



Bitte fügen Sie hier mindestens ein **FOTO** von Ihrem Praktikumsaufenthalt ein! Bevorzugte Motive sind Fotos der Unterkunft, des Arbeitsplatzes und Situationen bei der Arbeit. Achtung: Aus rechtlichen Gründen senden Sie uns bitte nur selbst erstellte Fotos zu!

ZUR PERSON

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|------------------------------------|--|
| Fachbereich: | Humanwissenschaften |
| Studienfach: | Peace and Conflict Studies |
| Heimathochschule: | Otto-von-Guericke-Universität Magdeburg |
| Nationalität: | Deutsch |
| Praktikumsdauer (von ... bis ...): | Mitte April bis Anfang August 2021 |

PRAKTIKUMSEINRICHTUNG

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Land: | Niederlande |
| Name der Praktikumsrichtung: | SOMO – Centre for the Research on Multinational Corporations |
| Homepage: | somo.nl |
| Adresse: | KNSM-iaan 17, 1019 LA, Amsterdam |
| Ansprechpartner: | Virginia Sandjojo |
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ERFAHRUNGSBERICHT (ca. 3 Seiten + ggf. weitere Fotos)

1) Praktikumsrichtung

Bitte beschreiben Sie kurz Ihre Praktikumsrichtung.

SOMO is the abbreviation from Stichting voor de Onderzoek en Multinationale Ondernemingen which means. Centre for the research on multinational corporations in Dutch. It is an NGO working in the field of business and human rights. SOMO has four main pillars that also make for four main teams, which are: Economic Justice, Natural Resources, Sustainable Supply Chains and Rights, Remedy and Accountability. Under these pillars people are working on a very wide array of topics such as financialization, taxes – avoidance and evasion, mailbox companies, business conglomerates, mining, destruction of ecosystems, defending human rights in violent contexts, the global garment industry, supply chain transparency, forced labour, the global tech industry, human rights due diligence and many more. They work on these topics in countries all over the world. The goal is to reveal the harmful practices of big corporations, contribute to curb their power and finally change the structure and mechanisms of the current economic system.

2) Praktikumsplatzsuche

Auf welchem Weg haben Sie Ihren Praktikumsplatz gefunden? Gibt es empfehlenswerte Links oder andere Tipps?

I knew of SOMO beforehand and that I find them interesting. Some years ago, a friend told me about SOMO and their work. Since I'm very interested in international political economy, global power hierarchies and

hands on case work, I found them interesting, too. I got to know that SOMO was publishing vacancies and therefore checked their website repeatedly. I can recommend the Oneworld jobboard where the big majority of non-profit organisations in the Netherlands publish their vacancies. When I discovered they had a vacancy for another job, I formally applied and was lucky that they liked my profile. In the end, I did not get the internship position I applied for, but another one that was even closer to what I am interested in.

3) Vorbereitung

Wie haben Sie sich auf das Praktikum vorbereitet (sprachlich, interkulturell, fachlich, organisatorisch etc.)? Gibt es empfehlenswerte Links oder andere Tipps?

Since I knew that I would be working on garment and leather supply chains I read a couple of academic and nonacademic articles on these issues and tried to understand what current discussions are about. Equally, I checked information in German and English on the Netherlands for tourists and people who would go there to work. I was lucky and could borrow a bike from a flatmate in Amsterdam, but normally how to get a bike and how public transport functions are good things to check in advance.

4) Unterkunft

Wie haben Sie Ihre Unterkunft gefunden? Gibt es empfehlenswerte Links oder andere Tipps?

There is one main place to look for places to live for students in the Netherlands: Facebookgroups. Good places are „Amsterdam rent a room, apartment or studio“, „Kamer Gezocht/Aangeboden in Amsterdam“, „Amsterdam Rooms & Roommates | Quoloc.com“. The are all quite big and there is lots of movement but this definately helps to get an idea how to get a room in a city that faces a severe housing crisis for years. Fortunately, I got a recommendation from a friend that helped me to actually find the room where I was finally staying. The website is <https://nl.woongroep.net/en> and it is for people who look for actually shared flats– and not just using the same kitchen - like the German „Wohngemeinschaft“.

5) Praktikum

Bitte beschreiben Sie die während Ihres Praktikums bearbeiteten Aufgaben und/oder Projekte. Wie erfolgte die Betreuung und Integration? Wie waren die Arbeitsbedingungen? Gab es besonders positive oder auch negative Erfahrungen?

During my internship I worked on a wide variety of topics with a focus on the project on the leather industry in South Asia „Together for Decent Leather“. Other topics were: Factory disasters in the global garment industry like the Ali factory fire or the Rana Plaza collapse, social sustainable public procurement in member states of the European Union, the media in Myanmar and garment workers' use of social networks to express grievances in the country, garment production hubs in China and forced labour as well as specifics about the leather sector in our three project countries Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. Since SOMO is a research organization, my main task was to look for specific information on these topics. This meant in some occasions to first check if there was actually any information available. Outside of paywalls you can only find little information about a certain company when they themselves stated it or when someone else published it. For research it also makes a big difference if a country has a statistical division that publishes recent data e.g. on imports and exports of certain sectors or not. The latter is obviously much messier since I would then try to get the numbers from other places drawing from different sources like reports from the Asian Development Bank or some UN body. In the context of the Decent Leather project I also supported the organisation of the consortium by scheduling and facilitating video calls and writing minutes.

As part of the Decent Leather team, I had four direct team colleagues and seven colleagues in the bigger Sustainable Supply Chains team, one of the four main teams at SOMO. We had weekly Decent Leather calls to discuss the recent development of the project, plan the next meeting, de-brief the last meeting or else. We met with Sustainably Supply chains bi-weekly and with members or the whole consortium every three to five weeks. In addition there was a weekly stand-up at SOMO where organisation news are spread and discussed and people present their latest research results.

