

FINAL REPORT/ GLEN INTERNSHIP 2015

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Home organization: INEX-SDA, Czech Republic

Title of the Internship: Forum International des Jeunes de Quartiers populaires du Monde

Country of the Internship: Morocco

Period: September – November 2015

Host organization: Quartiers du Monde

1 Introduction

First of all I would like to introduce my motivation and intention for participation at the GLEN cycle. Subsequently I will describe the internship and the host organization.

For almost two years I worked for Centrum Dialog NGO, which deals with projects focused on development cooperation in Kenya and Guinea. I had possibility to work with not only my colleagues who have been involved in this topic for many years, but also with local coordinators. The daily communication with Adada, Charles, Florentin and others was very inspiring, eye opening and sometimes challenging. In spite of two years of full time involvement in the organization in the end of that period I still did not feel that I understand most of the context of our common cooperation. For this reason the participation in the internship and in GLEN cycle overall meant big step forward for me. I hoped it would deepen my cultural understanding. Especially at time of applying for participation in GLEN cycle I was very skeptical towards development cooperation in general and I thought the participation will at least help me to find answers to some of my questions about global interdependencies.

I was chosen to participate in the GLEN cycle which I understood as a big opportunity. The internship I was selected for was based in Morocco in Rabat-Salé and it was related to International Forum of Young People.

First of all I participated in two preparatory trainings of the GLEN cycle, which were supposed to raise our awareness about global issues and to help to reflect our position in the global structure. Both trainings made the question marks in my head even more alert.



2 Quartiers du Monde

The main purpose of my internship was to help organizing the International Forum of Young People (Forum International de Jeunes de Quartiers Populaires du Monde) initiated by association Quartiers du Monde.

Quartiers du Monde is French association which supports international solidarity and its objective is to encourage participatory governance and citizenship in the countries of global North and South through awareness of cultural respect and tolerance and through social inclusion. The local communities which are involved in the organization are based in popular districts in the countries of Latin America, Africa and Europe and they are themselves engine for the organization, they are involved in the communication with local authorities and together they try to find opportunities or alternatives for change in environment, education, labor issues and social inclusion. Another important quality is the cultural exchange and constant cooperation on international level that brings different experience and points of view together.

Head office of the organization is based in Paris as it is legally French association, however the workload of the office in Rabat is not insignificant, on the contrary the office initiates many not only local but also international events and projects. Apart from Forum International de Jeunes de Quartiers Populaires du Monde which is held every second year, the organization creates different pedagogical tools connected with not only global education, but they also focus on gender topic, the documents are available for Moroccan youth as well as within the network. They organize seminars, presentations and other participatory activities often in cooperation with other local NGOs that are involved in topics as gender, migration and social inclusion in general.

Forum International de Jeunes de Quartiers Populaires du Monde

Forum in Morocco

Forum International de Jeunes de Quartiers Populaires du Monde (FIJ) is an international event which takes place every second year in Salé, a city neighbouring Rabat. In 2015 it was its 4th edition. Salé is younger and more popular brother of Rabat, the two cities are connected by bridge. In Salé high percentage of population is unemployed and with its popular districts it creates a place full of social changes. In spite of the fact that Rabat is the capital and the administrative center of the country, it is less tourist than other big cities such as Casablanca, Fez or Marrakech. On the other hand it does not lack initiatives for active citizenship and with many social challenges it brings together different kinds of NGOs working on local, national and international level. Nevertheless events such as FIJ are rather rare and as they stress hot social topics in the conservative Moroccan society they rather attract attention of younger population. For these reasons from the first days of my

involvement in the office of Quartiers du Monde, it was clear that I will be part of something very exceptional and unique.

Local office of Quartiers du Monde in Rabat has only three employees, me and my tandem partner Raphaëla were supposed to help organizing the Forum and apart from us there was another intern from France, all together we split between ourselves different tasks connected with the organization of the event. The Forum takes place in autumn and is held for three days, however as it is quite a big international event so most of the preparations start one year in advance already.



