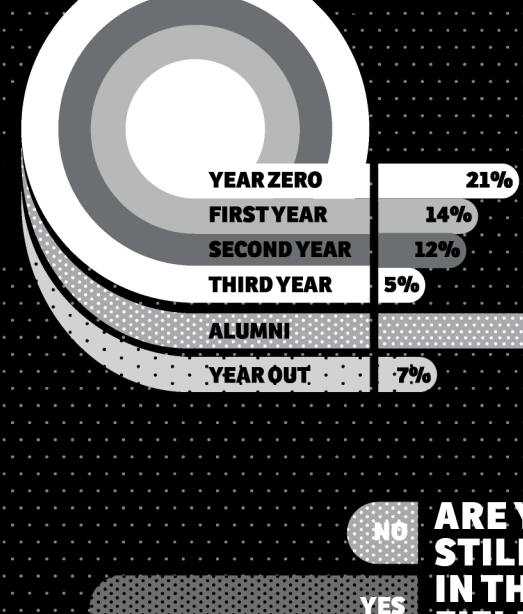


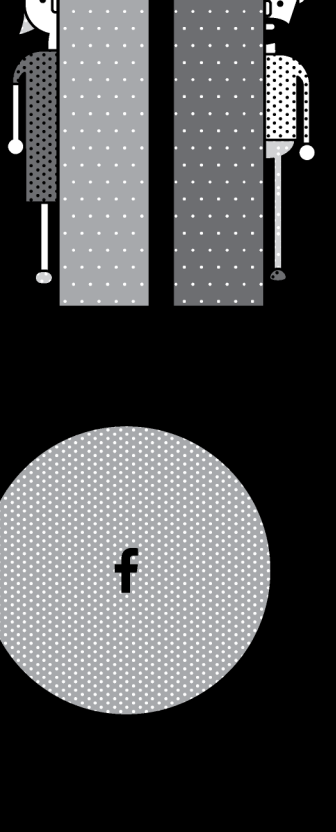
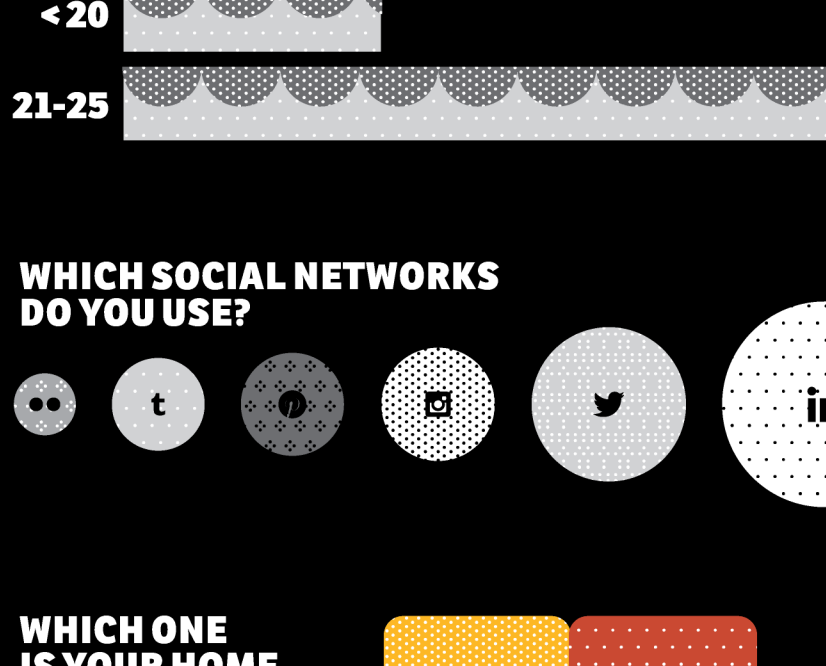
MEDes is no longer the best kept secret

43 ANSWERS



This is the **visual Table of Content** of the research of the MEDes Project done at KISD in 2014. A collection of stories about and from the MEDes people.

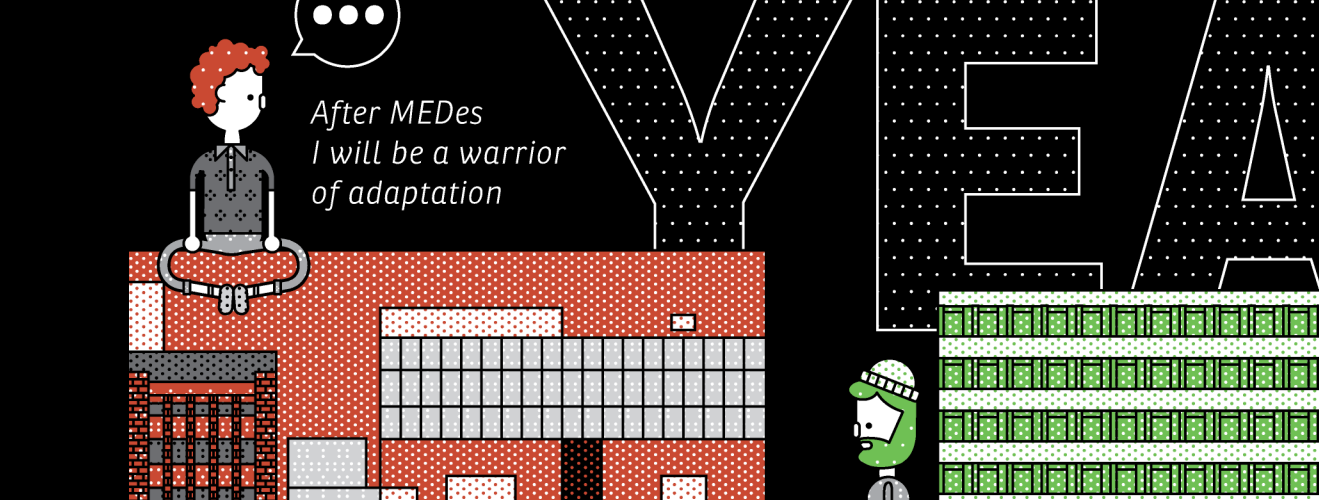
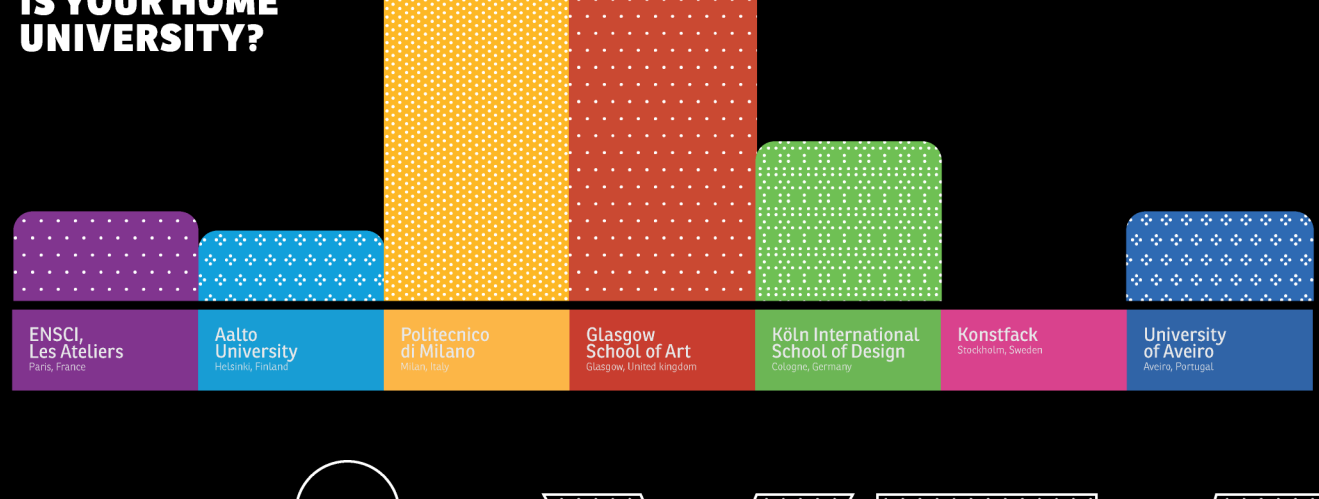
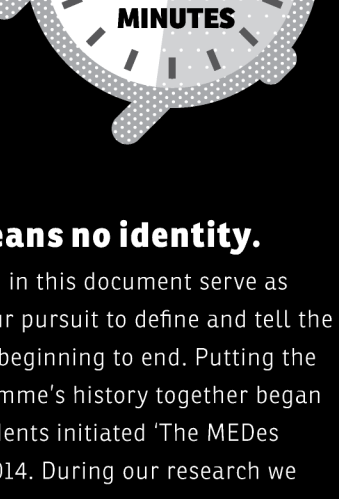
- INTERVIEWS
- SURVEY
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ARE YOU STILL WORKING IN THE DESIGN FIELD?

YES

the SURVEY in numbers



No history means no identity.
The stories collected in this document serve as building blocks in our pursuit to define and tell the MEDes history from beginning to end. Putting the pieces of our programme's history together began when six MEDes students initiated "The MEDes Project" in KISD in 2014. During our research we conducted interviews, surveys and co-design workshops to help us connect the dots. We interviewed nineteen MEDesians at different stages of the programme, from students, to alumni and tutors. We sent out a survey which has been completed by 43 MEDesians in only 3 days. Reading all those stories allowed the six of us to better understand the complexity of the MEDes network and all its different points of view. To complete this we have assembled all our material into one document and made a visual Table of Contents, to make our research open and accessible to everyone. Our stories have incredible value for all the people that are, were or will be part of the MEDes.

Read the whole story on our [blog!](#)

YEAR 0

After MEDes I will be a warrior of adaptation

OMG! SO IS IT A REAL THING?
When you said "I'm doing the MEDes" your family said...

I REMEMBER MAKING DECISIONS BASED ON WHAT PEOPLE TOLD ME.
Any comment on the application process?

COMFORT ZONE IS BORING!
Why did you apply for MEDes?

We truly believed in a more strategic kind of designers, able to develop insights because of having worked in three European countries.

YEAR 1

I HEARD ABOUT MEDES...

It's not just crazy partying, is a combination of a lot of fun and a lot of studying.

SAYING GOODBYE
Worst experience about MEDES.

FEELING LOST
Worst experience about MEDES.

GETTING TO KNOW THE MEDES FAMILY AT THE WORKSHOP
Favourite experience about MEDES.

ALUMNI'S STORYTELLING
What would you change about the WS?

How do I get along with the other students?

LESS DISTANCE BETWEEN STUDENTS AND TUTORS

MEDES IS ABOUT...

GROWING

ADAPTING

MOVING

SOCIALIZING

I WANTED TO GO TO... BECAUSE...

A PARTY INSIDE A SINKING SHIP WHERE...
If MEDES was a party.

The structure of MEDES is like a family and it's very personal.

YEAR 2

IN 5 YEARS I WANNA BE...

EXPECTATIONS = REALITY?
YES NO

ONE ONLINE CENTRAL HUB
How would you like to be connected in the future?

SHOWING YOU THE BIGGER PICTURE
MEDES is good at...

AN ADVICE ABOUT MEDES TO MY YOUNGER SELF...

YEAR 3

IT'S EXTRAORDINARY
What would you say employers think about MEDES?

I DON'T GIVE SH*T
What would you say employers think about MEDES?

MEDES is the best decision I ever took in my whole education

ADVERTISING ITSELF
MEDES is bad at...

YOU NEED TO BE THE INITIATOR
Main things I've learned from MEDES.

I WOULD HIRE A MEDES GRAD ASAP!
What would you say employers think about MEDES?

Thanks

to all the people that shared their awesome stories!!



TUTOR
YEAR ZERO
FIRST YEAR
SECOND YEAR
THIRD YEAR
ALUMNI

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Prof. Raimo Nikkanen 2015.....P. 19



Prof. Björn Bartholdy

First of all we'd like it if you could tell us how you got involved in the MEDes?

That started happening back in 2003 when I started teaching here at KISD. At this time Müller was responsible for the programme here at KISD. He was the coordinator. There was no professor coordinator for the programme at this time. And he was also the one who was responsible for the accreditation of the Bachelor, Master programme that we were running here at KISD. As you know this will change in the future... This was the time when I got in touch first with MEDes and after the accreditation process, that was a sad thing, because during the accreditation process the office said "Oh yeah we will keep this position for the coordinator" And half a year later they cut it... There was another guy who was 'Mr. MEDes.' I think he was also in the MEDes network, he was a very important person because he was the only full time position. He brought a lot of structure into the whole mess. As we know it is a creative space that is not always 100% well structured. But he is really a very well structured, very precise guy. And so I think he did also a lot for the overall network. When he left the question was "well who will continue the MEDes work here?" So that was I think around 2004. This is where Phillip Heidkamp and I came in... And we both in a personal union, took over the business.

We both went a little bit like I did the BA stuff and he did the MA stuff. We ran the programme here at KISD as buddies and we had always tutors looking after the MEDes. That is funny on one side because although they were interesting, nice students of course, from the administrative point of view a little bit difficult because they stayed for two, three semesters then they handed over to another tutor and that made us start over with the organization here at KISD like every two, three semesters. And every tutor was good of course, they all brought in their own expertise and their ambitions. We started to redesign the formula every now and then. So that was, in terms of continuity and in comparison to what Schmidt did there was a slight break.

On the other side I think it was good for me when I stood in and was an internal representative. Also in terms of the MEDes network, this is how we started the thing or how I started.

You mentioned these MEDes tutors that lasted two or three semesters. Were they comparable to the ones in say the wood workshop, that kind of tutor? Or was it more special?

More administrative perhaps. I don't know how many hours we had, the important thing to know for MEDes in regard to the size of the programme, in

regards to the head count that we have there. From the administration side, it's a horribly huge package that you have to carry around. I mean it's very intense, it's just a handful of people going out every year but it is a lot of handling and taking care of and transcript of records and scholarships. Well it's always been a huge pile of work and it was not easy to do it in this constellation. So I started to insert the idea to have a permanent position, at least a fifty percent position for MEDes. Because also the whole examination thing here at KISD was always difficult. Because the Bachelor they do mostly abroad, then they come back, do a presentation and it's messy. It's difficult. And of course it should be something where an institutionalized position should look after it.

But after we are changing the whole thing, you probably know it will become a side track of the integrated BA. It will not be a separate course in the future. At the moment with KISD we are going through the re accreditation progress as you know every five years. First you make an initial accreditation of programmes then every five years you run through a reaccreditation where you review everything. You write reports, do statistics and stuff. This is done with these accreditation agencies that we have in Germany. I don't know how it's done in your countries but in Germany we have these agencies and they take

care of it. They are public-private ownership agencies. This is happening now. Now the plan is to change MEDes from a separate programme. As far as I know only KISD handled MEDes as a separate, completely separate program you could apply for actually. For instance in Glasgow I think you're picked and then you slip out, it's not that you apply for MEDes. Right?

Yeah you apply in second year of Bachelors and have to do an application and stuff. Coming back to Martins Bauer and Michael Erlhoff, do you know how the whole MEDes began?

The Erlhoff thing I guess was one part but on the other side, probably one of the most important driving forces was Raimo. Raimo from Helsinki.

Was he in the workshop this year?

Of course! You don't know Raimo?! He is the grand old man of MEDes. I think one of the most important guys from MEDes. And Liz, I have to say she is equally important. That's the sad thing because Raimo at the years end will retire soon and this will be, this will be a really difficult situation for MEDes because it's people business in the end. You need the faces, the people that really stand in. From my perspective Gordon took the role of really being the heart of MEDes now, that's how I feel it.

We have to really look forward to bring in new people that you have to make MEDes into your own thing you know? You have to internationalize it. Internationalization in academia is always happening between personal relations, between the teaching people. It is not an abstract agreement you have with two universities, that is there as well, but on the other side you always need the personal touch and that was so nice because I know these guys for many years now and I think we can say we are friends. We do not meet very often but when we meet we feel we have a common vision. We like each other and we have a thing going on there.

So you keep in touch?

Yeah I was in Glasgow this year, not being a MEDes tutor, not being responsible and I will go to Helsinki as well because this is the wave goodbye for Raimo and probably also for Liz. So I will definitely come there. And beside that, with Gamelab we will also try to cooperate in the future with Media Lab in Aalto.

I'll be there in September

You're going there?

Yeah I'll be going there to the Master courses.

Yeah they are a little bit more separate in their departments but you should definitely try to go there. That's a great place as well. We would really like to keep that up, it's the people you know, you also go there because of the people. And there are so many MEDes graduates that I still know. I mean loose contacts but over the years you get very close also with the students you know.

So MEDes is about the people as well.

Well that's life. And the world is about the people as well.

It's interesting because we were looking at how not so many of the alumni go to the workshops.

But I think this is understandable because you go out after so many years, after five years or even more when you pause... after six years many of the students run through the programme and then of course I can understand that you're tired of university to a certain extent. New generations come up as well amongst the students and the teachers.

So you mentioned that you came back to the workshops. Do you still participate in these board meetings or have any sort of contact in the most organizational part of MEDes? Or is it just that you come back to meet the people?

Yes, it's both. The board meetings are of course, organizing things as always important things you know, like the new partner school that slipped into the network now. That was of course discussed during the board meetings and there is always something that we have to handle like with Konstfack. We went out there so we had to look after some substitution and there is always something, but at the end of the day it's equally important to meet the people again.

Because the part that you invest there is only existing when you really feel close to the people. I mean, that's my individual perception of it. Let's see what the others say. They'll probably have another perspective on MEDes.

MEDes is about perspectives as well...

Of course!

Yes, I think they've said the same thing about that the tutors have this common vision that they really like and feel along the same page. Are you familiar with the MEDes visual identity?

Of course, it was created here.

What are your thoughts on that?

Well... corporate design is always a difficult thing and especially in a kind of an institution like MEDes.

Because there are all these strong schools and they all have their identities to a certain extent like KISD. And I think it's quite difficult to have in such a loose network, to have an identity on top. I think that's always difficult, looking for example at the Fachhochschule here, you know that recently a new website got generated and now all the institutions should go there and be part of it: "Why do you need your own website? Come on jump on the train of the big website of the FH" And of course what happens it that all the institutions, even institutes where you would expect from outside that they're abstract, that they're economy, engineering, whatever... they all claim to have their own identity. And this of course will, in the FH context, to have two things going on parallel. And I think that in MEDes this is already the installation; so you have the schools and when you go as a student, you come to KISD and then you're under the roof of KISD and then MEDes is only like a little corner logo like in television. It's not really the main screen any more. So I think that the branding and design of MEDes would make sense if there would be a stronger, centralized organization. If we would have a MEDes office for example.

For some years we had at KISD some people being partially financed also from the partners, taking care of MEDes but we've been staying on the same level since more than ten years now. But to

take a step or two, we would need to raise money to really, you know, make it bigger and for instance, the chance to have corporation projects with institutions or with companies. I think it would be super interesting because we have this multicultural perspective on design in the programme. And therefore of course a kind of MEDes branding would make sense. But as long as we don't have that... I think therefore there is something... What I like is the idea of the logo where you could see, where you have these specific icons for everyone that you can see where she or he's been.

