

REPORT AL RIENTRO DELL'ESPERIENZA DI SCAMBIO - A.A.
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_Cognome	PROCIDA
_Nome	CARLA
_Matricola	884211
_Anno di corso	2.LM
_Corsi di studi	PRODUCT SERVICE SYSTEM DESIGN
_Sezione	PS1
_e-mail	carla.procida@mail.polimi.it
_Sede di scambio	FACHHOCHSCHULE SALZBURG
_Stato	AUSTRIA
_ID ERASMUS (per sedi in EU)	A SALZBUR 08
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Testo

Introduction

My name is Carla Procida, I am a student at the 2nd semester of PSSD Master and I recently completed this semester in Salzburg, Austria, at Fachhochschule Salzburg thanks to the Erasmus programme. I have spent almost five months in Salzburg, from mid February until beginning of July. I have completed 12 credits in total (13 actually, but I only needed 12).

Classes attended

Despite the PSSD master being focused on Service Design mostly, the fact that I only missed to complete the Professional Workshop and one elective course gave me the chance to attend classes very different from the ones offered by PoliMI, and therefore I chose to focus my studies here on deepening my knowledge about wood, by also getting hands on with some practical class / workshop. I attended some classes from the department of Design & Product Management, but mostly from the department of Forest Products Technology and Management.

I attended six classes in total, plus the German Language class. The German Language class lasted the whole semester and was almost every week once a week, I attended an A1/A2 level class. At the beginning of the semester I was pleasantly involved in a Social Hackaton, a workshop focused on developing ideas and first prototypes of digital projects to tackle social issues. Me and my group decided to work on the social issues of unused common spaces in the basements of buildings and ideated a service/app called Roomy, having many features (like chat, forum, list of rooms and related activities, calendar) to help inhabitants to coordinate and meet to use those spaces. Another short class has been the Construction Project: Urban Furniture_Parklett. This class was very practical and compact, it was in the form of a construction workshop where, in 3 days, me and my group constructed a piece of urban furniture that the other members of the group had been designing the previous semester. The furniture is meant to occupy the space of a parking lot for a short period of time, and it consists of a little stage and seating area where people can

improvise a little gig and people can assist, or just enjoy seating outdoor for a while. The parklett was installed in Schallmooser Hauptstrasse 46 on the 28th of June.

Another short class was the Construction Project: Pigeons House in Urban Context: this class's aim was to design a house / building for the pigeons of Salzburg, based on the problem that pigeons invade the town and cannot be easily treated for any disease they may have. Therefore, the house, 110 sqm, aims to provide for them shelter for healthy pigeons and a sort of hospital area for unhealthy pigeons. We worked in a group of 3 before the mid-term presentation, presenting the first design idea and a working scale model. After, 5 projects were selected by the local administration (including ours) and groups were unified to proceed with the final drawings and scale model. The final works were presented in front of the administration in Schloss Mirabell, Salzburg.

International construction projects: best practice has been a class in the form of a seminar, packed in three long days. The seminars have been held by different professors and professional coming mostly from academic or architectural field. The seminars have been focused on showing best practice for what concerns architectural projects all around the world. We welcomed two professors from Johannesburg, one architect from Hungary and one professional from Vienna. Together with the group we finalized a series of assignments including questions for the guests about their work, a report and a presentation of one example of good practice.

The most theoretical class has been Engineered Wood Products 2 with professor M. Barbu. The class has been focused on learning about the features and the production of the different wood-based panels for construction and furniture. The course was divided in two phases: the production of a panel and theoretical class. During the first half, me and my group produced a particleboard and conducted lab tests on samples of it. We presented the results both through a class presentation and a report. During the second phase, we learned about the production of the panels and other wood composites like cement or plastic bonded wood composites. At the end we had a written test on the theoretical knowledge acquired.

Last but not least, I took part in a Study trip, also with professor Barbu. He organised a trip through Germany until Hannover, during which we had the chance to visit companies that make wood-based panels and assist to their production. We visited Egger, Binder Holz, Schaffer, Schneider, Pfeifer, Pollmeier and Fa.GreCon. The last two days we stayed in Hannover and visited the LIGNA Fair, with thousands of wood-specialized companies exposing.

Impressions

All in all, I am totally satisfied with the didactic experience made in FH Salzburg. I have to say that one the most interesting and for sure the most challenging class for me has been Engineered Wood Products 2, mostly because it was the further from what I have been studying in PoliMI and so also the hardest for me to understand and study, being it, as the name says, very engineerical. But I was looking for a class to deepen my knowledge about wood, so I was very pleased to attend it and the approach of the professor was always very practical, always mentioning the use of the wood-based panels, for construction, furniture, flooring etc... so I am sure this is a class that a design student, especially for interior and product design students, can be very useful. The study trip for me was a completion of this class, because I was able to see the production of this panels in real companies, therefore not only studying it theoretically.

