

## Report of ERASMUS exchange study

Home University: Brandenburg Technical University of Cottbus

Bachelor of Architecture

Host University: Milan, Italy, Politecnico di Milano

### Preparation (planning, organization and applying to the host university)

When applying for my semester abroad I had a very clear idea of what I wanted to do. In my opinion, there were not many universities that were worth it all the efforts to plan, arrange and go through a short semester in an unknown country. Ever since I decided to study Architecture I was dreaming of it happening in Italy. A lot of things have changed during the years, still in the middle of the second year in Cottbus, I thought it is the right time to have a glimpse of what my life would have been, if I have had chosen to study in Italy. Based on the reputations and the information I could find about the universities in Italy, that I was able to apply for, I chose the Politecnico di Milano. I have already had experienced moving to a new country, with only a little knowledge of the language and the culture, when I first came to Cottbus, so I knew what I was about to go through. All the procedures were still little unpleasant- collecting documents for applying, looking for a room to rent, when you are still not even in the city, organizing everything from mobile phone, through public transportation card, health insurances. Everything in my home university was so well organized, that I did not had any extra difficulties. Therefore the host university was very hard to get in touch with. Its website was extremely complicated to navigate through and follow the changes in the structure of the architecture departments in the current year. I had problems with finding any information about the plan as well, but thanks to social media I could connect to some very helpful students of the Politecnico and somehow managed to prepare a possible student plan for the upcoming semester. I had the freedom to choose classes very different from the ones in Cottbus and that had as many advantages as disadvantages. On one side- I could benefit from the studies about Interiors, that the BTU does not have, on the other- there was no way I could finish my Bachelor in the planned 3 years. But I think it was worth it.

### Accommodation

As any other big city Milan is also not very welcoming for international students, who are planning to spend there just 5 or 6 months. Finding a room that offers a contract for less than a year was hard itself, not to mention how complicated it gets when the Italians realize you do not have a person (an Italian

citizen preferably), who would guarantee for your monthly paying with their signature. Since the EXPO 2015 was still ongoing by the date of my arrival, I had no option to stay at a hostel or hotel, just because every single bed in the city was already booked months prior. I basically spend my whole summer checking websites and social media for any offer that was anyhow less than triple the rent I paid in Cottbus a month. Without a success. I arrived in the city with the hope that I would find a place easier when I am already there. I was planning to spend the first few days on a friend's sofa and I got extremely happy, when I found out that his flat-mate has just decided to move out, leaving a small room in a tiny apartment with a huge roof terrace free just for me. It was just 20 minutes away from the campus Leonardo, where most of my lectures were held. The neighborhood was not one of the fancy ones in Milan, but I enjoyed it very much, since I was just 5 min away from two different parks and near plenty of small cafes and restaurants.

### Studying at the host university

The first week at the university was very well planned and I got to know some of the thousands international students. We attended different presentations about the university and the life in Italy. I had just 3 different classes, but one of them was consuming all of my time. The studio class, equivalent of the ateliers in Cottbus, was very unorganized and dissatisfying. I guess I was very unlucky in that case, since my new class mates assured me that every other studio class they had previously was amazing and totally inspiring. Our professor had held us a short lecture every Monday, that always started at least an hour after the time mentioned in our plans, if it happened at all. Fridays we started "discussing" the projects at 9 and we often stayed till 19 in the same room. The reviews with the professor were more like listening to someone having an argument with you, without even letting you explain yourself. The other classes I had were much more interesting and pleasant. One of them was held from a professor, who was still working in the field a lot and was giving proper examples about the theory from our everyday life and surroundings in Milan. At some point I decided that I wanted to experience more of the life there and applied for an extension of my stay there. It turned out to be a great decision, since I had the chance to see myself that the other studios are really nice and the professor in the always-bad-mood was just an exception. I got to attend a class about Chinese urban planning, a studio about Urban interventions, that was far away from the traditional architectural classes and a very advanced class about materials, that stole most of my Saturdays and all of my afternoons. I was secretly hoping that the rumor about the careless life of the Erasmus-students was true, but somehow I found myself studying more than ever, taking full advantage of the university's library and hit every possible book about the matter. Still without

a success. Leaving me with a bitter taste in the mouth, the second semester at the Politecnico was both very beneficial and grueling.

#### Daily life and free time

The everyday life in Milan depends very much on one's life style. As a student I saw Milan from a perspective, different from the one shown during the Fashion weeks in the city, or the one to be seen on the fancy photos. Still the number of the students in the city is big and the amount of possibilities to have a good time is big. I had the chance to visit some Italian and Swiss cities, which were very near to Milan. I really enjoyed learning how to cook from the Italians I met there. Learning the language was almost very easy and happen unconsciously. Milan is very lively and interesting city and I hardly could get bored there. Sometimes I even wished I was not there to study, but to just walk the streets and the yards, and the countless museums and galleries of the city.