



Diversity became a theme in my life before I was even born. It is why I am here, and it is why gül koc GmbH exists. As I reflect on the years leading up to the opening of my office, I recognise that diversity — cultural, linguistic, professional, and experiential — has been the driving force, but I wasn't always sure why. And it is on the occasion of my office's 10th anniversary, that I now have the answer.

In 1961 my father came to Germany as a guest worker. Like any young and ambitious person, he had big plans. Yet, due to his 'difference' - his origin and religion - he faced obstacles that pushed him in a direction that would later influence my own path. His decision to leave Istanbul is proof that one brave act can re-route the course of an entire generation. We were now a part of the Turkish diaspora. I, now having been born in Germany, was a German. I had a foot in two worlds. And from that, I experienced the pain and the pride that comes with it. However, I also found opportunity.

My family and, above all, my father has had a great influence on me during my educational and professional career. When you are the first — the first to move to a new country, the first to attend university, or the first to start a design business — there is no map. You have to chart your own course. My father's story encouraged me to question the world around me and to find my own answers surrounding my culture and my birthplace.

One place where I was able to find such an answer was in the space of architecture and design. As a teenager I was fascinated by the stories that my cousin told me about Turkey's architectural history, and his passion fueled my interest. Hearing about the magnificence of the mosques, I decided that I would one day go to Turkey to work alongside my cousin. When the time came for me to decide the first step on my path, I chose interior architecture. I successfully completed my studies at Kaiserslautern University of Applied Sciences, where I was awarded a scholarship to study in Istanbul. Architecture was the vehicle transporting me back to my father's birthplace and a way to connect my heritage to my profession.

After five years of studying in Kaiserslautern and returning from Istanbul, I was determined to move to Cologne, as my father had sixty years earlier. I felt that another answer could be there waiting for me to uncover it. Like him, I learned to stand on my own two feet. I worked while looking for my first professional job, and after a short time, I started my career in one of the largest interior design firms in Germany. I spent my formative years specialising in retail design and fell in love with the vast possibilities that it represented for seeing and shaping the world.

Then another kind of love shifted my path, and I returned to Munich — my birthplace and where I rooted my career. I discovered the value in understanding business from the client's perspective and in order to strengthen this asset, I worked for another five years for a luxury fashion company as a project manager in the architecture department. There, I had the chance to be involved in the brand's projects worldwide. After this intensive 'apprenticeship' in retail, I now dared to start my own business as an interior architect with this as my focus.

It was another big decision, but this time it was mine and in it I found the last answer which inspired this publication, Thriving on diversity. I started my office because I wanted to create a place where it was possible to experience diversity and share its added value. My office represents my dream of a better, fairer and more open society. It welcomes young people regardless of their background and accompanies them on their journeys to a strong and courageous future.

I am proud to run a successful English-speaking office that employs people from many countries. Like my father's choice to come to Germany, starting my own office has opened doors to new cultural connections. Each person is a cultural asset and valuable to our office as an individual. The more we have grown, the more diversity has enriched our office. This is evident both in the significant range of our projects and in the approaches and solutions we propose — a uniqueness that accounts for a large part of our success. As I look toward to the next ten years and beyond, my vision is to capture and spread the ideas of the variety of minds, always with enthusiasm and respect for our clients. Although we are diverse, we work laterally and have a common goal: the satisfaction of our clients.

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