Yeah! The rings where the center is your home university. Some tutors that we talked to, they were mentioning something about some plans to make a double degree or become like a research programme.

Yeah, we have talked about that...

Do you have any?

Yeah. I think there was one student from KISD that did a double degree, with Les Ateliers as far as I know.

Just to clarify, what is meant by a double degree in this case?

Well, double degree means that you come back to your sending institution, you graduate there and then you go

for an extra year to a second... this could be regulated differently within the institutions. But for us, we always thought "oh, one would love to do a double degree with KISD." You go back to Glasgow and you return to KISD and you kind of, add a second master. Then this would be that you would hold two masters from two European design schools.

And to be honest the topics inside of MEDes are not my topics. At the time when there was someone needed here to look after the programme, there was no one who would say "Oh yeah! That's my thing! Hand it over!" So I said "ok, I'll do it" but in the practical work with students... I've never played a big role because it's product, it's service design, it's design management, it's all these things that are really on the other hemisphere of design. This is not mine. This is not audiovisual media, in terms of film, television, video games; they're both very far away.

I just wanted to go back to this connection with Erlhoff and Raimo, so when they started they contacted the other...

I don't know that in detail, that was before my time...that was always Erlhoff quality, you know he was always able to kind of bring people together, that was a very good quality of him.

So how would you describe MEDes in three words?

In three words? It's a great, interdisciplinary, inter-cultural, European, design programme!

Very nice! What would you say is the greatest strength of a MEDes student?

I think, the ability for perceiving the world from inter-cultural perspectives... as you've been introduced to different societies and different ways of thinking and looking at the world, being in an International community, that enables the people really to think inter-culturally. And I think this is the most important thing besides, of course, mobility and stuff like that but everyone has to be mobile today... But this real understanding and this ability, not only the places where you've studied for a year but also the ability to, from there, I think it originates that you just get into kind of a mood to be able to absorb these kind of cultural aspects in, certain places, in different countries. I think this is the biggest asset that MEDes students take with them.

And of course the network, most MEDes students are very well connected, they're still very well connected because they spend intense time together over a long time of studying and I think that there is a quite good network and people that I

meet they're still around and they post things in our alumni Facebook site when they have jobs.

If there was one thing that you could change about the MEDes, what would it be?

I think that's what I've mentioned before, you could push the whole thing if you could have a strong coordinator person that would initiate for instance, these cooperations that I've mentioned with the industry. Or I think a person like this could also be a little more like an incubator into markets, into business. Because I think we don't really help the people into the market but especially with the MEDes students, regarding to what I've said before about the qualities... I mean that could be a job broker as well you know, having contacts in all these industries and positions. Having the MEDes people at the right places, I think that would be awesome as well...

On the other side I also think that the research aspect has a great potential. After applying for several research funds myself, I know that's a real pain in the ass. It's horrible paperwork, it's hundreds of pages that you've got to produce especially in a networked situation. For instance for the whole EU funded programmes, it's really a lot of work with a low percentage of hits that you have with applying and really

getting the money and I think that this would be a big chance of coordination, research, industry, incubation - that would be the package for this person or for these persons. That would of course make it necessary also to establish the programmes a little bit stronger in the universities.

But of course the network only works if you submit students. Taking them is one thing but you also got to submit students to the programme. You don't do that and it's not working. It has to be a bidirectional...

I wasn't sure what is meant with research programme. Is that the students doing more research? Or something else?

No, I mean that could also be related a little bit more because universities of course all want to research and I'm talking about real research not about a little bit of research in a project but that might also be an interesting perspective for graduates, especially those who want to go in an academic direction.

For example PhDs or something else?

For instance, yes. And this could be a beautiful construction with again, industry contacts. You always have immediately in a network because most EU fundings, it's a necessity to have

several partners from around Europe. Here we have a straight standing network of European universities. It's almost impossible to handle that. Because it's so difficult to bring the partners together and then you need one from Portugal and here we already have such a great range of European, top-class universities. It's a research platform already. We just do not run it.

Regarding the tutors' responsibilities, is there any way you pass on?

Well, I don't know how this is handled at the moment. Because I slipped out a year ago.

Did you pass it or did Prof. Heidkamp pass it on?

Professor Heidkamp at a certain point when he became dean, he slipped out of MEDes and I took over the full responsibility for MEDes, for Bachelor and Master. And I still was handling that with the tutors, always yelling for help because it was so difficult.

Do you have a specific proposition in mind then or?

Yeah, no. I've always said that you would need a fifty percent position for running MEDes probably. And as there were thoughts around about having a person for running the whole

examination business here because that's also pain. I've mentioned that it would be probably an interesting idea to have a combination of a person that runs MEDes plus examinations because examinations also grips into MEDes so it could have only one person taking care of the programme. Plus this didn't happen. I mean, it's always about continuity you know. If you have people that invest a certain amount of time in the topic...I never could invest as much as it was needed to push it, really push it you know. Of course we did all kinds of things, we invested time...this is not the amount of time that you need to graph in order to really change things and improve things on a good level. So it was always running and it's working and it's nice like it is, but you could do a lot more with it. Time and money!

Thanks very much!



Prof. Michael Erlhoff

Could you talk us through what you know about how the programme started? We don't really know where the idea came from.

Well the MEDes programme started when I was in discussions especially with people from Glasgow... and the Glasgow people started to talk with me about this, and how could we do something like this. Then we had the connection also, I had it to Aalto University, which in former times was another name in Helsinki. And that was important because the Helsinki people have been always a very international university. They had a lot of experience with foreign students and they had a lot of bureaucracy to solve problems connected with this. And then we were sitting together and talked about who else and then of course it was should be involved. I had been very often invited to Les Ateliers in Paris. So I knew Liz Davis even from those days nearly twenty years ago. And so we thought about Paris and then it was an open discussion. Then Milano started, Politecnico, and that was then the frame. So there were these ideas first how we could cooperate more and find ways and then how can could we start to move students between our universities. And then this programme started. Then I was the stepping back a little bit and other people had to do it and did it. And so it was really something which started more than fifteen years ago.

So was the initial purpose of the programme to set up an exchange or was there a broader idea?

Exchange or more a network. You know, we thought "ok well these are the very good design schools, in Europe" and first we did the step inside Europe, and how can could we find ways more of cooperation. And then we came of course, and this is very important, to give the students the chance to move between these universities and to find a way of constructing a programme, enabling them to do this without losing any time during the studies, but to get to know other people, to get to know other ways of studying. Because you know each of these universities has a special way of acting within this studying and teaching design and doing research. And I think it's always important, on the one hand it's important to get to understand the quality of your so called home university. You only understand this when you have been somewhere else because it's normal, if it's normal you always take it as normal you know? So it's interesting. But also to understand how other people are teaching because we are not the ones who would say "we are the only ones." No, they would have good possibilities, chances. For example Les Ateliers is a little bit more art orientated, but in an interesting way. And came out good people. And Aalto is this kind of strange, Helsinki, way of living.

So it's things like this, really to offer students the chance, and this is important with design because design, and this is one of its qualities, is primarily a very international activity. And we had to establish this international way also, to know how it is not a regional or national culture. We have to cross these borders and its important networks.

Well one of the tutors mentioned that they have considered making it more international and talking about getting partner schools from America or Japan. What would you think about that?

Well of course we did a lot of this also you know that was, even in the beginning, funny enough by chances I remember an example, this was nearly... twenty years ago and I was invited to this huge exit ICSID conference in Taiwan, in Taipei... and they asked me if we could take part. They could teach there, also somewhere but we had not the money to do this. Well I just found money to send two students to Taipei because there was also a possibility to do a huge exhibition of our universities but we had no money to give them something. So what they had was a CD Rom. And we told them, "Ok we give you the flight, but then you have to try to do an exhibition there." And they did the best exhibition there! Because out of all the packaging, of all the other universities, they took this material for their the exhibition.

And then they found a woman, she's a teacher at the university who gave them a computer and the light. And so suddenly we had this connection. And then we had connections with Japan. But this is a different programme. And I think otherwise this is getting too confused.

You know you cannot, even for MEDes it is not easy in this field to learn the organisational structure. And so the students, the KISD students can go wherever they want. We have some universities where there's KISD, where there's MEDes programme. And we have some universities in Japan, in the US, Hong Kong, China, where we have direct contacts and we can say "you can go there and we can support you." But if somebody wants to go to San Fransisco or Malaysia then ok well that's their problem. But we could not do the same, what we did with MEDes on a global level. This is impossible. You then have to meet at least once a year with the others. Even then this would be complicated.

That's true. Is the purpose of the workshops then to create this strong network and reinforce it? Is that how you see it?

Yes absolutely. And of course within the MEDes we could do more but, you know, it is not so easy, cooperation is always a dream but in reality it becomes complicated.



Think of very banal structures like different times of university holidays and different times of examinations etcetera, etcetera and that makes it more complicated. And then you have to organise all these basic structures. And this is complicated. And it cannot be done by the students themselves. You know they need support because these stupid bureaucratic ways and things, so I would even say that it would have been nice to do more what we do with the Japanese, Chinese, Hong Kong etcetera - universities with which we call it "international, special projects." Like I go on Thursday with Professor Brandes to Hong Kong for such a project where we cooperate with students from Hong Kong. Ten students from KISD are joining us or we are joining them, and then they are cooperating with ten students from Hong Kong, on a specific project. This would have been nice also with the MEDes universities but it's difficult.

Definitely. Is the structure and the way the MEDes is set up, does it reflect or is it linked to the KISD structure and how that was designed?

Well let's say The KISD structure: One of the qualities is that it has this open structure with the projects. That means here many students, we can do joint projects or offer joint projects to other universities. We can offer students, foreign students, exchange students

the possibility to say "you can go there, there or there, you can mix your own schedules, you build it up as you want etcetera, etcetera." We had hoped that other universities are following faster than some do with these concepts but you know that many of the universities, even within the MEDes programme, have quite tough schedules. They still have still this specialisation on this course, this course, this course etcetera. There are also some tendencies meanwhile, or there have been in some universities to open this more, to this project based and interdisciplinary context. And I think that was the good experience you got here, when you are here and you go home with this experience and share it with your university.

Yes it's very different from the structure of GSA I think.

Yes but you know when I had to write this concept for KISD more than twenty years ago, I had been teaching at the university for eight years, not in design, but I had a lot of experience with international design universities. When I was Head of the German Design Council I was very often invited to give lectures there or one week workshops. And out of all this I constructed KISD. One basic point was I always thought students are adult people, so you have to give them the freedom to do what they want and just offer them the

frames to do this. That means that you can choose yourself what do you want to do. It is inevitably multidisciplinary, but this is all Buckminster Fuller who said "specialists are slaves." And I trust this sentence. They are slaves. And we don't want to teach slaves. So we have to open up the story and the reality of design is not discipline. We just did a nice research with our former students and at least with five hundred we discussed and made interviews and so. And if you see five hundred people who studied design, you see five hundred different professions. There's not one linear line from, "you studied design and then you become this kind of designer." Design is this open but it's not only in design meanwhile, it's in every field. Also engineering etcetera. It's totally open. So you are creating also your own profession even within a company or an agency. And I think this you have to learn while you study. So we had to take, and we still take hopefully, the students as adult people. As people, as more than partners, to create the possibility to learn something and to teach. It's a good philosophy I think. This has definitely helped us being able to do this self-initiated project, which is why we're doing this project. We're no longer in schools you know. But this is a different way. It's a completely different perspectives what you do in academy or university.

Thank you for a great interview!



Prof. Liz Davis

Can you talk me through how the MEDes started?

Well of course the story is filtered by my own life and culture...

In 1992 Europe structured itself so that there would be funding for students and staff to move around Europe. And basically it was a very nice time for us because there was money to meet and build networks. Students started moving around quite often for three months, maybe four months... but little by little, the staff realised it was fantastic to do these meetings but the money was going to run out very quickly. That was an intelligent way of building networks because people were getting to meet together, eat together, drink together in the same hotels, work together in a constructive but non administrative way. And the students were happy because they were moving around Europe and getting a bit of money for it. But the institutions weren't building any depth of knowledge or any kind of material that could be long lasting. So there was this idea of constructing something that would allow for a deeper experience and would actually give students the opportunity to spend a longer time in one place, which then brought in the issue of the use of learning language to enter fully into a particular culture. So the first, basic idea was really drawn up by Glasgow, by Norman McNally.

He was the Head at the time of Product Design. Glasgow was very product design orientated at the time. We at Les Ateliers were very open and interdisciplinary "Design is everywhere!"

Norman McNally and Ian Grout drew up a structure, partly based on conversations we'd had I think. It was to be a five-year integrated master. Two years plus two years plus one year. Later on that became a bit of a problem. (reference to the Bologna system (BMD) introduced in 1999 to harmonise European education, structured around Bachelor, Master and Doctorate degrees) So Norman and Ian drew up this kind of visual plan and gathered together the people from schools they knew and trusted for a first meeting. This is where KISD came in, because Michael Erthoff was very good at smelling a good project and a good opportunity and also very good at finding money so that it could happen, which is not always the case. So he came up with a little bit of funding for us to have a meeting in Cologne. I can't remember if it was 1995 or 1996. We had the meeting with, obviously, Glasgow, Les Ateliers - we were very much Les Ateliers at the time - Helsinki, at the time called Taik, and Konstfack. I don't think that the Italians were at the first meeting. Yes, Politenico di Milano joined later...and I think Prof Klaus Lehmann from Stuttgart was at the first meeting. The reason there were two

schools from Germany was, my reading of it, Norman (GSA) who spoke very good German was very close to the Stuttgart school... And so he started off talking to the Stuttgart people. And Cologne, being the bright, new school was a kind of young, dynamic newcomer.

We were the 'odd school' - but a very visible, famous school at the time. The Glasgow guys were really good at structuring ideas, presenting ideas and gathering people together. We at Les Ateliers were very used to working with Glasgow and Helsinki and also with Konstfack. There were a lot of KISD people in that meeting, including Gui Bonsiepe and our friend who... died last year, Heiner Jacob.

So we had that meeting which was tough for me because I was very sick with Bronchitis. I'm so glad I was there because I can say I was at the first MEDes meeting! Then the second meeting we had was in Paris. And that was, you know, "now we are building a programme together." So Glasgow brought an administrator to the meeting and I remember Peter McGrory, recently graduated design leadership student in Helsinki, was very active. We made a booklet. I know that because I spent hours making this booklet. And every school had to make a paper of five reasons that make each school special and what we're looking for in MEDes and

stuff like that, it's quite funny. It's in my MEDes archive box I'm pretty sure.

So then what happened, we decided it would be launched in the 'Year of Design' in Glasgow in 1999. And we thought we would be ready. And I think that was the first meeting with students. But we weren't ready to move students around. The first students moved in 2000, I think. The idea was definitely to build on existing networks of trust, which has always been a leitmotif. The MEDes only works if there is trust between the schools and between the professors, as you so delightfully call us!

Yes we've gone from tutors to Professors at KISD now.

Well the Board has always been quite flexible. Usually each school has one professor who works closely with students and one person who is more of an organizational person, who makes sure the system runs. When there was a really strategic moment then some high up persons with good signature power would join the meeting. People would sometimes bring administrative people so they would support the project. The idea was always to have a group of people who trust each other. From the very beginning everyone said "This is a wonderful idea, we really want to make it work," but none of us has a job called 'MEDes Professor' or 'Leader',



and there is no budget. We agreed not to create something like a “usine à gaz,” I’m not sure what you say in English, a sort of multi-layered, complicated, administrative system. We don’t want to waste time on administration. This has to run in a very lean way. The second thing was that we felt very strongly we had to build on the European experience. We read a lot of the EU papers and applied for quite a lot of funding but we never got much money...

The MEDes was right in line with what the European union was asking of education, of an open, broader education, young people who were used to moving around, who were used to being flexible enough to integrate into another European culture, who were prepared to learn languages... This was a very unusual thing for design students and we did design it into the brief. And little by little over the years, because of the almost impossible equation of actually selecting students six months before they go, balanced with having to put quite a lot of effort into learning a language, the thing got watered down apart from the French situation, which of course remains the same - you do have to speak French.

The other thing was that we truly believed - and Norman McNally did a lot of work on the background of this - that there was a new designer profile,

a designer who would perhaps have more of a leadership role, would have his/her own way of working, but not necessarily be looking to become a famous star at the Milan Fair... a more strategic kind of designer who would be able to develop insights that would be very salable in the future, because of having worked in three European countries and being able to understand how different European cultures work together and which parts of design happen to be stronger or weaker in different parts of Europe. And at the beginning we really were trying to inject a strong MEDes academic module or experience into each school’s programme, to promote a new kind of leadership and understanding of what the fabric of Europe is... we never quite got this off the ground here in Paris, but we had huge hopes! I think it depends very much on each country how the thing works now. At this point we were also asking the students to actually write a paper on what issue was important for them and what they’d like to be looking at in terms of Europe. I think basically it was Stuttgart and Paris that really tried to push for that and it didn’t really take off. I’m going backwards again to this trust thing.

So what you have to imagine is this completely mad idea in fact of creating a Master programme with seven different cultural partners, which has no central

office. No central administration. No budget. And nobody actually officially has a job! And I think it is completely magical that it worked! I’m so proud of this because I find it so contemporary. Of course we came across many problems because we didn’t have anybody to deal with central administration and running of the project but it survived nonetheless. Another central concept, because I remember we sat there and said “Yes but, we’re just going to have a whole load of students wandering around but there’s no place that they can relate to. How do we make this into a programme? How do we make this into a family?” And that was when the idea of this, once a year “Forum” was born, a working together workshop, a collective meeting up ... the idea that everybody has to be together once a year, and moving the event around the schools so that each school could take the weight of the financial engagement of doing such a thing. For me, without the Forum (now called the workshop), the MEDes would never have worked. There would be no notion of belonging.

It also relies on the personal engagement of a group of tutors (or Professors or leaders) believing passionately in this programme, being prepared to give time and finding the budget to meet once a year. I think about five or six years ago we added a second organisational meeting for the tutors.

What happened in each school is, with a few little hiccups, if somebody left they would pass on the leadership to somebody who was going to be equally passionate. So you never really noticed that the team was changing, especially since there are still a few of the original people around like Raimo and Ian and me - still in there, since the beginning. So that was also a passing of the flame, like the Olympic torch. The last few years it’s got slightly more difficult. We’ve had a few tricky moments.

It’s all interesting! I was just wondering how do you see your role in the MEDes now? You mentioned it has changed and I guess you’re thinking about who you would pass it on to now?

Well we’ve more or less decided that. For me it was really hard in Glasgow because I realised then that I’d been in this from the beginning and it was really important to me and I had really put a lot of energy and care into it. I’ve passed on the leadership to Gilles Levavasseur, though it’s still me talking to you because I know the story. I’ve asked Gilles, who is the person in charge of student study paths (a kind of head tutor) to take over. He’s got a very different background from mine, in education management ; I’ve come up through design and education and urban studies, a more or less creative background and education.



