Relazione di fine scambio

Scuola del Design

Istruzioni

Indicare di seguito tutte le informazioni che possano essere utili ad altri studenti che parteciperanno a uno scambio. Preferibilmente in lingua inglese, lunghezza min. 2500 parole + possibili immagini, file di max. dimensione 2 MB in formato PDF. Questo documento sarà pubblicato nel sito web della Scuola.

Informazioni generiche

Anno Accademico di Scambio:	2019/20	Nome della Sede in scambio:	Chalmers University of Technology - Gothenburg
Cognome e Nome:	Mascioli Rossana	Stato:	Sweden
Matricola:	915587	Codice Sede:	S GOTEBOR02
Corso di Studio:	Design&Engineering	Tipo di scambio: (Semplice o Doppia Laurea)	Erasmus
Anno di Corso:	2nd years Master Degree	Semestre di Scambio:	First semester
Email:	rossana.mascioli@mail.polimi.it rossanamascioli@icloud.com	Docente Promotore:	Silvia Deborah Ferraris

Racconta la tua esperienza di scambio:

Why I have decided to undertake an Erasmus mobility programme

I would like to start by briefly explaining the reasons underlying my choice to attend the Erasmus experience.
First of all, I was confident that undertaking a period of study in a foreign university would enrich me both as a person and as a practitioner. I think that dialogue and teamwork with other people are essential to have meaningful planning processes. Being able to compare the tools and skills learned during my studies with other work methodologies and cultural backgrounds is certainly a complex and difficult step.
At the same time, so far, I believe it has been an important test for me to understand if I am able to work independently with people I don't know and in a new context. I was also very interested in learning about and experimenting with new variations in the discipline of design, because I think a designer should always be open to new ideas for reflection and suggestions.

Why did I choose Chalmers

The choice to apply for the Erasmus experience at the Chalmers University of Technology in Göteborg was mainly due to a keen interest in learning and experiencing design from another point of view. Indeed, I would like to deepen in more detail other aspects such as attention to the community, environmental impact and new approaches that link industry, people and innovation.
When I drew up my preferences for the university in which I would have like to carry out the Erasmus experience, I opted first and foremost for universities in Northern Europe. It is well-known that there is a deeper attention to social issues, welfare and new methods to approach a product also respecting the environment. I strongly believe that a project can no longer be seen as a single product, but rather as part

of a system of different factors regarding interaction with the user (individual but also as a community), business and industrial reality and ethical-social identity.
I have selected Chalmers University of Technology because it is a prestigious Institution not only in Northern Europe, but also at an international level. I would very strongly like to pursue my Erasmus experience in an internationally recognized University that manages to offer various hints for courses in the field of design (both from a manufacturing-business and user-centered point of view). Here are some data that demonstrate the quality and recognition of Chalmers. First of all, Chalmers is ranked 125 in the world in the QS ranking for 2020. It is also among the top 100 universities on QS subject specific ranking list for Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Civil and Structural Engineering, Chemical Engineering and Materials Science. Within Architecture Chalmers is ranked 37 in the world. Furthermore, the campus is ranked 81 in the world in QS Employability Ranking 2020 and 82 in the world for the Times Higher Education Ranking List 2019 for Engineering and Technology. Lastly, on the Leiden Ranking 2015 Chalmers is ranked as 1 in Sweden and the Nordic countries in the category collaborative research with industry. This indicator shows the proportion of publications that Chalmers has been co-authored with industry partners.
A further point to consider is the city of Göteborg. It is the second biggest and most populous city in Sweden after the capital. It is a university town in every sense, as there are two of Sweden's best known universities, Chalmers and Gothenburg University. There are students from all over the world, both for Erasmus exchange programs and for entire degrees. The atmosphere is very cheerful and friendly, as it is a very multi-ethnic and safe city at the same time. Although unfortunately I have been able to live very little life off campus and university due to the spread of Covid-19, I have been enjoying a very pleasant experience. Chalmers organizes many events both on-site and off-campus, such as trips to get to know the city and its surroundings.

