My internship in Amsterdam

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Thanks to the CEMS MIM Program I had the chance to do a 3 month internship abroad this summer. Going to Amsterdam was probably the best decision I could have made! The city is amazing, dutch people are very friendly, and there are great job opportunities in the country.

Moving to Amsterdam

The best option is flying from Budapest to Eindhoven, because it can be half the price of flying to Amsterdam. (Vienna-Amsterdam can be great too sometimes) The train ticket from Eindhoven is not cheap (20EUR) but with a little trick it can be reduced to 7,5. If you join a Facebook group called NS Train tickets you can team up with 9 other people and buy a group ticket for reduced price.

It is important to save on the travel, because living in Amsterdam is extremely expensive. Housing costs around 500-700 euros on average, and it is extremely hard to find a good place.

There are so many people looking for accommodation in several Facebook groups, with so many scammers (seriously, there are a looot of them) that it can be a very depressing and long process. I lived in the East side of the city which was great, and I can highly recommend that part of the city, but there are other nice areas as well.

Dutch culture

In general I really like dutch people, because they are usually very happy people therefore they are nice with others. They can be really direct too, especially at a workplace, which might seem a bit rude time to time, but at least they are always honest and clear about their opinion. They all speak great English regardless of their age, which makes it really easy to live there as a foreigner.

The most dangerous thing about living in the Netherlands has to be the biking culture. The amount of people on bikes is unbelievable, and the bikers in Amsterdam are extremely aggressive. They are not going to stop just because the light is red, or a car or pedestrian is in front of them. As frightening it is to bike in Amsterdam it is the only cheap option to transport yourself in the city, because public transportation is ridiculously expensive even with an OV
Chipcard. You are still going to need one of those if you would like to visit other cities, but it is definitely not affordable to take the train twice a day.

**Working at a start-up**

The Netherlands has tons of new, innovative companies and therefore there is a big need for start-up accelerators. I worked at an accelerator that was founded recently, called ScaleUpNation. As the company is still very young, the organisation is quite chaotic I must say. The roles and tasks are changing rapidly, and it is hard as an intern to figure out the norms when even more senior people haven’t necessarily found out their roles and responsibilities. This was quite challenging in the beginning, because my supervisor was clearly not ready to be responsible for me, let alone mentor me. The project I was hired for was not thought out well, the team had no ideal deadline or major goals in their head.

So after a few weeks of frustration I started to look for different projects I could be involved in, because I was motivated to see and learn as much as possible. At first many of my colleagues said I can’t really help them, but soon they started to give me small tasks and after a while it became natural for them to ask me to help out. The learning point in this situation for me was not to accept silently if my supervisor doesn’t give me enough tasks, but speak up. I think there is always someone around you in a team who would be happy if you could take a few tasks of his shoulder. I think what I experienced is really typical with start-ups: the whole company is still shaping, so you can’t expect best practices telling you what you should do. It takes time and patience until things clear out, but this chaos also holds learning opportunities in it. Since there was no prior structure of how things work, I had to fight for them to make time for the project I was involved in, and this is a valuable experience I believe. I was also able to form my opinion about things and senior people listened to it, that wouldn’t necessarily happen at a big company.

**Overall**

I feel really happy about how my internship turned out. It wasn’t like working at a big corporation at all, it definitely had some advantages and disadvantages compared to that. It was a bit hectic, a bit unorganised and a bit frustrating. It was also a nice environment, with a shapable structure and the opportunity to be involved in great things after a really short period. If I had to do a few months long internship now, I would probably go for an innovative start-up again.