Gilles is pretty excited about it. And there is a coordinator, Claire Fernier, who will be working with me and who will be joining Gilles on the MEDes team. She will be the person who follows the students and makes sure the organization happens. And the interesting thing about Claire is that she worked for many years in a Japanese company. So we've already worked on a Chiba workshop, tested out working together. She's already really into the spirit of the MEDes. Because I'm going to stay in Les Ateliers for another year or so, I'm rather hoping there might be think tanks or projects developed outside the main project and I might be able to contribute. I'll be available for the students while I'm still in the school. I'm a network person and, as you know, I keep in touch with people and that's not going to stop. But the decision is made to hand over. otherwise it gets too confusing you know. Having someone who's been there so long, knows the whole story, no one else can find their feet. I'm not coming to Helsinki which is devastating because there's a farewell party for Raimo!

I've done quite a lot of work with Gordon. Gordon and I get on well, and we've always spent a lot of time talking about the MEDes. There are issues, there are a lot of issues that need to be looked into again now. It's got a bit straggly. And so a new generation of people will

question certain things and tighten up certain things. One of the issues we never managed to deal with was how to support - and 'exploit' I think in a way - the students who come back after their two-year time out. We've been trying for several years to set up some kind of workshop for those students so that they don't suddenly find themselves alone, thrust back into their own school where they know nobody, but still have a feeling of belonging to the MEDes. So that's something that we feel strongly about. For example, the University of Chiba ('Friends of MEDes') workshops could be for 5th Year MEDes. if they could find an industrial partnership to sponsor them. I don't know how the students feel about that. The other thing is real engagement for building a research network. The notion that the MEDes is made up of three levels is relatively new (Glasgow and Les Ateliers don't have a Bachelor step in the MEDes programme by the way...) The MEDes was constructed on the model of Les Ateliers because we divide studies into three phases (phase one = two years, phase two = two years and a one year degree phase). So for the MEDes that means two years in your own school and two years abroad and one year back home for the degree.

In 2004 or something like that, suddenly all the schools in Europe were supposed to separate study into Bachelor and Master tracks and this didn't fit the

MEDes integrated master concept. At Les Ateliers we fought like hell to avoid dividing up our programme to fit this BMD (Bachelor/Master/Doctorat) system. - Glasgow, being under the Scottish education authority also managed to avoid it for their MEDes. But it seems to me that all the German schools, for example, had to adopt the new rule and now possibly regret it. The new EU ruling introduced this whole notion of Bachelor students into the MEDes (first year MEDes exchange), and Master students (second year exchange). This extra difficulty (where some students find themselves following a Bachelor project and thesis whilst abroad in another school) dates from the BMD.

Some MEDes students wanted double degree status so we decided we would try the experiment if the two schools involved agreed to the process. This was a complex experience for Johanna Hartzheim, the first (and only) graduate to try out the system. She spent over a year in Paris working on her second degree thesis and project (in French). She successfully gained full degree status from both KISD and ENSCI-Les Ateliers, but to be honest, we didn't manage it very well in Paris and there are a lot of details to resolve.

The MEDes programme gives you a degree supplement mentioning the

partner schools you've studied in. In the case of Les Ateliers' graduates they're still waiting - we haven't done this work yet!

And the top floor of the MEDes is the research network and that might someday turn into a joint PhD. So far all the schools with research programmes, or trying to build up research, have agreed to collaborate. I think the first meeting we had about this was here in Paris about four years ago. The Italians have a huge university system behind them so they're up and running with doctorate education and have loads of doctorate students moving around. The Finns made some clever strategies when they joined Europe as they were far from the centre and had to develop their specificity which was A - being the door to the Eastern Block countries and B - offering a very high level English-speaking master and doctorate education. Glasgow has always been a motor in the MEDes and their design research network is growing fast.

And who else is in there? Now we have a new member university, Aveiro, and they will probably be interested in joining the research network. And Les Ateliers has a few doctorate students despite non-university schools being dependent on partnerships with outside doctoral labs - I think KISD is also in that position. So this is where we are, the idea is to



first make sure we know the themes being worked on, seeing which themes can combine, giving these PhD students the opportunity to spend three to six months at another school, connecting with different tutors, with different networks and so on. So that's another kind of mobility. And the other thing is trying to get plugged back into the European Commission and do research projects together. We experimented with a bid last year with the GSA Institute of Design innovation, Les Ateliers and KISD. So the idea will be to keep an eye on opportunities and try to respond as a MEDes. group.

I was going to ask how you see the structure of the MEDes but it's good you did it naturally without me asking.

Well this is important, the MEDes is there, it has a name, it actually exists as a material thing. Despite the fact it's not connected to a space, it's not connected to a budget, it's not connected to anything but an education and a particular education dynamic...

So would you say the initial values, and the reasons for starting the programme, you have covered them? Or is there another purpose? Or is it this kind of network and academia mentality?

Well I think we quite definitely felt the opportunity of Europe, I mean the MEDes

is rooted in Europe because Europe of course was young and exciting at the time. We sincerely believed the students going through the MEDes would get better jobs, quicker. And though I couldn't sit here and actually tell you how much our graduates are earning, I think a lot of the MEDes students are snapped up. The idea was that these are people who have actually thought about and experienced what it means to be a designer, operating, and producing in Europe. That is an amazingly important background to have for the Japanese or the Chinese or the Brazilians... And I think that's been proved right. For example many non-Europeans are interested in the MEDes. The Chiba workshops are based on this. Our Japanese colleagues state quite clearly that there's a real difference between MEDes students and students from other schools. You students move around, you have to be incredibly adaptable, culturally adaptable but also have to know how to operate quickly and in depth because you're not just jumping in and out, you're actually sticking it out for a year. You've got to get to grips with what's going on. There's a much greater sense of listening to others, observing, having the antennae to understand what's going on. A more reflective way of working. I don't see it really as a programme for people who are going to be stars. I think that you have to have a deep interest for other people.

And team working and so on. And all these qualities are what people are looking for in higher-level design jobs.

And this is also invaluable for the workshops. The yearly meet-up, is unbelievably complex to organize because there're so many parts in the system to deal with. You have the student selection, you have the 2nd year student presentations, the school videos etc. You have what used to be one big workshop where initially the staff would work with their new student group, which was a nice thing. I used to love that of course. You'd make the selection and you'd form the new student groups. Then the new students with the staff from their new school would all work together, so consequently everyone would get to know each other. Unfortunately what happens now is that we have so much work to do, the Board carries on while the students do their workshop ... In fact, what seems to happen now is the student workshop has broken into three pieces, which is the Bachelor workshop, the more advanced student workshop which produces the white paper. Mainly the older students who are not moving anymore and who feed into the discussions of the Board, so that the MEDes can actually develop. And now there's also the research group.

I've forgotten things in there, but this Forum turns into an enormously

sophisticated system which is the pivot for the whole year. The students of the MEDes are all perfectly able to run their own thing, set up their own workshop, suggest developments, come up with their own branding, it's a kind of family where everybody just gets on with their job.

I was going to ask about the board. What's its purpose?

It's the guarantee that everybody is going to have an education in each school and there isn't going to be imbalances or conflict about Bachelor projects or ETCS and the assurance that you know who to phone if you have someone who is difficult. There are moments when you feel you have to phone up the person in charge directly at the other school because there's a real, very personal, situation to be dealt with. And we can literally pick up the phone or send a text because we know each other so well. So there's that. There're strategic decisions obviously to be made, development decisions, communication, this whole research issue etc. If somebody has an idea they want to develop we discuss it, it usually takes about three years to take shape. Work will be done outside the rhythms of the meetings and it will get off the ground. The research network happened like that. The Chiba partnership was an issue. What do we do with Chiba? Chiba kept proposing



interesting things for students - travel to Japan, joint seminars and so on. My standpoint from the beginning was that the seven schools are the beating heart of MEDes, but that Europe as a concept doesn't exist unless you have some connection with non-Europeans. My own work has always been international, for me Europe is just part of a bigger picture. I always hoped we would develop strong relationships with satellite schools on different continents. Chiba in Japan got so excited about us that a satellite in Japan somehow happened. I had hoped this would happen with ParsonsThe New School, New York. Most of the MEDes partners already work with Parsons so it's maybe just a question of re-articulating. We kept telling Chiba "but you're not European, you can never be in the MEDes." But finally, being in a Japanese workshop is a very good opportunity to understand what you are as a European. And so we changed them into 'Friends of MEDes'.

Another ongoing anxiety was when the first students, the first schools came together, it was random in terms of a European strategy - mainly Northern schools and two German partners... There were two questions no one dared ask "why are there two German schools? And why is there no English school and only Scotland?". We tried and tried to find a Spanish school, or at least a Mediterranean partner. Some of us were

promoting the idea of Turkey but the Scandinavians were not convinced it would be a popular student choice. We had these conversations again and again. But then there was the problem with Stuttgart moving out so now I'm really glad we've brought in Portugal. We've finally solved the balance with Southern Europe.

About the logo and the brand, do you know when it formed?

I think it started off in a white paper. When I said there's no fixed place, there's no budget and nobody has a job in the MEDes it means all these things like branding and communication and websites end up being done by students who are then going to leave. So it's really difficult to have any continuity whatsoever. It's not that we haven't worked on this. It's just that there's no budget and it's a fact of life that people are only going to be around for one or two years. Cologne was great in the sense that yet again KISD came up with a some money for a few years to pay for a MEDes Coordinator, That worked out beautifully, but raised expectations which was probably a bad idea as it didn't last! The coordinators started collecting materials and trying to work on a project of branding and communication. I remember in the last Paris Forum, in the white paper discussion, some of the students had

a communication-branding-logo workshop (I don't remember, maybe it was decided in the meeting before?) And we all had to vote on the concept which was then developed. Each school put in 2000 Euros to develop the MEDes student handbook - in Cologne with a group of students who carried the idea forward. Another branding exercise was the decision to have a stand in the Salone del Mobile in Milano, about five years ago? And then again we all worked together to do something. At Les Ateliers we did a video (special thanks to Victor Stelmasuk!) with past MEDes students I should show you. It might interest you about how to get more students in. I can be more precise on dates and things, when you finished I can photocopy things from the archive box.

So it was a group decision. It was the students who did the workshop during the week, everybody voted and we came up with this idea, or they came up with this idea that we agreed on, which was every student has a different colour scheme because every student pathway is different. So this idea that "I start in Paris, I then go to Glasgow and I end up in Helsinki, so I have those three colours." Or the other way round so everybody's different so that's how the coloured target images came up. Up to now I would say that most of the graphic work has happened in Cologne and a lot of expertise from Milan communications'

students. We now have some new graphic design expertise coming in from Aveiro. Because there's no archive, not much on the past workshops, is there any event, project or workshop generated by the MEDes that you think has been very beneficial for the project? Well let me remember, there haven't been many joint projects, there was the joint book which I'm talking about. There was the Salone exhibition which I talked about, there have been a few "alumni" you call them? - Graduate, projects which were very exciting at the time and probably still happen - a group who did a workshop in Thailand because there happened to be a Thai student from Glasgow. It was when they were in Helsinki that they came up with this. I thought this was great because I like the idea that a European Master group was going elsewhere to work on design.

This never got structured into the MEDes but the student initiatives are great. To go back to the Forums/ workshops - I think the white paper is absolutely necessary. It's an essential process where, every year, the (senior) students get together to analyse, from what they observe and hear from their friends and colleagues, what should be moving more, what's not working, what the expectations are etc. I don't ever remember having an aggressive staff-student meeting. We've always had a Student Board and the Staff Board.



And this is a two way process. There's one thing I regret, I think something we have lost from the original concept, I suspect again because the schools just don't have the finances. This is the academic preparation phase. What is Europe? You know, what is the role of Europe in the world, what is its history, some kind of background on economy and production... I really hoped to set up a special programme here, open to MEDes and other students... And the annual workshop was initially supposed to be contextual – a subject or event linked to the city or locality of the workshop. Over the years the workshop has become a subject that someone wanted to deal with or a sponsoring opportunity or whatever. But the notion of context was for me really important. The idea was to take an issue, a local issue or a national issue and to put the designers to work on that. One of the most hilarious workshops we did was in Stuttgart. The city of Stuttgart is full of spas, and all these spas are full of older people. I have to say it was Ian Grout and myself who persuaded Prof. Scheuer to work on "Contemporary spa", working with the professionals on how to change the spa culture in a way that could attract young people. We all spent 20% of our time in a spa, in a swimming costume! But that was based on an actual local economic issue, a real project, a real local partnership. There is something in the initial workshop

brief that has been forgotten. Maybe it doesn't have to happen all the time. But maybe sometimes we could go back to this notion that we are almost a guerrilla group working on a local issue.

Another of the important joint projects is the MEDes research network. It doesn't look like anything at the moment but it could become incredibly powerful and could also be a way of connecting – and perhaps developing – the "Friends of" the MEDes network.

Ok so the research network is kind of the form of the PhD's at the moment?

Yes. Again it goes back to pulling together issues and giving them depth and dimension. So, for example, if you've got one person in Paris working on 'Health issues for outlying regions with little transport', then very obviously if you work with the GSA Centre for Design innovation in Scotland or a similar project in Finland you've got some really strong research potential. Solutions in another part of Europe can possibly be interesting for Brittany, for example (which is where I'm going to be living!). It's a way of creating a far stronger project that can attract funding, and combining resources. If you're looking at the same problem and walking around it from different cultural viewpoints, then you're going to be able to give it much more dimension. So there could

be something very strong in that. And this "Friends of" idea goes back to my original image of the MEDes having mirrors-partners on different continents. And I think that the relationships with the European Commission is important because basically we could do with some funding. And of course, promotion, but for that you need a permanent team. I feel sorry for these website people because no one ever keeps it going.

Yeah it's very difficult. The website would be something we would love to tackle.

Gordon and I started up the MEDes LinkedIn group and Gordon tries very hard to keep that going, It's a professional network for alumni and for job offers etc. As far as I know more students follow the FB group. But since I've always banned FB from my life I have to ask somebody to tell me what's going on! I now realise that there are also a lot of students who don't use FB. To be honest I only post proud messages like "At Les Ateliers another MEDes student has just graduated!"

Thanks for an awesome interview!



Prof. Ian Grout

How did the MEDes begin?

I'd just started at GSA and Norman McNally, the then Head of PD said "wouldn't it be interesting to design a Master of European Design." And I said "it would be interesting". I thought "designing education, that sounds cool".

So we literally sat down in his back garden and designed the MEDes. It was a nice day, sunny and breezy, designing it took about ten minutes (a couple of beers actually). I went home and sat in my kitchen with a large piece of graph paper and drew it. We had a clear idea from the beginning about what it should do; design education was changing in Europe and we wanted to capitalize on that. In choosing the partners, we simply choose those we knew, the best ones, those we had already established exchange programmes with. So we knew them, they knew us, they knew each other. After a bit more detail planning (about ten more beers) we had finalised the concept. Cologne found some money to bring us all together; So off we went, map in hand. I still have the map.

We rolled out the map onto the table [in Cologne] and said..."How about that then?" And everybody said "that's pretty good." And off we went. So it was actually a very simple thing to do because basically it's just taking an idea of using a network. One of the beauties of

it is that it's all done at a department to department / peer to peer level and all the decisions go through at the working / delivery level. It makes for good, resilient and sustainable networks. In terms of partners seven seemed about perfect, any less it's not interesting, any more and you lose the ability to connect easily and meaningfully. It all basically just works on the idea that you have very good schools, which you can trust and you share students. You accept each institution's curriculum and perspective on design. And we are very careful to make sure that we made the best of each institution's strengths and differences. There is no point in you going to Helsinki if it's just the same education as in Glasgow but the beer is a bit more expensive.

So that's what we did; it was really that easy to design MEDes. From the beginning, everybody thought it was a really good idea and that we were trying to understand the future of design. The interesting thing about it is that the basic structure hasn't changed! I keep telling my newer colleagues "surely things have changed." But actually the structure is still the same; After all a good idea is a good idea, and this is still really a good idea. It's survived the ups and downs that are inevitable inside institutions, MEDes endures. I think what's happened over the last twelve years is that the landscape of

design has changed, we are moving more towards the idea of service design, design for experience and social design so it's kind of beginning to flow broadly together. But originally it was really diverse. The framework allows for a lot of flexibility. Does that answer that question?

Yes! And what was your original role in the formation of the MEDes?

Norman was head of department and I had just joined the school, we worked together on it, so co-creator I would say, initially. And then I looked after the academic exchange side, developed some of the design curriculum and taught into the programme.

So is that what your role is now?

My role is still academic exchange, to go to the annual workshop, board meetings and that kind of thing. And I love it. It's like my child in a way. There are just three of the original people left, Raimo Nikkanen (Helsinki), Liz Davis (Paris) and me and we will all have left by the end of 2015, an era passes one could say.

So who was the first person you met on the programme?

Everyone.

Everyone?

Everyone. Everyone came to Cologne. Everybody came into a room and sat down. Norman knew most of them. I'd just started teaching. The person that really helped me a lot was Liz Davies from Les Ateliers, she was really helpful. She's the Mother of the MEDes you should know.

So what other obstacles did the programme encounter when it was first getting off the ground?

Surprisingly few. We had some obstacles inside the school because our senior management suddenly realised that it was serious. There was some questions about maintaining quality and the cost of it, it was remarkably cheap to run in the beginning. MEDes is easy, it's just an extensive exchange programme, really, with some of the best schools in Europe which naturally takes care of the quality of the education. Most of the other institutions didn't have difficulty with it either.

The MEDes structure is flexible and operates differently in different schools, for Cologne students and Milan students they have to do their bachelor degree at home, it's so easy to do when you sit down together to work it out, it's so direct, so simple, you just decide around a table and there's never more than fourteen people. Trust makes it all possible.

So what do you consider were the aims of the programme when it first began?

It was simply a matter of understanding that design is an international activity and therefore design education should be. And the idea that a student could get a really different and valuable experience than they could in a traditional BA or BDes programme was a strong aspect. We thought that through the MEDes programme students could get a breadth of education that they wouldn't be able to get any other way, to be able to study in significant cultures and significant schools across Europe.

And the cultural aspect was very important as is the ability to develop international networks. It's pretty simple. And it's still unique. Simple things are best; Always.

So you mentioned that all the schools gathered round at the first meeting. Is there a reason why you chose those specific seven schools?

Well it's simple; It's because they were the best. And we knew them which makes a big difference. At the time we designed it these schools represented the breadth and depth of European design education. Milan came in about a year after but everyone else was right there at the beginning. We could now expand further east now that Europe has

opened up much more. We have been even thinking of going as far as Turkey... It could also be a little bit more weighted to the South because it tends to be quite Northern. But what you do is you just see what's there, who talks to you, who's interested, who's good and go with that. It would be possible to do it in different ways of course.