Accomodation

There are several ways to find a home in Gothenburg. The most famous Swedish agency is Boplats, but the waiting list is very long. Chalmers offers residences, but there are no reserved places for Erasmus students and, as in the previous case, the waiting lists can be long. For further advice it is best to contact the Chalmers secretary directly and they will answer politely and quickly. I have relied on the SGS Studentbostäder agency, which has a number of residency solutions throughout the city. I lived 10 minutes from Chalmers' main campus. There are different room and accommodation solutions with different rates and benefits. I suggest to have a look at the agency's website and contact them if there is interest. Finally, it is possible to rely on private individuals through social ads for example (on FB there are several groups to find accommodation or rooms for rent). I recommend asking well what is included in the rental (for example if utilities are covered or not) or if there is a minimum of furniture (to understand what to bring from home). Sometimes ads can be unclear.
Below are some links that might be useful for finding a home in Gothenburg.
https://qasa.se
https://housinganywhere.com
https://www.vrbo.com
https://www.chalmersstudentbostader.se/en/
https://www.blocket.se
https://nya.boplats.se
https://www.bostaddirekt.com
https://www.sgsveckobostader.se

Living in Gothenburg

Gothenburg is located on the west coast of Sweden and is characterized by one of the most important ports in Scandinavia. The city is welcoming and safe, and at the same time modern and rooted in its origins and traditions.
In the city there are very different neighborhoods but together they create an example of multiculturalism and inclusiveness. In the city there are both historical and traditional Nordic culture districts and buildings and headquarters of important international companies such as Volvo and Ericsson.
Gotheburg offers plenty of possibilities for all needs and passions. For example, if you love amusement parks and adrenaline games, the Liseberg amusement park is the largest in Scandinavia.
There are many museums in the city, both interactive and more traditional. Two possible examples are the Universeum nature museum and the art museum. In the Universeum museum you can visit up to 7 floors

to discover different scientific findings, such as the rainforest habitat or watch the sharks eating time. In the art museum (Konstmuseet) you can enjoy a variety of works by Nordic artists as well as well-known artists such as Munch.
The city of Gothenburg is a green lung, given the presence of countless natural areas and parks, in and around the city. The best known parks in the city are Trädsgårdsföreningen, the largest botanical garden in Northern Europe, and Slottsskogen Park. Within the latter you can also observe different species of animals such as seals, mooses and penguins.
Another area to visit among the others is Haga Nygata, characterized by coloured wooden houses in perfect Nordic style of the end of the 19th century.
In addition to visiting the city, I recommend taking some time to organize tours to the islands of the Gothenburg archipelago. There are many islands that can be easily reached by ferry (public transport in the city). Here you can experience the life of the fishermen and relax between nature and traditions. You can also organize mini-tours on the spot with the fishermen of the islands to see the seals, to reach the more distant islands or to fish with them.
In the town there are several attractions, discos, concert halls, restaurants. Chalmers will help you get to know the places where you can spend your free time.
As far as shopping, grocery shopping and food is concerned, you can find almost everything, turning a bit among the various solutions present. Gothenburg is a multi-ethnic city so you can find different solutions with different price ranges. Life costs a bit more than in Italy.
As far as public transport is concerned, the reference agency is called Västtrafik. I recommend that you wait until you receive your Chalmers' and the Chalmers Student Union (Chalmers Studentkår) in order to purchase the student subscription. The season ticket is the most advantageous choice and it is advisable to buy it because fines are expensive if you travel without a ticket or season ticket. Tickets or season tickets can be purchased from the app or in stores around the city. There are solutions for both the city areas and the periods of validity of the season ticket. Tickets and season tickets include buses, trams and ferries.
A final tip is that you should bring your own credit or debit card. In Sweden and other northern countries you will almost always pay by card and almost never in cash.

Campus life

The arrival in a new city and living in a new reality can be a cause for anxiety. Chalmers also takes care of that.
When the international students come, a welcome day is organised in which the school, the Chalmers Student Union and the ESN association are introduced.
The Chalmers Student Union (Chalmers Studentkår) is an organization that has its representatives on the board of the university and focuses on the quality of education, the labour market and the social life of students. The student union and the university are two separate organizations working together to ensure that students benefit from their time at Chalmers. In a sense, the university is responsible for education and the union is responsible for the fun and together they make a student's life whole.
The ESN, on the other hand, is the Erasmus institution that organises trips, events and gives discounts for various institutions, such as Ryanair. At the Welcome day all the necessary information and cards will be provided.
In addition, international students will be distributed in different Phadder Groups. In each group there will be other international students as well as two or three students of the Chalmers, who will help the newcomers to get to know the city, the university and the other students. Several trips and activities are organized (discos or international dinners where everyone brings some typical dishes of their own culture).
Chalmers is very active in extracurricular activities. In fact, there are several pubs, restaurants, relaxation areas and saunas on the university campus.