Probably the most interesting class for my career was International construction project: best practice. As I said before, the class focused on showing and analysing architectural projects based on means of sustainability both environmentally and socially. Collaborating with architects in areas

where there is lack of access to professional architecture and realizing small but socially and environmentally concerned projects maybe with the participation of local communities is what I wish for my future career, and what this class was partially about, so I really wished the seminars could be more or longer.

Talking about the construction project for Urban Furniture, this has been for me the most enjoyable one because I love to have my hands on and making stuff with wood, especially urban furniture, and I try to take part in all workshop or summer schools about this, so I couldn't miss this one. The design of the parklet by my group was very nice and the realization even better, if possible. The workflow in the group worked perfectly and I was so surprised how much we were able to build in only three days. I am absolutely satisfied with the process and the final result.

The Social Hackaton was also a very interesting but I have to say very similar to a lot of workshops and classes attended during my two years in PSSD. It was nice to take part, but not exciting as the classes mentioned above. I would anyway suggest a PSSD student to take part in this, if there is the chance.

Last but not least, I didn't enjoy the class Pigeons House for Urban Context a lot. The first reason is that there were no actual classes, but only meetings / revisions with the professors, apart from the introduction to the course. The meeting would also be very short and left little time for constructive discussion. The project in general started from a problem that is surely valuable, but I feel that the administration could have chosen some other, more crucial, social issue for the town of Salzburg to tackle. The ideation phase was very short: indeed, we ideated the architecture only in two days (something like 4 hours in total). Also, very few constructive opinions by the professors were given in terms of architectural compositions and design choices. The coordination inside the group has been poor, and the workflow not very fluent. What was surely positive was the strong link with the administration, giving the projects an actual chance to be seen, considered and maybe built, but also for this reason I think the process should have been coordinated more deeply.

University location

Fh Salzburg has two locations: Urstein and Kuchl. Both are not in Salzburg. Urstein is near the town of Puch and Urstein, circa 20 minutes of train from Salzburg City Center. Kuchl is a bit less than an hour far from the center. For both locations there are direct trains. I attended most classes in Kuchl. Urstein is a nice location where most of the classes take place, it has a big green area, and it has a big student dorm next to it where a lot of my friends were staying. Kuchl is a smaller campus, but it has a very nice view because surrounded by high mountains all around. Both locations have the a canteen and all services, including two libraries. For wood lovers, Kuchl library is very interesting because most of the books are about design and wood.

Welcoming and offices

The relationship with people working in the international office has been very good: they are always available and down to help any student in need. It started before the arrival of course, and the e-mail communications were always clear and on time. They helped us exchange students a lot. They also organized a very useful welcome week, during which we were explained everything we needed to know in order to have a pleasant and organized stay. They mentioned a lot of useful issues about accomodation, university facilities, documents, transportation and of course didactic issues. Also, the welcome week has been the perfect excuse for us students to know each other.

We were involved in a trip around the town, and some of us formed a bond that made us see each other throughout the whole semester despite attending different classes.

Accommodation

Finding accommodation was easy. In one of the first e-mails by the International Office it was mentioned the difficulty of finding a house in Salzburg and the suggestion to rely on the Oead services, a network of student dormitories that finds a place in one of the dorms for the students requesting. I was unfortunately too late to request a room through this service, so I had to find accommodation on my own. I was a bit worried, but as any student in Milan knows, on Facebook there are a lot of groups with advertisement of rooms, and this is also the case of Salzburg. Luckily I found a Facebook group with a lot of announcements and I found a big single room, for a fair price, in a nice area, near the station Salzburg Aighof. I shared the apartment (kitchen and toilet) with two more girls, and the stay has been nice with them.

Social life

Being FH Salzburg a university with a lot of faculties, also the Erasmus group was very big in the beginning: we were about 80 exchange students. This created a very nice social atmosphere. Some of us kept seeing each other also in big groups and we organized a lot of parties, barbecue and meetings. Salzburg is a very lively town: the city center is small, with four or five discos, three or four pubs and some bars, so we ended up attending always the same places, and we became affectionate to them. Also, at least for me, classes were very relaxing and not stressful at all, so I had a lot of time to be around or go out. I am sure this would happen to any exchange student in Salzburg, so I think no exchange student in Salzburg should worry about not making friends or not going out enough, because it's absolutely not to enjoy time in this town.

Autorizzo al trattamento dei miei dati personali ai sensi del Decreto Legislativo n. 196/03 da parte del Politecnico di Milano.

Firma

