

A TEAHOUSE IN TURKEY | UNE SALON DE THÉ EN TURQUIE

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*"It was like a festival. . . we all got together and achieved something wonderful." | « C'était comme un festival... nous nous sommes réunis et avons réalisé quelque chose de merveilleux. »
... Mesut Oksuzoglu*

La mondialisation a provoqué un accroissement de la demande en diplômés capables de communiquer efficacement avec des gens de cultures et de réalités sociales différentes. En gardant cela à l'esprit, 15 étudiants de l'Université du Manitoba organisèrent un voyage d'un mois à destination de Deydinler, en Turquie, en vue de la construction d'un salon de thé et d'un jardin au sein de la collectivité du village.

Il s'agissait d'une collaboration enlevante pour les étudiants qui traversait cultures, disciplines et frontières. Ce projet s'inscrivait dans le cadre d'un cours sur la collectivité mondiale de la faculté d'architecture, qui porte sur l'apprentissage pratique et qui vise à promouvoir les compétences interculturelles. Les professeurs choisirent une équipe interdisciplinaire d'étudiants qui, malgré les défis de taille, apprit que le succès était fonction du travail *avec* la collectivité en non du travail *pour* le compte de la collectivité. Selon un villageois, « c'était comme un festival. Le fait d'avoir des étudiants a créé une synergie qui nous a permis de réaliser quelque chose de merveilleux. »

Globalization has heightened the need for graduates to learn to effectively interact with people from different cultural and social realities. With this in mind, 15 students from the University of Manitoba set off on a month-long journey to Deydinler, Turkey, to build a teahouse and garden with the village community.

The Deydinler teahouse and garden holds a special place in the history of the 400-year-old village. Traditionally open only to men, the community aspired to have a teahouse and garden that would welcome women and children. Throughout May 2007, the contingent of students would design and build the teahouse, together with three professors, volunteers from the village, a small crew of tradespeople, and a very patient contractor named Semsettin.

For the students, it was a unique and exciting opportunity and a lesson in global citizenship. The project was part of a Faculty of Architecture course, Service Learning in the Global Community, which is based on hands-on learning and is designed to promote intercultural competencies – everything from adaptability and cultural empathy to non-judgmental perceptiveness and intercultural communication. Over 40 people had applied, and the instructors selected eight undergraduate and seven graduate students from the disciplines of Architecture, Interior Design, Landscape Architecture, City Planning, and Graphic Design. The instructors wanted to build an

interdisciplinary team of students likely to thrive in a cross-cultural setting.

The students were well aware of the course objectives. "The philosophy is significantly different from traditional design studios," said student Shelagh Graham. "We are encouraged to look beyond the technical and theoretical aspects of the project to truly consider the community with whom we are designing."

PANIC SETS IN

From this side of the Atlantic, the project seemed both inspiring and exotic. But the learning curve was initially steep. To build intercultural understanding and encourage the Manitobans to develop working partnerships with the villagers, the students were billeted in the community. Several students were reluctant. Student Lauren Hauser remembers the trepidation she felt before meeting her host family. "The panic set in during the bus ride to the village. I had asked Kelley what the plan would be once we arrived assuming we would have some sort of large get-together with the host families to ease us into the new environment. No such luck. . . we were just going to be dropped off. . . after that we were on our own for the entire evening!"

Later, however, almost all identified the home-stays as an essential learning experience, and found it difficult to leave their hosts. The families became cultural guides who helped them make sense of the experience as a whole. Even the considerable

language barrier was overcome. "The language difference adds a layer of depth to the learning," said student Vanessa Aleshka, "for we were forced to be creative in how we communicated, while remaining patient with both others and ourselves."

21 DAYS IN DEYDINLER

The teahouse itself brought cultures together, as students and villagers worked toward a common goal. Since the project required high levels of interaction, it promoted the development of effective, respectful and appropriate design strategies.

At first, the task was daunting: a two-storey teahouse, terraced garden, soccer field and playground. "Our site was large, much larger than I had anticipated," said landscape architecture student Leanne Muir. It held a very prominent location in Deydinler along the main street and across from the few small businesses in the village. "It was hard to believe that this large site would soon transform into a classroom for all participants. "It was basically a small shed perched atop a hill full of years of refuge and three months of weed growth measuring over a metre tall and being too dense to walk through," said Leanne. "My main concerns were that we didn't know what types of machinery we would have access to or how the actual shaping of the land would occur. We basically had to trust that things would happen and sure enough they did, faster than we could have imagined."

Once on the construction site, friendships invariably formed, encouraging critical comparative analyses between local and global conditions. For Vanessa Aleshka, the strongest memory was working with five other students and local builders, tying rebar for two days straight. "The job was repetitive and physically engaging, and gave us an opportunity to get to know one another and share in an experience that was new for all of us." Although the students and professors learned about woodworking, bricklaying and pouring concrete, the lessons on cultural exchange are the ones that most of us still talk about.

1 THE TEAHOUSE SITE 2 VILLAGE MEETING 3 THE CHAIN GANG 4 MANSERA PARK STRINGS | 1 LE SITE DU SALON DE THÉ 2 ASSEMBLÉE DE VILLAGE 3 LA CHAÎNE HUMAINE 4 FICELLES AU PARC MANSERA
PHOTOS JOE KALTURNYK



"We basically had to trust that things would happen and sure enough they did, faster than we could have imagined." | « On devait tout simplement s'assurer que quelque chose allait arriver et, comme de raison, tout est arrivé, plus rapidement qu'on aurait pu se l'imaginer. »

... Leanne Muir

Some of the lessons were tough ones to accept. In the garden, community perceptions of beauty were at odds with standard Canadian practice. "As visitors to the Turkish culture, and specifically rural Deydinler culture, it was hard to . . . gauge the villager's perceptions," said Leanne Muir. "Our initial plant choices included many native trees and shrubs which were discarded in favour of imported Italian trees and ornamental roses."

What remains in her memory now – over a year later – was the difficulty she had in understanding the community's perception. Why did the villagers and the horticulturist prefer these species rather than celebrating what they had locally? "What I had assumed, both from my education and my rural upbringing, would be standard practice. . . was not understood at all and we did not have the communication capacity to explain the reasoning behind our choices."

Despite such significant challenges, students quickly acknowledged that the success of the project hinged on working *with* the community rather than *for* the community, something that is difficult to teach in a traditional studio environment. When I asked community member Mesut Oksuzoglu about the value of the project to Deydinler Village he responded, "It was like a festival. Having the students here created an exciting time when we all got together and achieved something wonderful."

Service learning projects such as the Deydinler tea-house provide a genuine context for architectural learning for the global community. As an educator, I believe that collaboration across cultures, disciplines and borders, contributes to a design education for the 21st century.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

The teahouse and garden known as the Deydinler-Manitoba Friendship Park, is now fully operational thanks to Deydinler Village, The University of Manitoba, Professor Karl Burkheimer (Oregon College of Arts and Crafts), Professor Leland Hill (VCU Qatar), and 15 adventurous students. The villagers simply call it Friendship Park.

5-8 THE DEYDINLER-MANITOBA FRIENDSHIP PARK TAKES SHAPE | LE PARC DE L'AMITIÉ DEYDINLER-MANITOBA PREND FORME
PHOTOS JOE KALTURNYK



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