

## Personal Statement

I joined the Turkey Workshop in the second semester of its development, and my first task was working on the site model that we would present in Turkey. During the course of our three week charrette, I had the somewhat peculiar experience of becoming intimately acquainted with the site and program for the project, while knowing relatively little about the people who would eventually bring it to life. It was a nagging void, particularly since the villagers had been so much a part of the spirit and design for this place. At the end of the month we made the long trip to Turkey, models in tow, and I was anxious to finally meet the “clients.” All my curiosity could not have prepared me for what I found there. We must have seemed out of place in these small villages in northern Turkey, yet wherever we went we were greeted with openness and genuine affection. The people were eager to communicate with us in any way they could – using whatever English they knew, or through drawings, songs, or simple gestures.

In Degirmentepe, I saw a young woman, no older than I, who carried a baby in her arms. Though all but the simplest communication between us was impossible, I instantly felt a connection with her. She seemed a little shy, but clearly curious about the Americans who had come to help her village. She held up her child for me to see, and I was grateful that one of the few Turkish phrases I knew was *çok güzel*, very beautiful.

I was particularly struck, when talking to the teenagers in Cay, at the true globalization that was evident in the conversation. They talked about American movie stars, music, and the internet with the same familiarity that any American teenager might. And yet, these young people also talked about the traditions of their own culture, sang us a song about the beauty of their land, and performed a traditional folk dance.

It is often thought that tradition and technology cannot exist in harmony, and that to progress as a society we must inevitably give up the very things that have defined us. On that chilly night in Turkey, I found people for whom the traditions of the past inform and enrich their present and future. I have no doubt that when the community center is completed, the classes teaching computers and those teaching folk dancing will be equally welcome. For these people, innovation does not threaten their identity, but provides a means to preserve it. And we, who bring them our technology and expertise, must remember not only to teach, but to learn.

- molly forr