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Over the past 5 months I have had the opportunity to take part in International Mobility and represent the Politecnico di Milano at the Kyushu University in Fukuoka (Japan). When I applied, Japan was not my first choice but after returning I can say that it was great opportunity to stay in that country and I don't regret. In this report I would like to explain why Japan is the best destination to go for exchange and how was my experience at Kyushu University.

From the very beginning of the exchange, the university tried to make me feel as comfortable as possible. Foreign students arriving in Fukuoka can take advantage of the free shuttle service from the airport to the university. Upon arrival, I immediately went to a meeting organized by the support center, where I received all the necessary information and met the supporter assigned to me. The supporter was obliged to help me with all problems related to documents at the university and the state, health insurance and to give advices about everyday life in Japan for the first 3 months of exchange. I was able to complete most of the formalities within a few days of arrival and it was not stressful in any way.

Design school students usually live closer to the Ohashi campus in Ijiri dormitory. Due to the fact that I came with my wife, I lived on the Ito Campus, which is about an hour away from the Ohashi campus. Ito campus is the largest student campus in Japan. It is located near the countryside and about 10-15 minutes by bike from the beach. Life on campus was an adventure in itself, there are many sports facilities, inexpensive and good canteens, a fantastic library and many places to study. In addition to the classes at the university, I had the possibility of participating in academic circles. I chose swimming, football, karate, French and Japanese. Almost every student participates in academic circles and their activity is very visible on campus. The dormitory apartment was very comfortable. Each student residence had a group of managers who spoke English and are always ready to help you. In our dorm there were many events, e.g. coffee hours, barbecues or fireworks show.

Creating a class plan was a challenge, but my supervisor (in my case even 2 supervisors) helped me contact selected professors. Classes are held in very different forms, from practical workshops and group work to individual work under the supervision of a professor. Easy access to laboratories was a great advantage of the design school. For example, I designed wooden blocks and created their prototype with help of an assistant in the laboratory. The university also offers many interdisciplinary courses and inter-university programs. I took part in classes on new media art, an individual design project inspired by traditional Japanese art, interdisciplinary courses on marketing and contemporary Japan, and branding classes. In addition, I participated as a free listener in additional classes at the entrepreneurship center of Kyushu QREC University, which I highly recommend. I also helped one research team in design of new research tool.

I set myself the ambitious goal of organizing design discussions in Japan and I was able to achieve it. Together with Fukuoka Startup Cafe I designed an exhibition and I moderated discussion about the role of visual communication in business. Thanks to this, I had the opportunity to cooperate with Japanese partners and got to know culture outside the academic world.

Fukuoka is one of the largest cities in Japan but also one of the most comfortable to live in. There are many artistic museums, museums of Japanese tradition and countless small galleries, boutiques and modern cafes. The city also attracts with numerous festivals and traditions. Fukuoka is clean, safe and the only disadvantage of student life there is the cost of public transport. Is much more expensive than in Milan. Most of the time I was riding on bicycle. Bicycles can be purchased at second hand stores at a reasonable price. Unfortunately, for larger journeys it is difficult to use a bicycle and I have not been able to find a cheaper alternative to regional trains.

Food in Japan is very diverse. Initially, it was difficult for me to get used to it but with time I liked traditional Japanese dishes and at this moment I even miss them. The average price of lunch in the canteen is about 5 euros and in the city center about 8-12. In times of crisis, you can always eat pizza I even found Italian style place with surprisingly good napolitana. Five months was not enough time to try all the typical dishes for the Kyushu region, not to mention all of Japan.

I definitely want to come back and explore Japan more. I learned a lot about interpersonal relationships and how to build friendship despite cultural differences. I gained a completely new perspective on design and a lot of inspiration. A part of this experience will always remain in me. If I had to choose it again, I would choose Japan first - especially Kyushu University.