When I was a visiting professor in Sweden we did a lot of work on a two year World Masters where you spend six months at home, six months at another school, six months at another school and back home. The basic MEDes idea still works for this; that's really interesting.

Can you take a minute to draw how you see the structure of the MEDes?

I'll draw two. It's interesting there is no official structure, there's kind of two ways to sketch it but it is simply that there are the schools and they're in a flat networked system. No school or staff member within the school has more power than the others. That's the way the students experience it. In the second structure Glasgow tends sit at the centre. And the other schools all connect around it because Glasgow has a kind of fatherly role. We've certainly tried to give it away but it's kept coming back. I guess MEDes has to have some kind of spiritual home and Glasgow has to be that.

Could you talk us through the first workshop you experienced? And how the workshops have changed?

Well obviously workshops vary from institution to institution as it should. The first real workshop was in Glasgow. There was a smaller number of students than now because we had just started. We took over the halls of residence and just lived in there, staff and students working it out. The idea of running a workshop has always been central to MEDes. At one level it's about arranging the exchanges at another it's about working together and at another bringing family together. What's really interesting is that workshops are always, pretty much universally the same. The parties are important because it's an important way of making and reinforcing social contact. One way they've grown up is that we've begun to do seminar based activities.

The next question is what's your favourite workshop and why?

I've enjoyed all of them in different ways. But the first one in Glasgow has to be my favourite because it was just so exciting to be there with this brand new educational programme and we were actually going to put students out into it! It's quite an extraordinary thing. There we were all sitting around going "bloody hell! It's going to happen.

It's mad, argh! " Since then I've lost count of the workshops in a way, they go into a haze. I can remember the more difficult ones for sorting the students placements out. They always stay with you. And that's quite interesting that we don't have a uniform formula process. If you do the exchange workshop in Finland the process is very Finnish. If you do it in Milan it's very Milanish. We take a great deal of care and effort about placing our students, negotiating and discussing until we're sure its as good as we can get it. But the sort of operating culture changes from place to place. And it's an unbelievably egalitarian process. Nobody has a right to veto, we all have to agree and we do.

Can you talk about one MEDes event or project that you thought was really beneficial for the programme?

No, because it's such a collective, holistic thing that it kind of grows organically in its own way. I guess the most monumental one was going to Cologne and starting the process. It was the most extraordinary thing to do. That's the biggest one ever for me. In reality it's rather like being in a kind of interesting, curiously different but friendly family – that's what the programme feels like to me, like having many interesting cousins that you meet every year for a family reunion. And there's a kind of generous conviviality around it all and everybody



parks their issues at the door. Suddenly you stop being from your institution and you start becoming a part of MEDes. It's really interesting, always. Through MEDes you get to see inside, and really close in, the details of the other institutions and their students. It's good to know where you sit in a kind of European way. You're like "really! You do that kind of thing". The great thing is the universal openness and that is how it should be. It's the immense value collectively of what people can get out of working openly with each other.

So now moving away from the institutions, what do you think of the MEDes alumni? Would you like to see any changes in their role in the programme?

I would like us to have a really good idea of what our alumni are now doing across the whole MEDes network. I would like for us to have some way of seeing, what all the degree shows of the MEDes look like. It would be nice to have a place even if we do it in a virtual way. Even if all the degree shows are at different times. Maybe we could decide, "there'll be one day where all the MEDes degree shows are on at the same time." It would be good if we could actually link it all up and show it so we can all talk about what we've done and be proud of it. It would be good to see what a particular student did throughout their study, what the degree

output was and how that consequently developed into a career path. That would be really, really good to have. But the difficulty is that the MEDes runs perfectly well as a kind of anarchically convivial network. Once you start putting things like that in somewhere, someone has to manage MEDes and that could clutter the energy. I'm lucky if I meet an alumni at an MEDes workshop. Some of them come back to Glasgow and tell me what's happening which is always so nice. It's really a question of how formal we want MEDes to be, at what cost and to whose benefit. Again it's a bit like your family, how much detail do you need to know about what they are doing?

Have you seen a pattern in the types of career path the alumni have taken after graduation?

Certainly hugely International, at quite high level as well. Somehow the MEDes students manage to begin to operate at quite a high level quite early on. And a lot of that is to do with the network they built while they are studying. MEDes opens up broad opportunities for professional practice. A lot of Glasgow's students go and work in other countries. There's an interesting trend, that might not be in your question, that we see in Glasgow in particular is that our students are generally younger than students from other institutions so, currently, a significant number of our

students take a year out between year three and four, or between year four and five because they've picked up a job or they want to grow up a bit and they want to find out what they want to do. In the end every MEDes student seems to be very well networked and able to function in a truly international and professional way. MEDes seems to be very highly regarded in terms of the students ability to work across borders and barriers. I know we have several employers like 'Plan' now in London who seek out our MEDes graduates because they are able to operate cross culturally, cross language, multi-skilled and independent. That's the great thing about the MEDes profile each will be unique but all will be highly valued.

So what would you say is the greatest strength of the MEDes student?

Well I think the most important thing is the cross cultural profile. The greatest thing about MEDes is, the European context and an extraordinary breadth of understanding different cultures, different ways of working, a sense of independence, an ability to make networks and a connecting up of opportunities. Yes it's quite interesting you know, if you compare an MEDes Masters student to a traditional Masters student is that MEDes graduates may not be as specifically deep and narrow but they are very broad and able. So those

qualities are really useful, especially for international organisations. Our graduates seem to do alright and that's a great thing.

Where do you see the MEDes going in the long term? Do you think it will change?

It should change. . . What I mean is that design schools are converging in their profile, not because of the MEDes network but because the world is becoming more about experience design, service design, social design, these kinds of things. We seem to be trying to save the planet. There is a rethinking of design purpose and role in a changing society and MEDes must be at the forefront of that. It is a pity that MEDes has yet to realise its potential for joining every single school up in a really international project or research agenda. It's never generated its own income which it should and could do. In my view we have also lost some of our academic drive and vision about the future and we need to get that back. There is a move towards a more research lead education and MEDes is beginning to recognise the value in that.

What are the top three things you like about MEDes?

It's such a cool idea, it's so simple to run it and there is a great deal of trust.



And if you could describe it in three words?

Unique, convivial, liberating

What feedback do you receive from graduates?

We inevitably get great feedback especially when the students have been out working for a year or two, that's when they realise what the value has been. There's very little complaint about the institutions people have been in. Sometimes coming back to Glasgow for 5th year can be quite a shock, we all have to work really hard at remembering they are not 5th year Glasgow students, they are a 5th year MEDes students. And by so doing recognise and understand what you have done, why it was of value and then to build on those strengths. When students come back to GSA after being away they have to remake their identity. I mean the Bachelor programme has a very strong identity and that can be difficult to be around. It's easier now that we have the Design Innovation Masters programme because it means that staff are operating at Masters level already.

What topics do you discuss in the board meetings and what is their overall purpose?

Obviously anything in the partner schools that affects the programme.

Because obviously there are shifts and changes in the schools and they affect the MEDes programme as a whole. We discuss the students, we discuss potential directions and futures as we've been talking about PhDs and of course logistics. We talk about bureaucracy and management but most of the board meetings are about students and placing students and that takes a huge amount of time.

And finally, what are your thoughts about how MEDes has changed during your involvement?

I think it has become too bureaucratic in some ways, too many bureaucratic staff involved. We were talking about that, how do we get the academic drive back. For many years it avoided bureaucracy which was, I think, a good thing. Keeping it small is important in terms of value for the student, the prestige of it is inestimable. It's kind of curious because MEDes is everywhere and nowhere. There's nowhere you can go and knock on the door that says "The Centre of MEDes". And isn't that a good thing? I think it is. So really MEDes hasn't changed in this respect from the beginning. Should it remain this mysterious "best kept secret"? Before we make change we must consider the values of MEDes as it stands. It's the trick of working out the future. We did that when we set it up. Some of what we still

do is a testimony of how right we got our best guess about the future. That makes it difficult to change it. I think the good questions would be: Why do we need to change it? Who would the changes benefit? And crucially, what is our best guess for the next 20 years.

That's a wicked design problem and an exciting challenge and what makes life fun.

Thanks for the interview!



Prof. Raimo Nikkanen

I'm here to ask you how MEDes began and to understand the vision for the programme from your perspective.

I started here in Christmas 1989 as a professor from the side of Taik, University of Arts Helsinki. The international interest here started at turn of the 90's. The rector here organised international conferences here with the staff concerning design management, semantics and semiotics that were at the time hot topics in the design area. We were not a part of European Union yet but there was an agreement 1992 through which Finland became eligible to work with European Union context. It was called ETA agreement which gave us the possibility to join the joint European initiatives. At that time we started firstly this Cumulus network. I ran six schools together in the beginning, with other Professors in a kind of ERASMUS exchange where we were ETA members and then there were union members, it was a funny situation at the time.

At around the same time this MEDes, Master of European Design original initiative was coming from Norman McNally. Norman saw that this kind of ERASMUS programme and these exchange programmes which can be European Union level, were a suitable tool, a suitable means to develop design education in Glasgow. So that the

different schools had a master and the bachelor education and this European Master, MEDes was a joint fort with European schools to start something, using this as a vehicle to bring in also Master level education to Glasgow. It was also his initiative, his political understanding how to develop the education there. Then of course it started clearly as a programme of industrial design education. The whole MEDes, as with the Cumulus, started with industrial design Professors in all the schools, we were internationally connected already. There was us and there was Konstfack, Finland, Helsinki, Milan - all those. And Royal College of course was in the Cumulus.

The idea of having this Master as it was in the British system, the Bachelor and Master. The Bachelor three years, the Master one or two years on the top of it didn't exist in Finland. It would be like in the United States - they have Bachelor and then Master at the top. Like here in Finland we had a development of curricular systems supported and forced by the Ministry of Education; they wanted to have in 1994 that the universities restructure and look at the curriculum. At that time all our universities (we had twenty universities at the time in Finland) they all had Master, only Master straight and your first degree is Master after 5 years. So this, in reality it was four and a half years because it was

180 weekly credit points. Now when it is Bachelor and Master it is 300 ECTS. This means it is half a year more than it was at the time.

It was then that the Ministry introduced this possibility of starting the Bachelor-Master system also in Finland, but no other university except us was interested about starting this Anglo Saxon system in education. So our Rector and me because I had this experience already. I had graduated from this university when this was not a university in 1972 and it became a university in 1973. But on top of this education I got very interested in ergonomics and human factors engineering. I applied to the technical, the University of Loughborough in England and I was accepted there as a student. They considered my degree in Finland to be Bachelor level. Then I started and did Master in Loughborough in human factors engineering. So I personally was the head of the Industrial Design programme. Then there was the possibility to exchange that one. Our Rector had been in the United States and knew very well the education around the world and he also saw the benefits in introducing the new structure Bachelor and aster.

That was 1994 in this institution which was 12 years before so called Bologna agreement in Europe. Because in Europe, the Bologna agreement in Europe

introduced this Bachelor-Master system being a framework for all European Union countries. So that you can move after Bachelor even to another country to do a Master. You can swap even between countries the focus of your studies and all that, that was 1994 in our case. So we practiced this Bachelor and Master system twelve years before it became compulsory in the whole European Union. Technical university, part of Aalto now, they swapped only two or two and a half years ago to Bachelor and Master. They still had this five years for the Diploma Engineers.

Ok, quite radical then.

Quite radical but that also helped us a lot to work with exchanges because we had three plus two. At that same point then it was Norman McNally who introduced the idea of this European MEDes, Master of European Design initiative, which he used for his purposes, strongly to develop education at home. He was internationally connected, he knew people, he knew people from Sweden, from Germany, from France and from Finland. The first meeting that concerned the MEDes, where we were discussing face to face about the issue was in Cologne 1995.

Can you talk me through what the first meeting was like? Were you seeing some people for the first time?



Yes in my case I saw Heiner Jakob, who was the most important person in MEDes education, because he has been in the whole programme throughout from the beginning. So Heiner was the person I saw first time in my life. Of course people from Les Atelier they have changed the Rectors and they have changed I think five times. So there was a lot of people. I think we had people from Cologne, Milano, Paris although I am not quite sure who was there at the time. Then Sweden was there and of course Heiner Jakob, then three people from Cologne - one of them has left. But we were three from Aalto; our Rector and our other professor who had the position before Turkka Keinonen, and me.

Can I ask where did you first meet Norman MacNally or did he talk to you on the phone about this first?

It's hard to recall in a sense because I might have visited Glasgow before the meeting. Then of course, being international, our school and I was personally are also partners in, IXIT is Industrial Designers Worldwide Association, that's the professional organisation. And I was from the very beginning part of that one. So in those circumstances I have met a lot of people.

Ok. So at some point he phoned you asking about inviting you to the Cologne workshop?

Invited and I think he maybe made the first call was to our Rector because as I mentioned he was organising international conferences. At the time we had an international organisation really, just to organise conferences, to become international themselves. Then of course the Cumulus and it has been, both have been success stories. Cumulus has had over two hundred members and we started with six. I was the coordinator the first ten years as long as it was still the ERASMUS initiative only. But then the ERASMUS funding changed so that it became SOCRATES and at that time the institutions made an agreement with Brussels and the schools. Earlier it was so that I was the coordinator and I signed the agreements with the schools, which was then given to Brussels. Brussels then sent me personally checks to run the programme. I have a photocopy of one of those very first ones. It was 50,000 Ecu. Ecu [European Currency Unit] was before Euro, it was a currency that was used for exchange but it never existed.

This European Master was something new and it was radical thinking because we really, from the very beginning, we were thinking of organising the exchange twice - once as a Bachelor already and once in the Master. That was radical thinking because the ERASMUS and the European Union - they supported straight only one exchange per student.

So all us, the institutions, we agreed that we help the students for the second exchange financially. And of course it was not easy in the agreement in the paper sense, because at that time double degrees did not even exist in the world. There were no joint programs in that sense. Therefore it was rather radical to start with, to work together that intensive way. If you think about that - you give two fifths of the degree, you give your students two fifths out of your own hands and rely on the others and their education! So that finally, when you as an institution are giving the degree it means that you have a strong reliance on your other partners and their capabilities in education. That was the very first and strong issue to agree with.

May I ask did you plan together, what your plans were and what you wanted for the students of the programme or did that develop over time?

Let's say we really understood that we are not going to become similar, we are not going to influence the others degrees that deeply. This is because this variety of European ways of seeing design was a richness. In some cases in the ERASMUS and the other programmes like in maths - if you send your student in another area, like in maths, to another institution you hope that the other institution give the basics of the education similar to yours so that you can carry on on that

one. But in the design area we saw differences both in the educational approaches, focus points and cultural differences as a richness. So in the sense, to say that once your student has been twice out as a Bachelor and a Master - when they get a degree from here, their degree is not similar to the degree of the others. But they are both holding Master level education degree. But the kind of focus points and balances, they are personal. They are personally different according to the students choices.

Yeah it's pretty amazing.

They are according to students choices. Then we had also Stuttgart there as a partner and in Germany they had also some trouble to build this Master programme. In Germany they had this four year Bachelor and they didn't have Master in that sense. All the different states in Germany, in Deutschland, they had rules in each of the states concerning the education. Like now the Cologne they have the Master. But in Stuttgart that state made a decision that art and design education is not university education in the way the Bologna agreement says. So they dropped out of the MEDes. They had to drop out because they didn't have this agreed European system. And now, before Stuttgart was with us we were also looking inside because we were seven schools.



We were looking that we had in the South only Italy. We had two schools in Germany, Paris in the midrange of Europe, then we had the British, then we had us and Konstfack from the North. So we were looking for more North-South connections. And we tried also to get West-East connections - the former Soviet satellite states like Poland. We had had discussion asking could we find a partner? But they had financially not been in an easy situation, also they hadn't been originally in that Bachelor-Master system so it hasn't been that easy. But luckily now we have the Portugal - Aveiro is now with us as a new partner from the South. Aveiro is a good, internationally, high standard, research university with design as part of it and so on. So we have now Italy and Portugal. Then we have Konstfack and Helsinki. Then we have Cologne, Paris, Glasgow.

Aside from location, when you look at individual universities like Aveiro are you looking for a personal connection or quality or difference?

It was not that easy to find a partner from the Southern part. Politecnico was very international and connected so it was much easier with them to start with. But the rest of them - there was so many private schools in the South part of Europe and they really didn't have this Bachelor-Master system going on in many places. In Cumulus we have had

many Southern European ones because it is not that tight on the structure of the education. It's tight on - it's the question of design as a whole, design education but not in that sense. Then of course the second issue was that in our case, because in this country the Bachelor education was according to constitutional law chosen in Finnish, so is Master in the constitutional law Finnish and Swedish. We had to carry on those languages. I insisted and converted the education into English in 1994 and 1995 at Master level. But it means that our students according to the constitutional law have a right to write their final thesis in their mother language and they should do it. But they can ask a permission to do it in English. So we are in a grey zone in that sense because the constitutional law says that the education is given in Finnish and Swedish. But the international language is English in Design so it is easier in a sense to carry on. But the rights to do the most demanding exams and so on, the student can choose their mother language if they want to.

Ok. A lot of unforeseen challenges! Can I ask what do you think has been the biggest challenge of the MEDes? Has there been one major challenge or I guess there has been a lot..?

Let's say the differences have also been a problem because MEDes, the Master

of European Design as such, is existing only as a separate degree in Glasgow and in Cologne. So they get a degree of Industrial Design here, so a Master of Collaborative and Industrial Design has got a Master of Arts in Collaborative and Industrial Design. Then there is a separate mentioning that part of the degree has been done under this agreement in Master of European programme in Cologne and in Glasgow for example. Well it's a part of the degree but it became a separate leaflet that tells which institutions the student has studied at. And the constitutional law concerning education says that we give Master of Arts degree, which is also given by; film, theatre and music and fine arts universities. Master of Arts - it's coming from this institution. It's also coming from fine arts university. We have also the Doctoral degree, we don't have the Doctoral Philosophy, we have Doctor of Arts. The level is the same but the title is giving a little differentiation about what the topic area is.

I've heard some of the Professors say that they want to extend the MEDes into a PhD and they are very interested in this research area. In Cologne they mentioned that they are maybe writing a book about European Design. So I just wondered if you could talk about this aspect of the research?

In our case I think we are one of the

leading institutions. When we were Taik, we were one of the first institutions who seriously started Doctoral education. And we got a permission to start that already in 1983. So 1983 if you think about, during the first ten years there were no Doctors. And now we are in a situation that is producing fifteen to eighteen a year. So we are far ahead compared to many other institutions concerning Doctoral studies. Turkka is one of our first Doctors and he has been in charge of Doctoral education funding, finding funding for that. Then of course the MEDes in a sense could have the Doctoral education, I think it could be, it happens in Milano. There are some possibilities I understood in Cologne, Paris are just trying to find out the connection with the technical universities to do it together. And we have had the possibility to do it decades together. And then in Glasgow there are very few people who have done a Doctoral in some connection. We have now, in the department of design we have forty people in the Doctoral programme. So that the one issue it has been here is that it is different from UK or US and some of European partners, even Germany. Here in Finland the whole nation has a strong belief in higher University education - in the Master. The Master is the target degree and everybody is going to university. So the shift came in 1990, it then started that also the Doctoral education was seen as



important, not only academic but also for business and industry. The whole MEDes, it started with people who knew each other. Professors, they had a trust in each other and we benchmarked in the sense, all the programmes deep enough so that we can give our students to the hands of the others. To rely on their education once the students do the final degree at home, they have at least the same, but hopefully a better understanding of design as a Master.

