre le racism" in Lüneburg.

Then we wanted to integrate the community aspect of the mosaïque by interviewing and talking to the people of Lüneburg about their lives and their associations with the mosaïque. Some of our group members had not lived in Germany for long, which brought up the idea of making an article about different people's experiences living here. We wanted to present different stories, so that the reader has the opportunity to open his or her mind to new perspectives.

Another aspect was the report about the other project groups, for which we visited the respective project days and cooperated with the other teams. As part of that, we received

⁴ Osthessen News (21.07.2015): Online vs. Print? Eine kritische Betrachtung der Onlinemedien und ihrer Werbewirksamkeit. Online unter: <https://osthessen-news.de/n11506952/online-vs-print-eine-kritische-betrachtung-der-onlinemedien-und-ihrer-werbewirksamkeit.html> (11.09.2018)

recipes from the “mosaique cooks” group and poems from the radio group, that we wanted to include at the end of the magazine, together with contributions by people outside of our team. For that we printed flyers and distributed them around the university campus and the mosaique.

We set ourselves a couple of rough deadlines, for when we wanted the table of contents to be final, when we wanted to have all the content ready to start the layout and when we wanted to have everything done to print.

IV. Project Results

Since our magazine is still to be released, we cannot yet tell whether it will have the effect that we hoped for. But apart from that, we have a finished document, a collection of pictures and articles that we made and wrote ourselves, about topics that we find important. We managed to cover all the points that we initially wanted to have in the magazine and created a layout around it that we are happy with. We did not receive many contributions through the flyers that we hung up, but with the help of the other groups, we were still able to put together a little section for poetry and stories in different languages, which is a nice addition to the magazine.

Working together as a group went well, because everybody was willing to take over responsibility and to take the project seriously. However, we did not meet most of the deadlines that we had set for ourselves, because a couple of things took longer than expected and at the beginning of the summer, other projects or exams had to be prioritized. Therefore, the process slowed down a little over the weeks that followed and we finalized the magazine in September instead of July like we had originally planned. This was only a problem because some of the content was specific to certain dates, which meant that it had to be revised.

V. Reflection

I really enjoyed the project work as well as the seminar. I think both parts complimented each other really well. The seminar provided theoretical input and information about things that we all knew about in general, but not to that extent and not in that detail. For example, the official terms and statuses by the UNHCR or the main routes of flight.

The skype interviews were also very interesting and moving. Hearing about refugee camps and the rescue missions at sea on the news, is different than having a conversation with someone who talks about it from his or her firsthand experience. This brings the troubles that so many people who are fleeing their countries have to deal with, much closer.

In my opinion, many people often feel like there is nothing they can do in the face of so many global problems. They feel like they don't have the power to change anything anyway, they get overwhelmed and distance themselves instead of taking a chance. The seminar gave us an impulse to do the opposite: to use the resources we had available and start locally with our project. We learned about the mosaïque, which was an inspiring example and had a detailed list of guidance points for the project work.

We did not follow all the suggestions that we received regarding the group work, since we felt that some of them did not fit our type of project, but we used them for general orientation, which was helpful. For example, setting deadlines and having clear milestones: Even though we did not end up meeting most of them, it was a useful guideline to focus on. It was also important to have people assigned to specific tasks, since it can happen in a big group that nobody feels responsible to deal with a problem. We did, however, work in a very democratic way. Every important decision was made together and as I mentioned before, everybody was willing to help out when needed. I find that it can be difficult to keep up specific task during a longtime project like this. For example, always writing a protocol during our meetings or that everybody sticks to their assigned role within the group. It can start to feel unnecessary after a while, but in the end, it is worth it, because it keeps the project structured. This was especially important for us, since we were a pretty big group of eight people, which was sometimes difficult to coordinate. For instance, it was a struggle at times to find a date and time for a group meeting that worked for everybody. On the other hand, there was always somebody available to cover an event or take over an assignment.

Although it did take a lot of effort, everybody in our group was committed to making a good magazine and was willing to give in their time. I think what we learned and did during that time in the seminar, also contributed to the fact that everyone was so motivated. And that we always knew about the progress of the other groups through the weekly mails, also helped us to stay focused on our own project. In general, I really enjoyed the seminar sessions and the supportive atmosphere between the groups.

In the course of the seminar, we participated in a couple of events at the mosaïque, to write about them for the magazine or to support the other project groups. This way we got to know the mosaïque even better and discovered it for ourselves. Of course, we also had to be informed and up to date in anyway, as we wanted to include as much as possible in the magazine.

I think that we all learned a lot during the process, since for most of us it was the first time doing a project like this. Therefore, there were a couple of things that we had to figure out, like the legal rights for the pictures or which printing company to use. Regarding that, we did have a problem, because we were not able to get the same discount that the previous magazine group had gotten on printing the magazine. Very fortunately, we had the opportunity to use the money that the finance group from the previous semester had acquired through cooperation partners.

For me personally it was also something new to work with the design programs we used. Luckily, Kristina and Cherie already had experience with that. Another challenge for me was the communication and organization around the articles that I was responsible for: Setting up interviews or meetings, doing research and making sure I had all the information I needed. But this was a way of learning, by getting out of my comfort zone and getting in touch with new people.

VI. Conclusion

In conclusion I am very happy about the time spend on the project and in the seminar. Not only did I learn about the situation of refugees around the world and especially about specific legal terms and official definitions, that were not clear to me before. I also had the opportunity to work on and to implement a creative and practical project, that had a meaningful goal. An important part for me was also getting to know the mosaique – House of Cultures better, which I think is a big contribution to life in Lüneburg. It is also a reminder and an example that you can be active in your community and make a difference wherever you are. That no one should feel like they don't have the power or the resources to make the world a better place. You can start small and still achieve something meaningful to you, like the projects that developed in our seminar showed.

Although we don't know how our project will be received, the process of planning it and seeing it through was already something to take away from the seminar. I now have a faint idea of how magazines are made and what needs to be thought of when producing one. It was interesting to come up and engage with the different topics we covered in the magazine. I also really enjoyed meeting the people that were connected to some of them. We got to know new ways to go about and structure a project and had the opportunity to apply them directly to our process. Although we did not manage to stick to all of them, we learned from it and now have a completed project that we are happy with and that everybody was committed to until the end, which is a good feeling and something to be proud of.

VII. Literature

Arendt, Hannah (1994): We Refugees. In Marc Robinson (Ed.): *Altogether Elsewhere. Writers on Exile*. Boston/London: Faber and Faber, S. 110-119

Crisp, Jeff (2004): The Local Integration and Local Settlement of Refugees: A Conceptual and Historical Analysis. New Issues in Refugee Research, UNHCR Working Paper No. 102. Online unter: <http://www.unhcr.org/407d3b762.pdf> (10.09.2018)

Hovil, Lucy (2014): Local Integration. The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies, Oxford, Oxford Handbooks Online. Online unter: <https://bit.ly/2vaDomM> (08.09.2018)

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VIII. Eidesstattliche Erklärung

Hiermit erkläre ich an Eides Statt, dass ich die vorliegende Arbeit selbständig und nur unter Zunahme der ausgewiesenen Hilfsmittel angefertigt habe.

Sämtliche Stellen der Arbeit, die im Wortlaut oder dem Sinn nach anderen gedruckten oder um Internet verfügbaren Werken entnommen sind, habe ich durch genaue Quellenangaben kenntlich gemacht.

Ort, Datum

Lüneburg, 15.09.18.

Unterschrift

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