Since my internship supervisors were both also part of the Decent Leather team we had a rather close working relationship where we often talked about what was going on in SOMO and about personal issues.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic I could not go to the SOMO office in downtown Amsterdam often. In addition to that, SOMO's rental agreement for the officebuilding was ending after five years. The owner wanted to renovate the whole building, make small apartments out of it and earn a lot of money from the rents and therefore did not renew the contract. So, the whole organisation had to leave the old office by end of June. Since there were still changes to be made in the new office building, I had to work from home almost completely for the last four weeks of my internship. For me, this meant an additional hurdle to meet colleagues, as there were now even fewer opportunities to meet in person.

All in all I would say that I really missed the real life encounters with other people from SOMO during my internship. The few chances where I could meet them, I realized how insightful, interesting and important those lunch, coffee break and in-between meetings are for a good work atmosphere but also to get an idea what other people are actually working on and thinking about when at work.

One thing I really enjoyed during my internship was the strategy process SOMO did while I was there. In the NGO world, a strategy is a paper in which you present what you want to do in the next couple of years. A five year time span is very common here. But it is not only what you want to focus on but also why you want to focus on these things now and how this is influenced by the world around you. Based on this strategy SOMO can make short time (e.g. 1 year) plans on what they actually want to do during that time span and see after this time, how far they got and what needs to be adjusted to come forward within their strategy.

Afar from this purpose of good planning and structure, this document will be used to show donors what SOMO stands for and wants to achieve. The background is that donor organizations seem to be willing to give larger amounts of money if they are convinced of an organization's vision. The money would then go to the organization for the realization of that vision. This is in direct contrast to project-oriented fundraising, which is and can always be a cumbersome and frustrating process because there are obviously various constraints associated with it. For example, money cannot simply be reallocated between projects when there is an unexpected need elsewhere because the donation contracts do not allow for such things.

To me, this whole process was very interesting since I got hands on impressions how an organisation actually feels, behaves and reacts in such a process with all its resistances, questions, repetitions and a spreading agreement in the course.

6) Erworbene Qualifikationen

Welche Qualifikationen und Fähigkeiten haben Sie während des Praktikums erworben bzw. verbessert?

Something I learned newly but trained a lot at the same time is how to do internet research effectively. This is a crucial skill in the world of practical research and investigative journalism. I learned this actually at a seminar by an NGO who is supporting investigative journalists. Connected with that is a learning curve with garment companies in Europe and their set of vocabulary to present themselves. I figured that it is crucial to know which language brands are using to find information I am looking for. Under terms like „sustainability“, „responsibility“ or „ethics“ brands can sometimes mean very similar, somewhat alike or very different things. Also, I think I improved my organisation skills and the use of a variety of digital tools.

Of course there is a big pack of knowledge I gained regarding the global garment and leather industry. I understood supply chains better but also their complexity. It was very important to me to learn about the lives of leather workers in South Asia because in all the research it gets easily lost that all the production is in fact done by someone eight to twelve hours per day, often six days a week. Lastly, it was great to learn more about Myanmar in the context of my internship and what NGOs around the world are actually trying to do to support people in the country currently.

From the soft skill perspective, I improved my ability to communicate and cooperate in diverse teams and on different tasks. I learned a lot about the „workplace culture“ even if lots of it was only digital. This concerns e.g. the micro management of hierarchical relationships. Last but not least, my English got better over the course of the internship.

7) Landesspezifische Besonderheiten

Gibt es im Zielland besondere Bestimmungen für Praktika, die für Sie relevant waren (z.B. Wohngeld, Convention de Stage)? Wenn ja, welche? Gibt es empfehlenswerte Links oder andere Tipps?

Since I did not hear anything about such financial support structures in the Netherlands, I did not look into this further. However, it may well be that there is something I have overlooked.

8) Visum, Arbeits- und Aufenthaltserlaubnis (nur für internationale Studierende)

Welche Vorbereitungen mussten Sie in Bezug auf Visum, Arbeits- und Aufenthaltserlaubnis treffen? Gibt es empfehlenswerte Links oder andere Tipps?

Since I am a citizen of the European Union, I did not need any special permission for the internship

9) Sonstiges

Gibt es noch etwas, das Sie anderen Studierenden mitteilen möchten?

Two tips:

1) Do try to get as much out of your internship as you can! Go to colleagues, tell them what you are actually looking for in a job, a workplace, etc. and ask them where to find that. Ask them all your questions, if they cannot answer, ask who else you could turn to to find out what you want to know. Do ask very basic questions and do not think you have to know much beforehand. In fact, the question „What do you think, what I would have to do, to get employed at this organisation [your internship organisation]?“ can be very enlightening. This can be done at social events with colleagues, but also at work. People are often happy to meet over a coffee and tell something about their experiences if someone is honestly interested.

2) Invest some time to understand networks and a certain „scene“, like progressive non-profit organisations in Amsterdam and Europe in my case. In most cases certain things are not only done at one specific organisation, company, department but there are several who do kinda the same things from different perspectives. Also, ask people at your workplace for similarities and differences with other organisations, companies, departments, they will probably know.

10) Fazit

Wie lautet das Fazit zu Ihrem Erasmus-Praktikum?

I am very happy that I took the chance to do this internship in Amsterdam during these difficult times even if it was mostly remote. I had a great time and really enjoyed being at SOMO. The biggest downside was the lack of office time and related experiences, but unfortunately this could not be changed in time of a global pandemic. In sum, I can only recommend an internship abroad as it can be a great cultural, intellectual and social experience.

Einverständniserklärung:

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