Ok, and what sort of people do you feel come out of the MEDes? Do you see certain similarities or do you see a certain type of learning in addition to this?

Yes, let's say the students in the MEDes programme; all of you have a tolerance to work in uncertain situations and in unpredictable teams, so that you are team players. So that you are strong personalities who know what you are and what you are capable to get through your design visions in the teams. That has been proven with those situations where we have had students from Japan and universities from there. We have organised joint meetings with students from Japan, MEDes students and Aalto students are working on university projects with Japanese industry. So Japanese industrial projects brought in connection here where we have Finns,

we have a separate group of MEDes and we have students from Japan. In those situations it is really proven that the professors from Japan, they have a very high belief on MEDes students being team leaders and capable to work in harder conditions.

But then of course in some cases, some of the MEDes students who have gone through the system - it is a question about the personality. Some students have had maybe a very wide, horizontal understanding of design and it seems that some of them have in the beginning lost the focus. Sorry to say some have lost focus because you know so much of so many items and what is mine? But then the students who have chosen the focus on the way of just doing product design, those people who have just had a desire to do that one from the very beginning, they maybe have lost focus. But the ones who have got an interest on new, more societal approaches of design - they have gained a lot through this service design and teamwork systems and all of that. Did you join my seminar?

Yes I came to part of it but then I had a class. I saw Gordon's speech and Bartholdy and some of them.

Did you see the students? There were five students from five decades.

No I didn't. It would have been really interesting!

The MEDes was there strongly because we had the meeting and Bartholdy was there and Gordon was there.

Ok but then most of all if we still think about that, in our case our intake has been only twelve to fourteen in Bachelor and we have introduced the MEDes for them first or second year so that the pool to select students for MEDes has been only a dozen students. And we have been lucky to have about two candidates every year. From that group to persuade them already in second year, to think that far that the Master may be in another country, they may learn Italian language, French... And decide what they are studying here. They are studying design here and art. And as it was in Cologne and Glasgow, you have a separate Master level intake. I think in Glasgow it happens second or third year?

Well for MEDes, you can apply online when you apply to the university. Before you go to the university you see this BDes / MEDes so you are aware. Then in second year you apply and have the interview.

In Cologne they had a larger number and then in Sweden they have hardly anyone out, very few. Then when it was Stuttgart, the students coming from

Stuttgart they had good, strong, product design background. And then the Italian education, it was this more design system and the whole big question about design business. In our case it has been very much the collaborative part of design and that area.

Have you seen the schools change their focus and do you feel they are flowing in a similar direction or staying different?

In Paris it was in a sense, very conceptual and it still is. Some of the students when they asked me which schools they should choose I say - do they want to do this more conceptual thing? Can they tolerate it? Are they mature enough? Because it is a very different approach. In Cologne it's also a different approach because it's also a design system, very very open. But I think that in our case we have changed from the product design with heavy ergonomic approach. We have changed from that throughout our research in user experience and usability and that route. So the design here has started with product design with good ergonomics, then taking usability as a strong point, then the user experience and then going behind the collaborative area so that we have changed. Glasgow has changed, it has been a product design programme when they approached the 1990's and then it changed. It has become very strong in the service design area.



Glasgow has changed, Konstfack has not changed as much. There has been several design schools and Konstfack has been the most keeping in history. In Sweden they took or adopted this Bologna three year Bachelor and two Master, some four or five years ago only. And at that time they focused on Master level, on form giving, I mean formgebung in Deutsch! And design, design and expression as such. When we think about the other school in Umeå they had this usability, then they had this interaction design, then they had the automotive design, then it was product design. And Umeå was only product design in three categories; interaction, automotive and advanced. And they are strong, they are international and they have been forced. Whereas in Konstfack they kept in tradition very strongly.

Where do you see MEDes going in the future? Do you have specific plans or something you want to achieve with it?

I hope that the MEDes, somehow they should more strongly tie together in a sense of having double degrees. Or something that is giving an even stronger point of view. If you have a degree from both Italy and Finland it's easier to work in both countries and so on. Because there is a danger that it's diluting, I mean there is so much exchange, there is so much collaboration in different areas of design schools;

people are here and there, I hope it is not diluting in the normal system. The whole Bologna agreement meant people could move here and there. So then there is the possibility - what is the strong point of MEDes? What is the strong point of the seven partners? If we all look at each other it is not good, what is to come out? I still want to have Paris and understand what is their strength and want to see that the Politecnico has a lot to say.

However, it's a question about the individual schools and their vision of what is their national and constitutional task to do because they get the money from the government. The government gives the money to us, it's a funny situation this university; constitutional law says that you are giving a higher education, then they are giving you money but we have the freedom, rather big freedom to do and build in our own research and education. But if we won't hit to the needs of the nation... Also you have to hit on the needs of the exchanging society. And not only hit, but to be the forerunner for the change, for better in the societies. That's important. Universities are supposed to be on lead, not industries.

Is there something you're really proud of relating to the MEDes? An aspect or something it has done, maybe this facet of having these differences?

Yes the differences and of course. Aila has done some statistics and we have been one of the most productive in the sense that we have had over seventy exchange students here from MEDes over the years. And we have only had I think twenty out, less than twenty out. Having those seventy MEDes students here, it's helped me and the others because the motivation of the students from this programme is high. They have high expectations of education, and also act as a good example for Finns. Because once you are in a foreign country the education is the first thing, then comes the others. If you're born in Helsinki it might turn out that your ice hockey team and your girlfriend are more important than education when you are at home. And having this international community, the best years we have had something like twenty five exchange students and twenty three different nationalities. So that it has been the richness, that is the richness, the students.

The second issue is that being involved and heading this programme from the beginning of 2000 now, the other Professors in the different MEDes schools - how deep an understanding we have of each other. We have learned to know each other. Gordon came in between but Gordon is one of my best friends! But he was not there in the beginning, there was Ian Grout and Norman MacNally in the

beginning. So I thought that, personally, to know professors from the different schools and their visions, their targets and their way of seeing the development and their vision of society. It's is a fantastic platform to educate yourself.

Yes, It's fascinating talking to all the Professors. It helps me reflect, for example when Liz talked about the MEDes being about creating this new, strategic, reflective type of designer who is very people oriented and not a superstar designer - I thought that was very interesting and it made me think.

This is a professional team workers programme. Of course there are a few small stars too but I mean this is university education at a good level. This is university education that's given to the students and the students are supposed to make the change in the world.

I hope so!

About the very beginning; when we had the first meeting in 1995 then there was the paperwork going back and fourth. We were defining the structure and how to do it. We were ready to start in Helsinki in 1999, we had already chosen two students but then suddenly I think Norman was not ready with the papers so it was postponed for a year or two to start later. And when it started later we were in a situation that the former



students who were chosen couldn't join and then when we had to recruit new ones. They didn't believe that it would start. Therefore when the others started to send students we didn't have anybody out because there was this loss of faith in between and then we started again.

This Stewart Duxbury from Glasgow was the first one here, Aila has nice statistics. He was I think 2001 or 2002 here. In the beginning and due to the fact that they are Master of European programmes in their own system, like in our system, it's always supplementary as part of the programme. So it took some time in the beginning how to handle it. Then the one issue is the Professors; we have agreed what we do, how we do it and we have an agreement which is signed by the Deans of the schools or the Rectors. So we programme leaders, we Professors agree what to do and how to do it and then the institutions sign the papers that we will do this for five plus two more years. This is because if there is two exchanges, if we stop it after five years then there is two more years and the ones who are inside the programme need to finish. I think we have now written three agreements, three times, always signed by the heads of the institutions. So that once you are here, you are not here because I signed the paper, you are here because our institution has signed the paper that this programme is running Master of European Design. So it is a guarantee

for the students too. It is a guarantee for the other institutions that once we start something we carry it out. There is no way to drop out in between. This agreement it is signed by the institution, and then the second biggest issue is that we have this agreement that gives a kind of guarantee for all the sides.

Let's say we have a very low profile organisation, we don't have any bosses, we have twice a year a board meeting and during the second board meeting we have workshop week. In those board meetings we develop what we do, we also handle the intake and placement of the students. The board meetings are agreed to run around the schools. The board meetings are going around and so the workshops are going around, so that the East of the institution are after the seventh year in charge to do the issues. Once the institution has the meeting, the Professor of that institution is the spokesman for that meeting, when you have a meeting somebody is a head. When we are in Glasgow then the head is from Glasgow. That time they write the papers. It is decentralised so that the agreement says we always meet like this and we do the plans together. There is not anyone who is President or boss or whatever and it has been nice way to do it.

That's interesting, we are planning something similar when we think about

how the website will be sustained, trying to think about a long term plan of distribution or responsibility. We are aware that the rapid student turnover makes it difficult.

It is like the Cumulus, when we established an international association then we had international agreements, statutes, the statutes mean we have a board. There was a President for so many years so that we don't have this kind of statutes for organisations. We have an agreement of action in between institutions.

Could you take, very quickly ten seconds to do a rough drawing of how you see the structure of MEDes, like how you see it in your head. It can be a rough doodle, no artistic piece.

Ooooooh! If I think about that, if we have a globe and we are situating on this corner and then we have here the European area. Then we have layers, the European layers and it is coming... We have here in the North different conditions and different needs than in the South so this is something. Then we are having the schools here how they are situated now in Europe. I can see, the reflection is all the way. So that it is strong in between Europe but then MEDes is strong in between exchange and what is the outcome is if I say, the design, industrial design is a European initiative. It's

strong and it was almost born here and it's originally here and strongest here. It's different to the United States which is more market driven, it's different in China nowadays.

I hope that and I have a strong belief that all this layer typed, European typed and I hope that, this European area will have a huge reflection to the other parts of the world, how the design profession should effect on the society.

Interesting! So this is Europe and layers of the MEDes?

This is Europe and the layers of North, middle and South in the sense that if you think it is coming from the living conditions. What you eat here, we don't have the Italian vegetation, we have different here. So we have cultural differences and also of course here we have long Lutherans, we have in some parts of Europe Catholics and we have in some parts Anglicans. So the religion changed, Europe changed and the most important thing is the diversity. The European diversity is there. We are more diverse than America. We are more diverse than they are.

So is this what you would consider unique about European design?

It is.



It is in a way not the connection but the diversity?

Diversity. Understanding the diversity. Learning from the diversity.

Maybe to go back to the workshops, many of the Professors have said this is a very important part and they don't think MEDes would work without the workshops. Do you have a favourite workshop or one you think has had really big impact in MEDes? Have you got a strong memory of one particular workshop?

Well I think one of the important workshops was not the one but previous in Glasgow where the first time, let's say the alumni and the second year MEDes students form their own kind of committee to look out the future. At the same time I ran there a workshop where we wanted to find a common understanding of some issues that are strong. And then the students took over the outcome of the workshop and built that one, the first draft, the first really strong draft of the students opinion.

So this was not the most recent GSA workshop but the one before?

Yes so in that case it was that the students were alert and they had a strong belief about what we do and they wanted to take over some parts of the

responsibilities. Of course now I have seen that the programme applied for European money and they have also a bit a longer plan for the set of workshops to come. The Professors, they have put a target for several workshops; two, three or four ahead and the development of the workshops and they have applied the money to do that.

Can I ask what happened with the students who wrote this draft? Did they follow it up or take more responsibility?

Yes and I think the Cologne book was published after that workshop and of course I have to say I appreciate the Cologne people in a sense that they had the money to have a student secretary which we paid partly, but they paid partly to have the money. Let's say the point for student connections and the next step was the exhibition in Milan. So that Glasgow workshop, the first one was the meeting when we started the thing. Then we had the exhibition. Then we had the book, have you got the books? I found in my shelf some of them, I have a bunch I can give you one. Then it was this exhibition in Milan when we had this kind of suitcase exhibition.

So that was initiated by Cologne?

It was initiated by the students with the help of this student secretary for MEDes and he or she was situated in Cologne.

Because Cologne had also a separate Master of European Programme so they had a stronger need to have somebody from the students to control it.

Thanks that's great! We are building up the different perspectives and it is really good thanks.

The one of the arrows down to Africa from my drawing, don't forget it. It should be handled.

Thanks for your time and the detail!

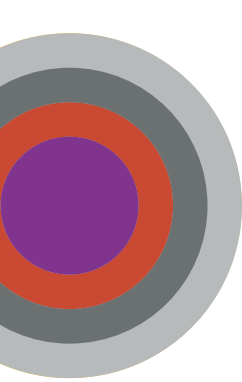
All the best!



TUTOR
YEAR ZERO

FIRST YEAR
SECOND YEAR
THIRD YEAR
ALUMNI

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Odisseo

Could you tell me a bit about your background before applying for the MEDes?

I'm a design student at Ensci and before that I did product design for two years in Paris in another school. I would like to apply to MEDes now because I want to go abroad, I never studied abroad before and I would like to.

Did you know about MEDes before apply to Ensci?

No, before applying I didn't know this programme. I think it's an unknown programme in the world because every time I speak about this programme to other people they don't know about it. It should be communicated more outside in France outside of Ensci.

How did you get in touch with the programme?

It was Liz Davis who told me when I came to Ensci, in the first year. There is one week of orientation to get in touch with people in Ensci and other new students. Liz made a speech, she talked about the MEDes programme and I thought "wow, that's cool..."
Another teacher in my school didn't agree, he told me "no, you are in our school and you want to go to another school, I don't know why you applied to Ensci..."

Did you also know other students before applying?

Yes, before applying I knew Marco who is a French student. He went to Milan and Cologne and he gave me motivation to go there. He spoke to me about the programme and told me it was awesome.

You have already said that your intention was to go abroad, but why did you apply to MEDes and not to another exchange programme?

Because MEDes is a total exchange programme, you are abroad for two years and it's huge. It's like you train to adapt yourself everywhere. I imagine that after MEDes you will be a warrior of adaptation because you change two times and it is difficult to change environment. So that's why this program is better compared to just six months somewhere, because six months aren't very long...

What were the biggest doubts you had to deal with before deciding to apply to MEDes and selecting the destination? Which were the most exciting points?

When I asked some questions to older MEDes students I was asking a lot about the weather, living costs etc. I was very anxious but also very excited because when I asked them very pragmatic questions they told me to not to be

worried about that. Then they explained to me more fun examples of the life and way of living.

In general was the application process complicated? How does it works in Ensci?

It's not very well organised, if you want to do MEDes Liz knows. Liz is responsible and knows you because we are just a few people, it could be two to four or five. It's a really human exchange between Liz and us; there are no papers, website or organisation around that.

So let's say that there is no competition, how does it works when there are more than five people?

Liz knows and there is no competition between Ensci students to do the MEDes, for example this year there were just two of us. I do not know if in some years it was competitive.

What did your family say when you decided to have this experience?

My parents were ok, they love travel and they have traveled a lot. For my grandparents it wasn't the same, they always want me to go to their home to say hello, when they knew that during the next two years I won't be there they were very sad. They told me "you know, you had better study in France because

France is better and blablabla." I said "no it's not like that." They think this because they didn't travel in their life, they didn't have this chance or better. My grandfather was in the army and he traveled for that, but this isn't a good reason to travel. The bigger problem is my girlfriend because I have been with her for two years. It's a long relationship which became serious and it's good, but right now we don't know if it will be good or not between us. It's complicated at this point. I'm just trying not to think about that, just to enjoy the present moment and see what happens.

What scares you more about next year?

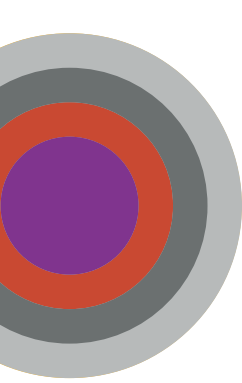
I hope I will adapt myself in Glasgow. Sometimes I'm not sure I will fit in with Glasgow people, I don't know. I have a lot of questions...

Was Glasgow your first choice?

Yes, I hope I made a good choice. Every time you hope you have made the right choice, but I imagine that every school has something interesting and that's ok.

Have you talked with other MEDes students to get help with choosing your destination?

Yes. I talked with this student, then with other French students and also to other MEDes people that came to Paris.



I spoke with them and asked them about each country, about what they do and the workshops because I didn't know if there were big workshops, if they have access to this workshop...

You said that you heard about MEDes from the very beginning, from Liz's presentation and you said also that you had the possibility to meet other MEDes before applying. So you are in contact with them a lot?

Yes.

What was the main reason you applied to GSA?

GSA was for the service design part, which is very present, also to speak English. When I went in the school, it's the only one that I visited. The school gave me a good impression and the people seemed to be nice.

About the workshop, when you were there which was your best and worst experience?

My best experience was the final presentation. There were several experiences that were good such as the party with everybody from everywhere. My worst experience was the food because I like good food and I didn't find good food there, but that's cool. It was a bit full and a bit stressful the first

time when I went in the Glasgow school. I didn't know that my choice would be accepted, so I didn't know if I would be able to go there. But the moment they said "YES, your choice is accepted, next year you will be in Glasgow" it was a strange feeling. I felt like *wow, next year I will be there, crazy.*

If there was a possibility to change something about the workshop, what would you change?

I thought it was a shame to separate first and second year. In first year we were all shy whereas the second year knew each other. It could improve the integration to have everyone together and maybe we didn't make a lot. Sometimes it's good to do things, even if the subject isn't very clear but is very intelligent. The subject was very serious, maybe the subject should be more crazy - material, you can build something with like wood or cardboard. It could also be more interesting to put people together, to do a real service design project. Everybody does not always agree, you have to manage the time, this is too much. Just building something instead could be good. Like in Ensci, for the first integration week we do that, you have to build something with other people, the subject is not very serious and it's just to make something.

What about the Facebook group, have you used it already?

Yes, I used it last week to ask people if they know about the starting dates for GSA. They sent me the calendar of the courses, so it was very efficient. I used it before going to Glasgow to find an apartment, a place to sleep. I was very surprised because immediately Gregory answered me and told me that it was no problem, I could come to his home for free. That's a very good thing.

So how is your relation with, let say, the "MEDes web"?

I think it's very functional, you can know what you want. Maybe it is not very organised, but it's the bad point of Facebook. It's organised at the time and you have to check all the posts in order to find something. Also there are not a lot of things to see, or maybe I didn't check...

What do you mean? Which kind of thing?

I will add - I'm checking the page - photos and videos. I expected photos of events like the workshops, but I didn't find any. Now I can confirm that there is no content. Now I'm just starting the MEDes but I can imagine when I finish the MEDes, I hope to find work, to find something like. That maybe could be a

tool to find work, to find a job. Because MEDes is a very big network...