Picture 1. Break during the Forum

The main purpose of the Forum is to bring together young people from popular districts from countries networking within Quartiers du Monde to create debate, not only on Moroccan level but also on international level. Also Quartiers du Monde cooperates with other NGOs from Morocco (CJJ, EPA, AJJ) who represent the formal. Other national and international organizations are also invited to participate. So all together a big platform of organizations creates the Forum, thus forming truly special event. The participants come with their own workshops, seminars and presentations connected with topics such as gender, social enterprises, active citizenship etc. The workshops are usually held in the form of either debate or interactive activity. What is important that the Forum is not organized for the participants from up but by the participants from down, so creating the crucial idea of cultural exchange, responsibility and awareness. Thus in the process of organizing the office

of Quartiers du Monde has representative role and it takes care about the form of the Forum rather than its content.

After the Forum, which is an event full of sharing knowledge and very intense learning process, the participants go back home and they multiply their knowledge, they may stay in touch with each other and continue on sharing. The Forum gives them new ideas of social change, which they may apply in their communities, thus making impact not only locally.

Power of young people from Salé

As it was mentioned, the Forum is held by the youth for the youth. Important part of staff in action before, during and after Forum are young people from Salé who regularly and voluntarily help organizing the event. These are usually students or young people who are involved in local communities and it is up to them to make the Forum active especially during the period around Forum. They distribute different tasks between themselves, one is responsible for contact with media, another is responsible for logistics and accommodation of the participants etc. It is honour for them to be part of such a big event, they also speak darija¹ and they know the local environment the best.

Our work

When I arrived to Rabat six weeks before the Forum started in September, the office was already in full preparation mode. There were many people involved in the organization of the event, and it was necessary to split the responsibility for different tasks between all of us, the interns and the young people from Salé. The Forum was scheduled for the dates between 23.-24.10. Our main content of the work was to take care about accommodation of the participants, logistics before, during and after Forum. Another important part of organization was to take care about all the material needed for the seminars and workshops. The main tasks were split according to language skills as none of us interns could speak darija, only French. Thus we could easily be involved in "communication with media", however we only could prepare propagation material, leaflets and others. The fact that we were not able to speak the local language was sometimes frustrating as we were not able to really approach those who were not French speaking. Another important task was to coordinate group of translators as the Forum was held in three languages due to different origin of the participants. All the workshops and seminars needed to be translated to or from French, Spanish or Darija. Apart from the main program, the Forum also offered supporting program and cultural activities, so another part of the job was to be in touch with different local music bands and artists.

¹ Darija is local language, arabic dialect spoken in Morocco



Picture 2. Workshop on social enterprises

I have never worked in different work environment than the one in Czech Republic and England, thus it was very enriching for me to see how it works within Quartiers du Monde. I had possibility to see from close distance the cooperation with local authorities which was sometime very challenging for all the team, when only a few days before the Forum the city hall in Salé was holding red card above the Forum. It was especially the communication with the authorities which for me stated the real level of democracy in Morocco. Unfortunately I could see how hard it is to even approach them in the name of this kind of international and civil initiative.

3 days of the Forum

"It does not matter where you are from, we are one..."

With more than one hundred participants who all met in Salé, the Forum was truly special event. The participants came from Brasil, Colombia, Bolivia, France, Senegal, Mali, Tunisia and Morocco. Most of them were either members of local communities within network of Quartiers du Monde or other cooperating organizations. Apart from that the Forum was also opened to public. The opening ceremony was full of press and media representatives which refers to national dimension of the event. All the three days the Forum was held in atmosphere of understanding, tolerance and humbleness I would say, so the participants could easily talk and debate on different topics such as gender, social enterprises, active citizenship or sexual harassment. The broad scale of different topics made the Forum accessible for all the visitors.

My question marks

During my stay in Rabat and especially during the period around the Forum, I had possibility not only to observe how such an event evolves, but also I could face my personal attitude towards it. At the beginning I was very skeptical towards an international event which brings together more than 50 participants from South America and Africa, for whom the organizations finds funds to come to Morocco and who fly over the ocean to participate in only three days event. How meaningful is this? Who is the right person to be financially supported within a local community? Can I support such economical and ecological behavior and what is the impact of Forum? I was not really able to understand what the output would look like and what are the advantages.