Forms of lectures and examination

The types of lectures and examination methods at Chalmers University of Technology are manifold and varied, depending on the subject of study. The more traditional and bibliographic courses require good personal organization because it is required a lot of individual study, while the more practical ones have several lecture-brainstorming more based on a learning by doing and teamwork approach.
It has to be said that group projects are a form of study often used in the Swedish education system. Group projects are often examined through written reports and/or oral presentations. The teaching staff is very present, establishing a good relationship with the students.
Unfortunately, I have been able to experience little of the campus life and classroom lessons due to the spread of Covid-19. In fact I only attended one course on tree in the classroom in person. I followed the other two at a distance, but I appreciated the rapid reorganization of the courses for distance learning and the activities carried out.

My courses

I attended the following three courses at Chalmers:

- *Design for experience*

  The purpose of the course is that the student should develop further insight into the area "Design for Experience". The overall objectives are that you develop a basic knowledge of:

  a) What constitute experiential relations between consumers/users and artefacts;
  b) A subset of existing and relevant frameworks, models and theories;
  c) A subset of methods and tools for identifying users' needs and requirements related to use(r) experiences, for ideating, and for evaluating design solutions from a use(r)experience perspective;
  d) How to apply the frameworks/models/theories as well as the methods and tools in a design process.

  This was the only class I attended in person. Different types of lectures were organized, from the more traditional ones, to meetings with companies in the sector to workshops to organize group work and intensive lessons to discuss and study the bibliographic material together.
  The evaluation of the course was based on 3 written exams on the lectures and bibliographic materials (the course was divided into 3 macro-areas) and on a group project. The latter was structured by randomly assigning to each group a particular issue (anxiety in the waiting rooms of hospitals, how is experienced waiting for a public transport to the shelter, how to improve the energy efficiency of the house and others) to be analyzed through UX design methodologies presented in lessons to find possible solutions.

- *Research design and methods*

  This course introduces students to methodological challenges in management and business research. Students will learn how to formulate research problems, research questions, select appropriate research design and subsequent empirical methods. In doing so, students will develop skills in critical thinking and being able to understand the basis for management and business as well as ethical ramifications of choices and actions.

  After completion of the course, the student should be able to:
  a) Describe and discuss the relationship between research problems, research design, research methods, and data analysis to answer research questions

b) Formulate practically or academically relevant research questions
c) Estimate data needs in relation to research question, relevant models and frameworks
d) Understand ethical ramifications of choices and actions

The course consists of remote lectures individual work, a compulsory exercise, hand-ins, and -as an important course element- a home exam.
The course contains two overarching modules: a) quantitative methods, consisting of two remote lectures and a compulsory in-class exercise and b) qualitative module, consisting of lectures on qualitative research methods and techniques as well as analyzing qualitative data.

- *Social innovation and social entrepreneurship*

The purpose of the course is to introduce students to notions of social innovation and social entrepreneurship, and discuss the extent to which contemporary societal challenges (e.g. energy, climate change, equity, gender justice, biodiversity and pandemics) can be addressed though these means. The course provides students with tools to assess and analyze socially innovative and entrepreneurial initiatives, and gives them an opportunity to discuss and develop their own prospective initiatives within this field.

As examination students write a report on: a) a potential social innovation or social venture that the students may or may not choose to establish, or b) a certain aspect of an already existing social innovation or social venture.
It is expected that the reports reflect knowledges from literature and digital material provided. The report ought to cover several themes, such as business model, organisation, finance/funding etc.
The reports are to be written individually and should be 4-5 pages long.

The students are graded individually, on the basis of
a) the hand in of three (3) case study reflections
b) the merits of the 4-5 pages long report
c) remote presentation of the report

Personal thoughts

Although I have experienced my Erasmus exchange programme in a somewhat strange way due to the spread of Covid-19, I am glad that I have taken this path. For what little I have experienced of campus life, I can say that I was really impressed by the Swedish educational approach. Unlike the Polytechnic, I liked the more generalist approach, because the Swedish didactic view is based on the fact that it is right to give the possibility to offer different inputs on different subjects and topics that the student will then organize, choose and carry on. Before leaving, it is good to know that Chalmers does not have a real department that only deals with Design. All faculty areas have sections that relate to some aspect of design. Getting to know and dealing with new experiences and approaches is part of the game. It may not be easy in the beginning, but I think the biggest achievement is to really challenge yourself and immerse into the new culture of the university, and more generally, of the host country.

Firma: Marciali Rossana

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