It's a network you said?

MEDes is a big network that we should use in a smarter way.

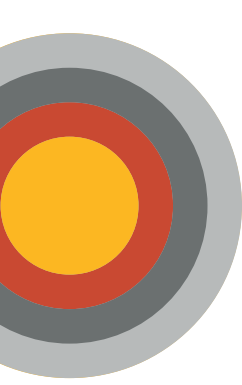
Last question, if you have to list three great expectations that you have for MEDes, for next year?

To find good people, to meet people and to know a lot about them. Change my vision of design and way of living, because MEDes is not an end, it's a starting point for your international life... I hope that when I finish the MEDes I can't stay in the same country for all my life. Instead I will move and move and move again...

Do you want to add something, some reflections that come to your mind?

I find it very funny that MEDes students are thinking about the new MEDes programme through skype, it's a very MEDes way of doing it. It's cool.

Thank you very much.



Lemuel Gulliver

Did you know about MEDes before applying at your home University?

No, I discovered it during the break between first and second year, in the summer, while I was searching something about the exchange possibilities. I read that in addition to the Erasmus, there was the possibility of applying for the MEDes. I liked it because with this it is possible to move more and not to stay only in one university.

So you found it going through the university website?

Yes, on the website of the design department at Polimi.

Looking for the different possibilities of exchange?

Yes, although it was not very clear. There was written that there is this exchange opportunity but it was not clear at all. The link on the website for example, was only one page with the text *Master of European Design* and the schools...

We know it very well. It has also been presented by the MEDes Tutor, hasn't it? Last year he made a presentation for us.

I think that for the Communication Design students, as he is the Professor of that course, a lot of students that arrived at the interview were from

Communication. They hear from him about the programme. The Product students like myself, didn't hear about it during the lessons. We received a mail that explained there will be a meeting, but it was from the International Office.

Have you had the chance to talk with other MEDes student, before applying or while doing the application?

No actually I made the application a little bit quickly, without too much reflections. After I thought that maybe it was better if I became more conscious, I tried to understand if there was someone that I know, maybe through friends. Then a course mate of mine told me that a friend of his was doing the MEDes.

So, all this was when you had already had the interview and were part of the programme?

Yes, we already had the interviews and they had already told me that I was in. At that point I said to myself *now it is better if I get some information...* No, I had already found some information through the official channels, what it was about, but I was wondering if I could have information from a student. That was a missing part, I mean the access to other students, there was no possibility to get in touch with students. Actually the International office told us later about the GSA workshop and they

give us the names and contacts for the Italian students in Glasgow. But this was for making arrangements about the workshop, rather than for getting information.

Why did you decide to apply for MEDes, you already said that it was because you have the chance to do two years abroad. Are there also other reasons?

Oh, I liked the fact that I could extend my studies path, I'm studying Product Design, so I'm not sure if I am satisfied about the choice in a way. I like a little Product, a little Communication a little Service Design but doing Product at Polimi you do lot, lot, lot of stuff related to Product Design and a little bit of Product Communication, but there isn't really a possibility to explore more aspects. On the other hand with the MEDes you can look into other stuff which you are more interested in. Also you can do this without looking at them from the *Politecnico point of view*, that means in the way that we look at them here. Maybe I discover that I am more interested in something else, but actually I cannot know that because I haven't discovered it.

Is that something that you discovered going through the website or talking with other students?

No, it happened whilst talking with the

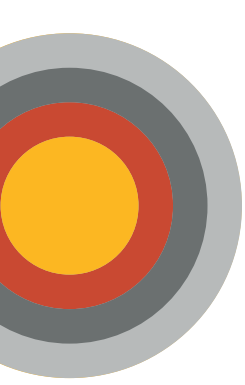
International Office, they also explained to me during the interview. I went at the interview really easily, not only to be taken, that was maybe the attitude of everyone else. But I also wanted to understand - I was not thinking *if they don't take me I don't know what to do of my life*. During the interview I asked how the different universities work. They told me that they do not have the same approach as here, no divisions of Product, Communications, Interior, etc. All the stuff that you already know.

Was the application process complex?

The application, maybe I was a little sleepy, it was a little confusing because there were no references, no website, no page from which you find information, application forms, deadlines and everything. I've found some stuff in the department website and other information from websites of the other universities. Maybe it's because of that, it wasn't very organized in a way that made it comfortable. But the deadline for bringing the portfolio, to be honest was not clear. It wasn't very visible on the page, for Politecnico I mean. I had to search everything carefully, but the application form wasn't very complex.

Where are you going next year?

Glasgow.



Was this your first choice?

No it was my second, I was more interested in exploring Communication Design. The coordinator told me that as I was a Product Student there was a 90% of possibility that I would be sent to GSA. This is because Köln is more for Communication Designers, but she also said that I could try to apply to GSA. Then too many applied for Köln, I was the only one from Product and all the others who applied to Köln were studying Communication. So they gave to me the second choice which was Glasgow. But at the end I was also not totally convinced, because I liked both the possibilities. Now maybe I am more happy to be assigned to Glasgow than Köln because it's something that I'm interested in. Also because I've seen the school there and I had the *luck* of doing the workshop there so I've seen. Although, it's clear that it's only a overview of a week which perhaps cannot coincide with reality.

It's surely something that helps. Also with myself, because last workshop was in Köln... So your choice was oriented between GSA and KISD?

Yes. There was Aveiro...

Why were you oriented only towards these two?

They told us that generally the first

exchange is to Glasgow and Köln, and this year there was also Aveiro. But Aveiro was mysterious and new, and none of us seemed to have a propensity. Then I saw that there they make a lot of hand drawing, really academic, and since I'm really bad at drawing I didn't even take it into consideration, it wasn't something that I felt was for me. With Glasgow I've known that they do a lot of stuff for Service and Experience Design which was something that sounded very interesting for me, and Köln because I heard that there is this inclination for the Graphic Design.

But this is something that the professors said to you or that you have discovered looking at the websites?

I discover most of all from looking at the websites. Also the Professors told us, they said that in KISD they do more Graphic Design, usually the ones that study Communication go to Köln, but then I looked at the websites. For example, KISD has all the catalogue of its courses, so I've had a look on what they study. It was more difficult to understand the studies at GSA, without the help of someone. I contacted some students in the programme to ask about what they were doing. This is because at KISD it was more clear whereas the GSA website was less clear, so I asked them and they explained to me.

So between all this stuff, the one that was most difficult was?

I didn't understand, because it wasn't well defined, that I had to compile the application form choosing as a destination for first year, between GSA, Aveiro and KISD, and for the second year Konstfack, Helsinki and Ensci. Later they told me that they had mentioned it during a presentation meeting in which I hadn't took part. It wasn't clear.

What about the workshop, you were there, which was the best and the worst part?

The best part was working in a mixed group with students coming from different universities because you understand that you are working with people that have completely different approaches. So it was important to realize that there is not only one way to do something; sometimes here they give us this only way to do things, but at the end there is more than one. Another positive thing was to see the presentations of the second year students, because they showed the level they achieved, to understand what is possible to do going straight in this way, which competences can be achieved. The worst thing was to have no clear time scheduled that explained what we had to do at what time, in particular at the beginning. They apparently changed

it without tell us so the first morning we were there alone. Then also the others started to come, because no one had clear ideas over the time schedule.

So, what would you have change about it?

We did all the stuff in two days, and maybe it is good to have something so intense. Maybe with more time, of effective work, not to become crazy and work 7 days a week 10 hours a day, but a little bit more...

Did you known any MEDES student before the application?

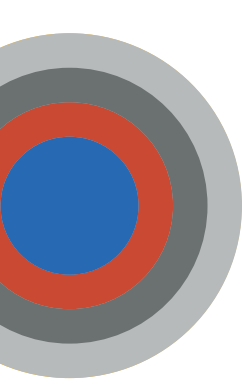
In person no. Before the application I had known some guys that are now MEDES with me.

Regarding your relationship to other MEDES students, what is your experience?

It was a good experience because I had known them as I know you all. You are very open minded, International students that aren't up yourselves, with no problems relating to each other.

Thank you very much.

Thank you and enjoy your work!



Vivienne de Watteville

Will you quickly present yourself, your name, what are you doing and what have you done before applying for MEDes?

I'm Portuguese, I study design at the University of Aveiro. What have I done? Well I've been studying design for two years now and I will study in Glasgow next year. Is it ok?

Perfect! Did you know about the MEDes before applying at your home university?

No, not at all.

How did you learn about the programme?

Our teacher was talking about Erasmus and they told us about the MEDes programme as well, so that's how we got to know about it.

Of course you didn't know other MEDes schools because it is the first year that your school is part of the programme?

Yes.

Was the application process complicated?

All we had to do was an interview in both languages, Portuguese and English and to make a portfolio for the evaluation.

Ok, you had to present a portfolio...

We also did an interview and we made a recommendation letter and that was it.

Why did you decide to take part of MEDes instead of another exchange programme?

Well, I wanted to do an Erasmus but then I thought that maybe MEDes will be a bigger challenge and I really didn't think too much about it. I just tried to apply and then I was like *ok, if you get it you get it, if not that's fine...*

Which were your main doubts about applying to the MEDes?

Well I suppose the first one was that it is for two years, and then there was not too much information about the programme itself or I couldn't find it. For instance, I explained to my parents that I was trying to get into it and it wasn't very easy... those were my biggest problems. Maybe not knowing which school you are going to be in, you just apply for it and you may go in a school which you don't want to. Perhaps you have to adapt differently, I don't know...

How did your family react when they knew that you were in the programme?

Well, I started to prepare them for it. First I told them about it and they said

that was interesting and it was for two years and I said "yes, but I'm just applying, I will probably not even go, so don't worry." Then I got it and they were like, ok. They are ok with it if at first a little bit worried.

Which are the things that scare you most about the next year?

I'm scared that I won't work well with the evaluation system, I'm not used to it and maybe it's different from here. I won't be able to perform as I'm doing in Portugal maybe because of English, maybe not because of English. I don't know, it might be different from here and I'm scared to spend a lot of time adapting. My fear is not the culture of the school, but the evaluation more... I think that's it.

Why did you apply to GSA?

I did a little bit of research about the schools and I didn't want to go to some of them at first because it was really a lot about Product Design and I didn't really research about GSA. I know that there is a lot of Product Design but it's not traditional, I mean it's not about tables and chairs and so that really interested me. Another reason is English, it was important for me to go to a country in which they don't speak another language. I would learn it for sure, but English is easier to start.

What do you expect from next year?

I'm expecting to be really interested and find something really different from here, and I'm expecting to learn a lot... I hope so.

What about the facebook page? Do you know that there is a group and are you in the group?

I don't think that I am, but I actually forgot to say that I found a facebook page where student that are in the MEDes gave me a reply. I asked what MEDes is about, because again I had trouble finding that information. He replied that the goal was to make students grow without teaching them just Product Design, or Communication Design, but more of a global sense of design. And he said to me that I can ask if I have any question or doubts.

I will add you to the MEDes group then.

Ok thanks.



TUTOR
YEAR ZERO
FIRST YEAR
SECOND YEAR
THIRD YEAR
ALUMNI

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Isabella Bird

Can you talk me through your very first contact with MEDes? How you got to know about it and decide to apply?

Well the very first approach for me was actually when I just viewed GSA. I had a private viewing with one of our tutors, since I couldn't make it to the open day. He showed me around and in the end he put the MEDes catalogue in my hands and said "oh yeah, we offer this as well. Just take it home and have a look". So I had a look and then I applied to GSA having the perspective that if I got in I would like to do the MEDes. Then I got in and it was actually clear for me I was going to do it. I never said it that honestly because I thought maybe that wasn't good to say but it was clear from the very beginning that I would like to do it.

Did you get additional information about MEDes?

Well yes, from this catalogue. I mean, it was enough for me. It was actually in my interview as well! The guy was then asking me if I had heard about the MEDes programme and if I would like to do it. He asked me "when you're coming to Scotland you're willing to go to two different countries again?" That was what it was really all about for me back then, getting another design perspective in different schools plus combining my studies with traveling. MEDes had enough of that for me to say yes.

What were the main reasons not to apply? If there were any?

Back then there were no reasons at all to not apply. At the moment it's maybe a bit the thing that you don't have a home, you know, you're always everywhere. For me that's also because I started in Glasgow and not in Germany where I am from, which again is different I think. I wouldn't have liked to stay in Glasgow for the whole time so I'm glad I've done it! So there where actually no reason not to.

Who influenced your decision the most to do the MEDes?

I didn't really discuss it with anyone other than my boyfriend, because we were wondering if we could go together. My boyfriend is French. I think we combined it well with our private lives since we went to Paris first and now to Germany. In this way each of us gets to know the culture of the other person. So it worked out. I mean, it was a bit risky as I didn't know if I could get in to these two universities, of course that's not for sure.

Then there were also my parents. Since I was in Glasgow already I wasn't in their country and it didn't make a difference whether I was in Glasgow or somewhere else in Europe. I mean it was not America or anything like that.

So why did you decide to apply to Ensci?

For me it was really a personal decision. I think the main thing was that we wanted to go one year to France and one year to Germany. I considered it harder to get into Paris, so I applied there first to have a second chance in case it wouldn't work out. I had heard that it's hard to get in which is of course a nice challenge but I never really inform myself. I mean I've been to the school in the summer before having a quick look because I've been in Paris anyway. For me it was more the idea of living in Paris as well and trying to learn French, which in the end didn't really work out. But I now understand quite well. I'm also quite good at not listening at all. It depends on the situation, but French people talk a lot and they never get to the point. They just talk around it. So I think that sometimes it's good to just not listen. I still can't articulate myself. It just doesn't come out. It doesn't make sense and I don't know how to formulate the most easy sentences. I don't know why!

What was the most unexpected thing in Paris?

Well, this is not Paris especially but in France in general that they eat so much meat! I never realised that before. I've spent this summer with my boyfriends family and they ate so much meat! At a certain point I was like "I don't want it anymore I'm sorry". That was really interesting. Then, you know, I have all

these clichès about France being quite old-fashioned and not very open. They are sometimes so true and you totally know where they come from! Then of course there are always exceptions. But I think in general the clichès about France are actually true.

What were your expectations compared to the reality at Ensci?

To be honest, I don't know whether I had real expectations. I'm just more of a person that jumps in and see what happens. I'm definitely happy about it though, it was what I was looking for. In Glasgow we have these projects that are maximum four weeks and then you start a new one again. So, you never get to do a nice prototype in the end. It's mostly concept-based. Here you have one semester on your main project and then smaller ones, so you get to spend more time on it and develop it further. In the end you would usually try to produce it as well and this I really like! I wanted to experience this because in Glasgow we don't do that. I didn't know how it would be to do one project for six months but I do really like it.

Then again it also depends on which designer you are with. This semester for instance I find the project very interesting but the designer and me don't click which is hard to deal with for six months. But it's fine.



If you could go back would you still pick Paris?

Yeah! Yes!

How about next year? Do you have expectations this time?

Well, It's the same thing again. At the moment I want to be in Paris until it's over. I'm really struggling getting started with searching for flats and stuff. I just can't be bothered to in my head already be in Cologne and not here. You know? So yeah, for me it's more like this, when it comes it comes. Of course we have to do the minimum to find the living and stuff but school-wise, definitely once it starts. Now, the thing is that in this school I already know a lot of people. I do for example have friends here that will be in Cologne next year. I also have a very good friend there from my home town and I know her friends as well. So if I'm lost I just know who to ask. I don't think I will have the experiences other people have told me about where they felt a bit excluded by the German people. Because I am German I'm also not going to have the struggles I have here now with this language barrier. I'm actually looking forward to this because I did struggle with it quite a lot, especially this semester. French people have this attitude where they don't speak and they're so shy that they come across as really arrogant. I know it's just that they

are so insecure with the languages but I'm also very insecure with French! I think this combination just doesn't work so well this semester. I also find many of the home students very young. Doing the MEDes you've been in so many situations they've never been in and it is therefor always hard to find a common level. Not a level maybe, but a common topic to talk about. Many of them comes straight from high school into Ensci.

What's your experience with the workshops? How many have you been to and how did you find them?

I have only been to two, in Cologne and Glasgow. It's quite nice to meet all the people and I think that's what it has been mainly about for me. That became clear especially in Glasgow, I think it was a bit pointless and we didn't really get anywhere. That's a problem with every workshop. We discuss the same things again but then we all go off and nothing happens. This is a bit pointless to my mind. I like when things are efficient and every workshop I think "come on let's not waste time, it doesn't make sense." I also found it sad that they were in Cologne and then Glasgow because those are two places I know and I would rather have gone to Helsinki or Milan or Stockholm... or Portugal now. Oh well.

Would you still go to the workshops after your final year in GSA?

After the final year in GSA? I don't know. Yeah sure. I think it depends a lot on our group, you know, our year. If everyone is saying "yeah come on let's go!" of course I would go! If I'm the only one, I don't think so. If it would be in Helsinki on the other hand, why not?

What's your relationship with the other MEDes students?

In Ensci? Oh really good! Well, two are not at Ensci at the moment, they're doing an internship, but when I see them it is really nice! We have a really good relationship. It's really nice.

What about the tutors?

Just the other day we had an international student meeting, not only for the MEDes but also all the other internationals. We went to a pub and they paid some wine and we had a chat. I mean, that's the first time that has happened but they really takes care if you need something. If I had a problem here I would definitely go to the MEDes tutor, she's here. The ones in Glasgow are distant. I think they would be the last step if something went terribly wrong, then I would also inform them.

When you explain MEDes to friends and family what do you say?

Well I start with "I'm doing the MEDes

- Master of European Design." Then I say it's like a co-operation of different schools around Europe and you get to go to three of them; you start at your home university for two years, go to one exchange year and another exchange year and the you go back. I usually say that I really enjoy it, that I started in Glasgow and that I now am in Paris. I say that it's a great opportunity to get to know people a little better and live longer in the countries. Especially that in the MEDes you do the whole year, it's much nicer than other exchange programmes because you really have the time to BE there. You know, to really arrive and you're not just getting to know the place and then you're gone again.

Best and worst things about MEDes.

Best is the relationships I guess. Cross-cultures. Worst is that you can feel a little lost. For me, since I haven't lived in Germany for five years, it's all a bit longer then a unusual MEDes would be, so I'm not sure. I think it's hard to define if you had really good experiences in the end. It might be a bit hard to find who you are and where you belong, but that's really a personal experience. Some people might say "oh I'm definitely Italian, I realised that now." It might go this way or they might say "I really liked it but I don't really know where I want to go either."



Cristoforo Colombo

Can you talk me through your very first contact with MEDes? How you got to know about it and decide to apply?

Basically how it happened was that a tutor came to talk with our class about the exchange and about MEDes. I really wanted to have an exchange but I was a bit worried that it would be a kind of lose year basically. I didn't want to have that kind of a gap and worry about not getting any points or credits, or that I would not proceed with my studies. So these were my worries, but then she talked about MEDes and said that this is an actual part of the programme, that I would do my studies in time if I wanted to and that's really nice.