My skeptical point of view was deepening even more with all the obstacles that we as the team encountered during the preparations, which was for me very eye opening especially in cultural and social context of the event. Being in Morocco, which is mostly Muslim country with so different attitude to vast scale of social topics, it was sometimes hard for me to even express myself freely. It was probably also given by language barrier, nevertheless I felt to be very torn between being culturally tolerant or independent and free woman whose cultural perspective is based on western society values. However now, few months after the Forum took place, my impression of the Forum is actually very opposite to my earlier assumptions.



Picture 3. Workshop on gender topic: "Let's talk about love"

The atmosphere during the Forum was amazing, all participants ready to change the world, the old structures. They were opened to dialogue. It was especially interesting to observe the Moroccan participants who were free to talk about any kind of topic as for example sexual harassment is, which is usually taboo subject in Moroccan society. All of them were enthusiastic not only for their workshops they had prepared but they were also keen to take active part in workshops of others. Even though the initial plan of the Forum was changing from one minute to another due to unexpected events, everyone was very understanding. What I found especially touching was the constant vibe of enthusiasm which was according to me caused by cultural exchange. For most of the participants it was the first time they even had left their city or popular district, so it was clear they want to make some profit from it. It was constant learning from everyone's side, even from mine. I would say to see all this must make some kind of change in mindset of anyone, because the event is made those who have very limited possibilities in their lives and who really want to feel the change after their action. Also another aspect which makes the Forum special is that it is not some regular "formal" meeting financed by the UN, but Quartier du monde and the participants had to fight for its existence due to financial and social obstacles. As someone said during the final evaluations: "He did not know it was impossible so he did it".

Global education activities

During my stay in Morocco, me and my tandem partner were thinking about doing GEAs in Rabat after the Forum is finished and we will have more time. We wanted to make some impact in the local community of young people in Salé and give them our perspective on some topics. In our mind we had topics such as migration, ecological and environmental questions and especially attractive was question of gender for us. However after some discussion with our colleagues in Quartiers du Monde and after visiting the local center for migrants operated by Caritas, we decided to not take any active steps as we realized that we are not competent enough to "give some lessons". It was the time when I realized that my experience in Morocco wouldn't be easily transferable even to my family. Morocco as Arabic country is nowadays very hot topic in the context of current social development in Europe and one needs to be very careful to pick "the right way" how to describe her own personal experience and that's why I need to think deeply about my future global education activities back home.

A subject which stays in my mind is migration. Being in Morocco it was the first time I could observe migration debate from closer perspective. Morocco is the place where many emigrants from countries of Sub-Saharan Africa head and migration is very hot social topic here. That's why I would like to organize a debate, or youth exchange project on this subject.

Conclusion

After some time of reflection I can say that all the GLEN cycle was very eye opening for me, talking not only about the internship but also about all three seminars. I joined the GLEN cycle with the objective to be more tolerant and I got out of it even more critical toward the society and myself. I don't know whether it is good direction or not, nevertheless I feel I changed during this time. The internship itself helped me to understand at least a little bit the complexity of another culture, actually I can say that during my four months stay I tasted only a bit of Moroccan life, not saying life style. I still don't dare to claim that I know the country. I would say I learnt humbleness towards someone's culture and society.

My learning process was happening constantly 24 hours a day, in the office of Quartiers du Monde, in the flat during religious discussions with our flatmates Simo and Issam, when being robbed in Essaouira, in the streets of Rabat, in hammams surrounded by strong Moroccan women, during early morning talks in the bakery shop, and especially during discussions with my tandem partner Raphaela. I felt in love with Morocco, I call the country "magical", sometimes "cursed" when being sceptical. I often become emotional when talking about the Forum and its meaning, and I am happy I could be there.



Picture 4. Relaxing during the Forum