

Edwin Mårtensson FWJ 2023/2024:

I came upon the opportunity of becoming an FWJler very soon after having moved to Germany for the first time. I have previous experience with University environments, so many aspects of an FWJ are not new to me. This does not mean I have not learned a lot, as I am new to both Germany and to the study of Material Culture. I have only good things to say about the Institut für Materielle Kultur, as it has been an excellent environment to both learn and do in a free and creative manner.

I would say that the main reason I have enjoyed this past year at the Institut für Materielle Kultur and more specifically the Sammlung Textile Alltagskultur is that I have been given a lot of freedom to undertake the tasks I feel I was best suited for. Because an FWJ entails spending a lot of time in a specific location and office, you really learn a lot of specifics. It is very satisfying to have a large degree of control over something you care about. The Sammlung also enabled me to participate in a larger collection team, in making decisions and making the collection work smoother. The collection, both as a physical space and as an institution with a history, makes for a challenging and stimulating workplace. This mainly comes down to the unique nature of the collection concept, and the large spread of topics it can be used to cover.

The Institut für Materielle Kultur is an inherently multi-disciplinary environment, where one can interact with experts in a multitude of fields. I learned a lot about many different subjects during my FWJ, often about subjects which I knew nothing about before. This has been incredibly interesting for me, especially since I have previous experience within academia. I was thus able to expand my understanding of social and cultural processes through my work and interactions with others at the Institute.

As for other aspects of participating in an FWJ, I can only speak to my own, quite uncommon, experience. During the year I participated in German classes, which really helped me feel more at home in Germany. In the class I met people from other subjects at the University, with very different backgrounds from my own. This can also be said for the workshops given by the FWJ-programme, as my FWJ-colleagues were naturally quite different from myself. They, along with the organizers of the programme, have all been very helpful in making sure I can follow along in the activities, and helped me when my lacking skills in German became an issue.

All in all, I would say that participating in an FWJ has been a very giving and interesting experience. Especially the Institut für Materielle Kultur and the Sammlung Textile Alltagskultur have been wonderful places to learn and develop my skills in both academic subjects and in German. Working in a collection with a unique concept, and one with a lot of things to discover means that you will continually learn more, while also being able to provide real assistance to people who are doing important things.