Where did you find all the informations about MEDes that you needed to apply? Did you look somewhere else?

The tutor gave us some books, like a kind of introduction to MEDes, I think I have it still somewhere. Basically there's an introduction on each school and what MEDes is. I will try to find it.

Did you know any other MEDes student in your University?

I knew that there were two people from the year above me. They were excited and a bit nervous when I talked to them. But for me it was just something I wanted to do. So I applied and got in.

There was a workshop in Helsinki that year when I applied, so even though I didn't know if I got in I wanted to see some people that were in. I felt a bit like a stranger there because everybody kind of knew each other and I didn't know anyone. You know the feeling when you are at the workshop, the feeling is really warm. Because I came later than the first meeting it was more like a picnic. They were having salad and eating something. It was something like a starting party, if I remember right, on Monday, an after school thing.

How was the application process?

We had to make a motivation letter. The teachers know us really well so they know how do we study and how do we are doing. In our class there's 14 students, so basically everybody knows everybody. It's a bit different then Polimi where there is 100 students or something like that in one class. I don't know. It was a new experience for me, PSSD, class that has like 100 students. Back then I had 14, 13 I think nowadays. I think we had an interview also. There was an interview about what we wanted to do in our future and if we wanted to apply for MEDes we could have that talk in that interview.

So is the interview a very informal talk or something more official? Was it stressful?

No it was pretty relaxed. There was a set time for the interview but it wasn't so formal, it was pretty loose, pretty nice. It was nothing stressful or hard, it was nice.

What were your main reasons for and against doing the MEDes?

I must say that there weren't really any reasons against doing it. Basically the experience is so good, it is a win win situation. From my personal point of view there were so many things connected to that experience, the new ways of designing, new teachers, new students. There were also a new protocol on how to concentrate on design. I can nowadays for example understand how many ways there is to understand design, and how to gain a point of view and that's really cool. One reason not to do MEDes is maybe if you're in a really fragile relationship. Maybe then you shouldn't.

Did you get your first choice? How did that affect your experience?

I applied for Paris first actually. I heard so many good things about Paris and I always wanted to live There. That was my kind of goal, but looking back I'm pretty happy that Milan became my first school. In that way I got a really gentle start because it's in English and basically there's no big surprises about the study structure. Politecnico is also a technical

school so it has a different approach. For me it is good to have this as Aalto is more artistic. I don't know. I am happy to go to Ensci next year. I think it's a more creative and a bit more artsy approach to industrial design. But I'm really happy that I got both experiences.

What were your expectations vs. the realities in Milan?

I must say that I was thinking that Milan was even more designerly that it actually is. Like the silly idea which of course is not true, but you have the idea of Italian design and you are basically thinking about design week. That was an amazing event, but I thought the whole year would be like that, which is of course not true. I didn't know what to expect from the school before I came here and so far I like it! There are ups and downs and always some things I don't understand. Sometimes I think that Helsinki does things better but other things are in the contrary and I am thinking *wow this is in this way and it actually works really well*. So I would say there are good and bad aspects.

Best and worst thing about being in Politecnico?

Best is how they concentrate on process and the diversity of students, in PSSD at least. It's really something that I didn't experience in Finland. So when there



are 100 students in the same class there are a lot of different ideas, different point of views, but how do we create one great idea in the group? Basically it is just 45 or 50 students in the workshops so it is easier to have a contact with the teacher and feel more like a person, not just a mass. In that group I feel I have more importance than in a bigger group when I'm just one of the mass. The thing I don't like is some bureaucracy. That is sometimes really impossible to understand. I'm studying in PSSD but I'm an exchange student which is usually not a common combination, because PSSD is something that is really closed and there's not so many exchange students. so basically I can't choose these courses and there were some really problematic things just for choosing these courses. When I tried to email it was just really absurd and they said something like "you can't be that stupid that you don't know how to do this". There was a language barrier maybe. But I felt misunderstood and that this was not what I deserved. This was a minor thing with Students. Otherwise, what I really like is this feeling of being here in Milan. The city has a lot to offer and there are many things to do.

Do your classmates know that you're a MEDes student? What do you think they think about it?

Actually I'm not sure if many even know

that I'm an exchange student. Because the class is half and half - half are Italians and half are internationals. Basically the international students are anyone who's not Italian but they're not exchange students. For some I think I'm a home students. For others, when I said that I'm MEDes, they knew the programme and asked if I knew different people going out of Polimi. It might be a bit confusing because I'm now doing a master course even though I'm in my third year. Some have difficulties understanding that. For me now it will be two years of bachelor and three of master. So I think we're going to be good!

Do your classmates back in Finland know? What do they think about you being a MEDes student?

I would say that my classmates know about MEDes because it is introduced to industrial designers, not for everyone. But next year it might be a bit different because there are some changes in the programmes and they're going to be just one design group. So they will not anymore have industrial design, textile design and glass and ceramic design as bachelor degrees but only one combined degree for design. They will have 30 students in one class so I think MEDes will be more popular and better known. But right now it is just for industrial design, but people know. I think for industrial designers MEDes is

something that you study actually. It's not just about crazy partying but there is an aspect of exchange students here. It's a combination of a lot of fun and a lot of studying.

What about next year? Paris was your first choice, but how did you get to that decision? Did something change from first year when you applied for Ensci?

The main reason is that I heard that this is a really cool and good school and the other reason is that I would love to live in Paris. It has been a dream from when I was seven. When I first visited I was like "yeah ok there's the Mona Lisa and there's the Eiffel Tower, I want to live here." And Disneyland also. I would say that oh yeah I don't know. I would say that nothing changed but maybe I have more knowledge? I would say I'm more prepared for the challenges that I have to face next time.

Who did you hear about the school from? How did you get the information?

Some websites where there's ratings of schools. I wanted to apply because I want to learn French and the second reason was that I know that school is good. Another reason was that it was an art school which is similar to my home school. You can be more crazy there than for example in Milan, I think they want you to be very functional.

The main reason is that my heart belongs there maybe.

Nice. Ok, change of topic. What do you think about the workshops?

The main reason is to create the spirit of MEDes. What make it different from other exchange programmes is that it is kind of a family of people that travel all over Europe sharing experiences and skills. When there is a project to do it is a way you can actually show your talents and create the sharing network. People in the programme will be life long friends, even the friends you don't see so often or keep in contact with. You have that kind of feeling anyway, and that is always nice.

If you could change something about the workshops what would it be?

In the last workshop I didn't like the dividing of first and second year. Maybe that's the one thing. I like when there is a main task for the day. They can be a combination, but something that can done in one day. What I liked in the last workshop was the seminar, it was really nice but I don't want both at the same time.

Would you go to the workshop after your final year in Helsinki?

Good question, probably yes.



I'll love to do that at least. I think that I'll do it if there will be someone there who I know. If I would be the only one from my year group I would not go. It could be interesting to meet new ones, I actually never thought about it. But if I'm working it would maybe be more difficult.

What's your relationship with the tutors in Aalto or Milan? What do you think their roles are?

I would say that in Milan I don't have any kind of relation to them. For me it is not that important either. I think I would have a better relation with the Ensci tutor, probably she have more time for MEDes students. In Milan we met once with the MEDes tutor, I think before the workshop. It was almost at the end of the first semester. With the tutors in my home university I a really good relationship. It's kind of a friendship I feel. I can talk about a lot of things with them. It's nice, it's a bit strange but it's nice. I feel they are really open minded, it's not that strange to talk to them.

What about you relationship with the other MEDes students?

There are a few people I saw in the workshop in Glasgow that I haven't seen because they have been busy with their thesis or in general busy in their schools. In Milan I meet more often with this girl from Glasgow. We have the same PSSD

course and the other doesn't so we are not that much together.

Are they in a different departments or are they just taking other classes?

Student from KISD are not taking course from PSSD. We are not meeting so often.

One last question. What is the best and worst thing about MEDes?

The best thing is the people. The international friendship and networks and the design experience and the unique path MEDes can give you. I would also say that it is interesting that even though every MEDes have a lot of experience, the experience is always different. It make MEDes really unique, you can't compare your study with anyone else. In Helsinki I was used to follow a study plan for three years. The worst thing is that you have to start again in a new country when you have created a social group in your first place. Then the next year you have to start again. I like that but it's still sad that you have to leave everything. Leaving Helsinki was not that sad because you know that you'll be back, but you'll never know if you'll ever be back in the other place and that is kind of sad.

Thanks for the interview!



James Cook

Can you talk me through your very first contact with MEDes? How you got to know about it and decide to apply?

The first time I heard about MEDes... well, I didn't hear about it. I read about it. I was always interested in studying at Cologne International School of Design. So, after School and internships in the field of Design, I finally applied for it. I researched a lot about the school in advance and then I found out that there were two different majors which you could study, the BA in Integrated Design and MEDes. I read about it again, when I was filling the KISD application form.

Was it on the KISD website?

Well, during the application process they sent me all the documents and forms. One of the first questions on the application form was if I would like to apply for BA or MEDes. Then I did some research about it on the official website of KISD. It wasn't a lot of information that I gained, but that's actually the way I got to know about MEDes. The only information I had were a couple of sentences from the website. But I still decided to apply for MEDes, because of the two years abroad in the study plan. It was a really big desire for me to get international experiences and MEDes offered that. It was also a kind of mysterious, you know? There was not much information, it was like a

challenge. Let's discover it. There is so little information, must be exclusive or something like this.

So when you became a KISD student you were already a MEDes student too?

Yes, I had to decide for MEDes in advance.

After you became a MEDes student, without being on exchange yet, did you meet any MEDes students at KISD?

Yes, there are MEDes meetings each semester at KISD. All the MEDes students have the same tutor. We get contacted by the tutor very quickly so we get to know who else was in the programme from the very beginning.

So how did you decide your first exchange school? Did you want to go to Milan?

Milan wasn't my first choice but in the end I was happy with it. It was my second choice. I was interested in going to Politecnico but my first choice was Ensci. I don't remember how I got to these decisions exactly. There was some information about all the partner schools on the KISD website. I read through all of these and then I decided on Ensci. But I have to say that you never know before, if the school is matching with your interests or not.

I experienced that, expectations are always different.

How much did the cities influence your decisions?

A lot of course, the city and the environment played an important role. I think this is somehow connected. The environmental, social and the educational aspect. I can't open completely my mind for studies, while being in an environment I don't like or can't integrate. But as I already mentioned, you can not be 100% sure about it before experiencing it. I had been to Paris in the past, so I already knew the city, what was probably a factor of my decision, beside the school characteristics.

How did you feel when you found out you were going to Milan?

Sure, it wasn't a good feeling to not get my first choice. But I was prepared for everything.

If you could go back would you still pick Paris or would you pick something else?

I think I wouldn't choose Milan, but I wouldn't choose Paris either, maybe. I don't know. I think the interests are always changing in this MEDes programme because you experience so many new things, different fields.

What was the biggest thing you didn't expect in Milan or you expected to be different?

It's was really hard for me to go from KISD to Politecnico because they are so different. I knew that it would have been different, but not that much. POLIMI is much bigger, there are many more students so there's not this familiar character like at KISD, where you know everyone. But that's not a big problem. It was too structured. The good thing is that I'm learning a lot of stuff I would never have learned at KISD. You are also quite free to choose in which courses you are and that is really important for me. What I really like here in Politecnico are the studios of Industrial Design, there is a studio once per week and this is similar to long term projects at KISD. I really like that, because of the intensive focus.

Did anyone help you when you arrived in Milan to understand how the system works, how to pick classes and these thing or you had to do everything on your own?

I received instructing e-mails about bureaucratic stuff in advance. But how to pick classes I had to learn by asking other students.

Who would you expect to receive these information from? Who do you think is "in charge" of it?



I think it's good if you are yourself in charge of it. It promotes your ability to open up to socialize. I guess the tutors give these information too. But there must have been a problem with my e-mail or so, because I never heard about MEDes meetings in Politecnico and I have never met my tutor. We could also provide these informations on social platforms. Maybe on our FB group.

Best and worst thing about Milan.

Finding great new friends. The worst thing is not being at home. But it's not just about the social aspect. I mean, I also had some really good experiences in projects last semester. They really interested me. There was an educational, social and cultural and enrichment. This was the best thing.

What about next year?

I'm looking forward to go to Aveiro. I'm feeling like a pioneer. I'm really proud to go there. I'll try to gain as much information as possible, so I can tell others how it is there.

What's your biggest fear or doubt now about Aveiro?

I don't know, I had a really good discussion with the professors from Aveiro during the workshop. They described everything really frankly.

They gave me their emails and told me that I can contact them for any question. I don't have fears about it, I'm looking forward. The excitement is higher than the fear, of course. It's about the school and the nice stuff you will learn there. The professors told me what I will learn there. I will draw a lot for example. And this is something that I really missed.

Was Aveiro your first choice? How did you/the tutors decide?

Aveiro? No, it was my second choice. I didn't know anything about it. I heard that they would participate in the MEDes programme but I didn't know that they already begin this semester or next semester. The first day of the workshop at GSA there was a presentation of the University of Aveiro and I really liked it, so I thought about going there. My family is also living in Portugal so this is a really good connection for me. My first choice was Aalto. But I told my tutor that I actually didn't mind going to Aveiro. Both Aveiro and Helsinki were really fine for me.

Speaking of workshops how's your experience with workshops? What are they about?

I don't know if this is also for the students from the others schools a problem. I don't know, but for me the workshops have been always a problem, because

they were during a time when it's really stressful for KISD students. This year I have my Bachelor presentation. You're really focussed, but then you have more than one week you don't take any time for your thesis.

Change one thing about the workshop.

The dates. Or maybe something about the organisation, but we already talked a lot about this at the workshop in Glasgow. Information given before the workshop. Both this year and last year at the workshop I heard that some students were happy with the topic and others were not interested... maybe it would be better to have an offer of different topics when you come to the workshop and decide "ok this topic is interesting for me". This year it was different because there was an important topic. These were some things about the workshops I'd change, but in general I really like and enjoy them.

What do you think about the separation of first year and second year students at the workshop in GSA?

I think it's really important, especially for MEDes, that Bachelor students and Master students are all working together. I think that this is something that makes MEDes so special. I don't know how it is for MEDes students in Helsinki or Paris but even here in Politecnico I can choose,

as a MEDes student, courses of the master cycle, or any other year. And at KISD it is the same, even when you're not a MEDes student. I think it's important for MEDes students to not be divided during the workshop like last year.

How's your relationship with the other MEDes students in Milan?

I'm really good with the other students. But I think everybody has a lot of stuff to do and the school is so huge we don't see each other every time.

What about the tutors? Do you have any contact with the tutor in Milan or Cologne?

As I already mentioned, there must have been a problem with my email. Unfortunately I just met my tutor of Milan during the workshops.

What do you think about the tutors, in general? How would you describe them?

I'm hearing a lot from KISD, I like it. We have these MEDes meetings... there was even a MEDes meeting last week or two weeks ago. I think it's always good to join these meetings with the professors. You also have the chance to talk about your problems or some difficulties and about your experiences so far: what you have learned in the past semester, and so on.



In KISD there are two MEDes meetings each semester and I think this is good.

Can you draw the MEDes structure?

It's about the content I'm drawing. It's just some lines and circles but, you know each circles can stand for everything, for schools, for competences, for anything... we are sharing these competences and sharing ideas and sharing experiences and there's a lot about sharing...I think. We are sharing with each other, we are trying to share outside like a huge network or something like this. Isn't it beautiful?

When you explain to people what MEDes is, what do you tell them?

MEDes is... it's some kind of network that gives you the opportunity to go your individual way in your studies... So MEDes is a big enrichment in different fields and aspects that are so important for product design. Like cultural, social, international competences. MEDes prepares you somehow for an international career as a European product designer.

Best and worst things about MEDes?

These are also good things about MEDes but the bad thing about MEDes is that of course you have two years... you leave people and things to go this way, your

own individual way and you have to leave friends, maybe just for a period of time, you have to leave your family, your favourite bakery, basically your whole life. I had to start from the beginning you know. But this is also the thing with MEDes... you have to start new to discover. That's it.

Thanks you!



TUTOR
YEAR ZERO
FIRST YEAR
SECOND YEAR
THIRD YEAR
ALUMNI

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Fernão de Magalhães

How did you first hear about the MEDes?

I heard about it when I entered ENSCI-Les Ateliers and checked the international connections of the school. Then it took me a while to decide. The decision came at the end of my first year. In the middle of my second year, I was preparing my application. This choice wasn't obvious at the beginning. I was hesitating a lot. Unlike KISD, where you apply to MEDes when you enter the school, it is optional at ENSCI-Les Ateliers and only a few students want to join MEDes. It is not an easy choice because ENSCI is considered as a good design school in France. It is hard to get in, then the admitted students don't want to leave ENSCI-Les Ateliers... I was really set in Paris when I finally decided whether I was joining MEDes or not...

So you have a choice of when you can apply?

I first applied to my school, then it came as an option. But still, from ENSCI there was a series of requirements that you had to fill before you applied. If you fill these requirements when you decide to apply, you are more likely to be taken. First, it is important to feel comfortable with the classes at ENSCI-Les Ateliers, then the tutors know that you may be comfortable to study abroad as well.

Can you talk me through how you applied?

It's a really small school with about 250 students, five years together. They know you quite well because the students have regular meetings with the teachers and some members of the administration. You have to be the first category, which means that you entered the school for five years and not less. You also need to have done specific classes that they think you won't have abroad. It's really important that you have that from the school so you have a good base when you leave. They look at your grades as well. You have grades A, B, C then fail. It's hard to get A, most students get B. It is important to have at least two semesters as an A.

You have to be quite open, and inform the teachers about your will to join the MEDes programme. Then they can advise you and maybe they look more carefully on you. ENSCI follows individually each student... They want to be sure that you can manage to study on your own when you are away.

Did you go to the MEDes tutor when you first applied?

Exactly. I went to the tutor and it was just a discussion. She just asked all the questions like "have you done this and that" and she asked me why I wanted to

join the MEDes, it was really informal. At the end of each semester at ENSCI you have an appointment with your teachers. During these commissions the designer that follows you gather with the MEDes tutor and you have to present all the projects and the courses that you have done during the current semester. Also you have to briefly introduce yourself and say where you come from and what you have previously been taught in the school. There, they announce your marks. So at the end of my third commission (third semester) it was decided if I could join MEDes or not. It depends on your results and attitude.

Interesting. Is there anything you really miss about ENSCI-Les Ateliers? Or anything from your home in general?

It's hard because I have never tried to compare. But I think for sure the schools have a strong identity which makes them have things other schools don't. I tried to get the best from what I could get abroad without thinking what I would miss from ENSCI. When I left Paris I was already in the perspective of getting everything I could from Paris so I wouldn't miss ENSCI-Les Ateliers or feeling I hadn't done something before leaving. I think what I miss most from ENSCI is the constant feedback. Maybe it's less key for the MEDes students because they are part of the course but not really a full student, a degree student. Because

what I have found these last two years is that I really have had a lot of freedom. And I think sometimes I would have been more motivated being a bit pushed, like coached a bit. Otherwise from Paris of course there are some people I miss, some teachers. But I know I'm going to come back there. If I was leaving of course I would feel really sad. But it's not like I am leaving forever. I still feel like a student of ENSCI.

Thanks for a great interview!



Marco Polo

How did you find out about MEDes?

Even before enrolling in Politecnico. I was already looking at the exchange programmes because I wanted to go abroad and I had seen this MEDes programme. At first I thought it was just for Product Design people because the programmes you are going to attend abroad were all industrial design. So I knew it existed but I never really thought I would do it until November of the second year where I had applied to an exchange in London but then the school said that they were renovating the building so they didn't take any Erasmus students. So I was left with nothing and they offered me other places in other cities but I was not interested. I think I had seen a notice on the website of the school and I was like, there is still this and I kind of looked into it and thought "why not try it"? Seems like yesterday.

What would you say to a student who wants to apply to MEDes today?

I've said stuff to a lot of students, I was contacted by many. I would say do it. I would say; be prepared to be open, to change, to do something different. Don't plan too much, it's better to have an open mind, if you plan everything and things go wrong and you get angry it doesn't work, just go without a plan.

Your first year in one minute?

Ok, my first was surprising, it was my first choice and it was the best choice for me. It was fun and it was relaxing compared to Politecnico, but also kind of life changing because it moved me from one direction to another and that's what MEDes is about, finding yourself. It helped me find myself and really specialise in my practice.

What do you mean saying from one direction to another?

Well, because my bachelor in Politecnico was in Communication Design but then in Glasgow I discovered that maybe what I was interested in, what I was good at was not only that but maybe Service Design or not even just that. The way to design in Glasgow was really different from Politecnico, not that I enjoyed that way more than Politecnico, but the fact that it was different helped me figure out what I wanted to do.

Your second year abroad in one minute?

It was like a step up from the first year. I could really feel that it was a master and not a bachelor. Everyone was more motivated than all the people I was working with before, more motivated than anyone and I was also more serious about my courses and more anxious about what would come next.

In my first year of MEDes everything was still new and it was more like an exchange, more like a life experience. The second year for me was more work related, in a good way, because in Helsinki I found even more of what I want to do and now it is quite clear. It was more serious, that doesn't mean that it was worse, maybe it was better, because everything was clear for me and I got even more inspired.

So what is clear now? What do you want to do?

Well, the last course I did in Helsinki was an experimental course called "Design for government" which wasn't in the master of industrial design but in the creative sustainability one. That is a new thing and we worked with the minister of environment and it was all about sustainability, using design. Like designers in power. How the design mentality can help also in this big decisions and not just packaging or communicating what is decided already, but contributing in the decisions during the process.

Are you in contact with Alumni? If so, what for?

Yeah, I guess. On Facebook but I am not so active. It is always like a food chain, you always ask people that have been there already, ask for tips and

you get asked by people who are one step behind. It's a good system I think because you give something and you get something from different people.

What has been your best experience in MEDes?

It's hard to choose, a single event?

Yes, a single event.

Well, I would say my trip to this island two hours from Glasgow and it's like Scotland in miniature because there is the coast and high mountains. I went there one month after I arrived so it was really at the beginning and it was just great. I went with the friends I just met but we were already like long time friends, we climbed this mountain and we had a view of all of Scotland and it was great.

And the worst one?

Well, it was kind of bad, now I can take it with irony but the first time I arrived in Glasgow I arrived at the flat that I had already been to because I went there in August to check it out and get the key and stuff. In September I came back to Glasgow and I thought "ok it's late, I'm gonna let myself in and sleep in my bed". So I arrived and I opened the front door, but trying to open the door of the flat it just didn't open. I tried for half an



hour with my fifteen kilos of bags and it didn't open. Then I tried everything, I tried calling the flatmate, I shouted my flatmate's names through the mail hole and no one answered. I could pick up the wi-fi from the flat so I started looking for hostels, no one had a room, not even hotels up to four stars. I was desperate and no one picked up so I ended up sleeping on the stairs outside the flat the whole night. It turned out that I couldn't open the flat because the person who had left me the room for the semester usually used the key to open beer bottles so the key was broken and it was just terrible. I had a headache for four days and I couldn't enter the flat for four days because it turned out my flatmates were abroad. Luckily another MEDes student who was in Glasgow hosted me for that period. It was not the best way to arrive.

What about the tutors?

I liked the way tutors were in Glasgow, the structure was like a family and very personal, our tutor was our big uncle. He always came and asked how it was going and was really nice. Everything was human based, you could just go to people and talk and he was also a teacher so it was kind of different.

In Helsinki there is an administrator, she is not a teacher she is kind of the bureaucratic queen of the department and she is really nice as well.

She really helps you. At the end of the year we took her out for dinner and she was really happy and helped us with the credits as well because in Helsinki even if you do full time credit you don't get 60 credit, so she gave us MEDes related extra assignments and she was really helpful, just great.

That's great, thank you.



TUTOR
YEAR ZERO
FIRST YEAR
SECOND YEAR
THIRD YEAR
ALUMNI

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Gertrude Bell

Could you tell me a little bit about your background before you started studying?

Yes, I came to Cologne to do an apprenticeship at a television company. After three years I was an educated editor, video editor. But immediately after finishing my apprenticeship I started studying here at KISD. It was great cause I could work on it during my studies, like I could work professionally while studying, but I knew that I wanted to go into the design direction because the television was very technical.

And so you went here, and then you went to which schools?

I went to Glasgow and Ensci.

What made you initially interested in design? What was it about it that attracted you?

Actually, it was before, when I was in school I loved art and these art classes. I wanted to start studying directly after school, I wanted to go into design, but then people told me "don't do that, you won't get a job afterwards". You know that stuff, and I was looking for different things that also related to being creative, and then I found this media thing. I think it was always in the back of my head that I wanted to go into design later. I think it was just always in my interest, especially

discovering what people want and need, and how they behave. I just remember when I applied here, and there were three people sitting in this interview. They asked me the same question, and I was kind of explaining, and now I know that I was kind of explaining user centered design but I didn't know the term then.

How did you then hear about the MEDes programme?

From the website. I wanted to apply to different schools. I applied to Düsseldorf, then I wanted to apply in Berlin, and here in Cologne. And then of course I was searching on the websites, what kind of studies they offer and this MEDes was just super special, you couldn't find that anywhere else. So that is why I applied for that, and I always wanted to go abroad for a longer time. I didn't do a year in school, like some of my friends did. And I always wanted that but my parents didn't support me so I thought during my studies I will take the chance to go.

Entering into the programme, what was your first impression?

Ok, It is interesting because normally you won't go to a workshop before you are in your second year, but I met this girl in my first year when I started here, and she was the MEDes coordinator, and she

organised the workshop in, or she was involved in the workshop in Stuttgart. I asked her if I could join, even if I was in the first year of my studies, because I was curious, and then she said, "yes sure why not", and I went. I don't think students normally did that before.

So for me it was a great experience because I got to go to the workshop and meet everybody, ask people a lot of questions about it but I had no pressure to choose already, you know, my next destination. So I would recommend that to everybody to go first year.

Nice.

For Glasgow people it is not possible right? Because you don't know if you are in the MEDes or not. But here you knew, but I think next year when it all changes you won't know anything, so then it will be different.

Was there something about the culture of MEDes that you noticed especially?

Very special, because it was the tenth anniversary, and that is also why they made this new sign, the corporate identity. The people were very connected, and it was really good! A good experience, and it is hard to describe it, but it felt like a big family as you sometimes say, the MEDes family.

Can you just briefly talk me through your experience through the two schools? How it felt, how you liked it or didn't like it?

Yes, to start, Glasgow. I chose Glasgow because of Service Design, and my experience of Glasgow is very good because I was learning much more about service design than I did here. It was very focused on that. Especially in third year. Glasgow was super different from Paris, because it was more structured but more kind of a school approach. I had less connection to the people there than I had in Paris, I don't know why because other people tell different things, like normally I would say that Glaswegians are very open and friendly and open minded but I had more friend outside of my class, maybe it was just my year?

And then the second half of Glasgow I wrote my bachelors, and that was great cause I could use a project that I did in the first half, and develop that further. I was working with a social enterprise in Glasgow so I had a partner, and they were very open so I could do anything, and it was really good! It was a good experience to also have something outside of school, that I was working on and with. The last three months writing thesis was just like sitting inside and not meeting my friends anymore or being part of the MEDes, so think that was a bit of a pity. You are ten months in



Glasgow and you missed three months because you are writing your thesis that in the end does not really matter anymore because you are doing your masters anyway. So, looking back I would not have put so much effort into the Bachelor maybe, and enjoyed more my time there. I think that is also a personal thing, some people don't care about the bachelor that much. So I wish I would have done a project then in school or something. The whole experience ended with the degree show. That was really impressive, because we have a show but it is not in that size so I thought that was very wow.

And then Paris. It was different because my boyfriend joined me, so we went together to Paris, and in Glasgow I was alone. So we lived together, and I think that also changed the experience totally. In Paris we had seven or eight MEDes people during the exchange and in Glasgow we were only two, three initially but one girl quit after three months. So we had more MEDes in Paris than in Glasgow, and that also made it a more intense experience in terms of MEDes for me. It was a great team of people from Helsinki, I think we had people from everywhere, we didn't have that many from Stockholm, and we did a lot of things together. And learning, I knew a bit of French, but of course it was a bigger step to learn speaking French than English so that also changed the

experience so much as you could not communicate like you wanted while in Glasgow it was easy to communicate.

What would you point out as the highlight or the highlights?

I would say the workshops. That was always something that I was looking forward to. The best thing I think was during the five years I got to see each school. As I started in my first year going to the workshops, the first one in Stuttgart and the last one in Glasgow. That was perfect! I now have the big picture of how every school is and I think that completed the whole experience, knowing what the other schools are about even if you don't study there. Being there for one week or two weeks give you an impression. It brings together the MEDes family. Also at that point you meet alumni or you meet younger or older students, and people you never studied with but you knew they were MEDes. You know them somehow, but only because you are connected to the network. I think that is fantastic!

What has been the ultimate low point of the experience?

Low points. I don't know, for me there is not so many. I would not say low points. For me it is always a challenge and I loved it. But maybe the bachelor? Because you suddenly have to come back

to KISD and you suddenly have to work with a professor here. You have to always keep in contact with them, so you are detached from what you are really doing in the school you are. Maybe that one was the lowest point.

Looking back what are the skills that you learned in the different schools that you would not have gotten here?

I think adapting to new things, of course as you get forced to when you are abroad. Learning about cultural differences, I understood more my own country because I was away. As I said before I learned much more about service design because they focus much more on the skill-set, how you do the whole service design project, instead of here where you are very free. So I learned about the tools and methods.

In Paris I learned what I didn't want and what I am not good at and that is also very important because I was always between Paris and Helsinki when I was deciding for the second year, and I decided on Paris because of the living aspect, city aspect and not so much because of the school. I decided on Glasgow because of the school, and in Helsinki I would have also decided because of the school. So I thought I would now decide based on the living aspect, and I wanted to learn French. I think that Helsinki would have been

easier for me because I would know the user centered design and that would maybe have been more my way of working. In Paris, working and focusing on industrial design and having the clash with designers that don't care about service design, that don't have a clue about service design, I think I learned a lot more from that. And now I am very clear what I want to do, so it was good to have the two extremes, and now I think I am a little bit in the middle, combining both aspects.

If you would redesign the programme, what would you then have done differently?

Redesign the whole?

Well there are many elements but the overall, how could it in some way have been a greater experience?

What was always the problem was the organisation, and the administrative stuff. Because here at KISD nobody really cares. If you are abroad then you are there and you need to find your way through all the papers and my papers got lost and then I wasn't signed up for the bachelor thesis but I was already writing on it so it was a big mess. And because so many people changed. One person was in charge of MEDes then they changed, again they changed and that was a really bad experience,



being abroad having no support, and not knowing who to talk to and getting information. So I think the initial idea was to have a MEDes coordinator and I think it is a good idea because you have one central point where everything comes together and maybe also someone that is there for longer. So that didn't really work well. I think also because the MEDes tutor here at KISD, is not that much passionate about the whole programme, because they were not the initiators. The experience is so much influenced by your tutor.

That is interesting.

But you know what I mean?

Yes, it makes sense. If I was a student that was interested in the programme and wondering if I should apply how would you describe MEDes?

Well. MEDes is a great study programme where you have the chance to study in three different schools, learning different skill-sets and approaches to design. And developing your personality very much during that time. Finding great friends actually! I like saying that it is like a big family, a network that you can hopefully rely on also after your studies. So it is a great experience, five years, you have your master degree, it is an integrated programme, makes sense.

What do you think is the value of MEDes to employers? Why should people hire people from MEDes?

It is interesting because when I applied for internships during my year off people were always super positive about that. And when they see that "oh you went to Glasgow and to Paris for one year each". I think good companies know the value. And that you learned how to adapt, to always work in different teams and managing yourself.

I also think that MEDes educate leaders, like you learn how to be a leader, that was my experience, you learn how to work in teams so that would be of high value for companies. To get such a person into their team.

How would you like to be connected to the MEDes? Through which channels or events?

The workshop maybe? Could always be a good thing to meet every year, because then we, then everybody comes together so it is the best chance to meet everybody. So getting invited to the workshop, or having a platform where alumni can communicate. And I think that would be enough, one meeting during the year especially when you are working. But being connected over Facebook is always a good thing. It was a strange thing because when you asked

me if I know people that have already graduated, I know their names but I don't know them, like I am not connected to them. Maybe I am on LinkedIn a bit, but I wish I had more contact with them because I know them from the first workshop in Stuttgart but I have never seen them again. So if they would join the workshop then we would see each other much more, in person. Instead of seeing them in a LinkedIn profile.

Do you think that is important for strengthening that family sense in MEDes? To have them connected?

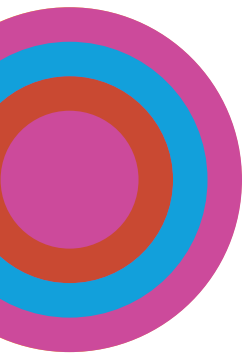
Yes, especially because MEDes people know how MEDes people are, and so they know best the value for the companies, and for me that is interesting now. I mean, finding a job, and connecting to people, and then working with them or for them. I think that would be a great opportunity.

So realistically, how do you see yourself connected to MEDes in the future if things stay as they are today?

Well at the moment I was thinking about arranging a meeting next year, trying to get the alumni together and then meet, even if it is not arranged by the MEDes. I am not sure if I would have time for that. Depends where I am working. I think you can always find your way even without a structure, I mean I am connected with

some people, in different channels, I think I would just try to keep that connection.

Thanks for your time!



Freya Stark

Could tell me about your background before studying?

I was actually quite old before I started studying. I was twenty five when I started studying in Konstfack. I studied psychology for one semester, then I worked as a teacher assistant for a year and then I went to an education in packaging design for one year. I got an internship through the packaging design education at a product design firm, a firm that makes cooperation branding products, so they do bags and give aways and stuff, as a designer there, and then I applied to Konstfack for the second time. I applied first when I was twenty, and when I was twenty five I got in, and then I went there. So that is pretty much it, I went to art education in high school, like an art orientation in high-school.

What made you initially interested in design?

I think for me it was industrial design. I was interested in industrial design because I've always been a bit of an inventor, like I like to make things up and solve problem and that is what originally pulled me into design. Then also the art aspect, so art and invention I guess.

How did you hear about the MEDes programme?

Well, it was through my professor at

Konstfack, and I was originally only going on an exchange to Glasgow, but he convinced me to do it through the MEDes program. So, then I went to the workshop in Milan, and then I learned a lot more through the workshop of course and then I found out that I got my spot in Glasgow.

Next question is what was your motivation for enrolling in the programme, you already talked about that a bit.

Yes, I kind of just fell in to it through that I wanted to go to Glasgow and then I thought it was just so great and I just wanted to do the whole programme.

What was your first impression when you came to Glasgow as a MEDes student first year, and you found yourself as a MEDes student, what did that feel like?

I felt there was a community between the people who did the MEDes thing, which was nice, and I felt that I liked the school, it was quite different from Konstfack. I felt quite old, I mean it was good for me, I think you can learn a lot from people who are a lot younger than you as well.

Can you maybe briefly talk me through your experience at the two schools that you have been through?

Yes sure. I think that Glasgow was interesting with the sort of user centered profile and I liked Glasgow, the school. Aalto had amazing resources. As a student you have more freedom, I mean that might also be because it is the master education that you have there. But it is nice as well that you get to choose from courses there. I think there is a point to not be able to choose you courses that much in the bachelors degree program. I really liked the class in Glasgow a lot, how you work together and I felt like it was a very collaborative atmosphere there. People really work together there which I thought was very nice. They do it in Aalto too but it is difficult to compare since one is a bachelor degree and one is a master degree.

What has been your highlight of the MEDes experience so far?

Wow, to be honest my first year in Glasgow was really amazing because of the experience of a new culture and being on exchange, so I think that was really a big part of it. To be able to go to a different country, that is quite different to Sweden as well, for a year and just live there. I really liked Glasgow and Scotland a lot. To be honest it was not only the school, when I think about the experience, it was the experience of living in Glasgow, though it is hard to separate them from each other. I mean if I went

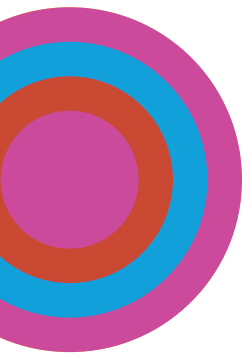
to Glasgow to work in some boring job I think I would not have enjoyed it very much at all.

What are the hard parts of MEDes?

Well, I don't like the sorting hat thing very much. You know like in Hogwarts when they give you your school, I think that could have been done in a more sensitive way. I don't like the tension and the competition. I don't see why we have to do it all publicly really. I mean it was not a big problem for me because I got my choice and also I am older so I am more used to these things, but I understand that people are really upset if they didn't get their choice, they are really young as well, some are really young, and I think why can't this be done more sensitively. I mean it is not fun to be crying in front of all your professors and everybody.

I think, to be honest, I had a very good experience. I think my school could have been much better at promoting it. I don't really know what is going on with MEDes and my school right now. Our professor talks about how great it is but it is but there is nothing really happening, like no-one is really coming or going.

What skills have learned at your exchange schools that you could not have learned at Konstfack?



GSA was where I learned about service design, so that was very good. I learned Arduino at Aalto, and also something that I have come to appreciate more now that it is over is the academic writing .

If you could have changed the MEDes system what would it look like, how would you have done it differently?

I would have more schools, I understand that it is difficult but if I could dream I would have more schools and it would also be in more places than only Europe. And maybe something for the older students, to help them somehow. Because it is quite different to go abroad when you are twenty seven and when you are twenty one.

What that could that look like?

That is the thing, I think it is probably hard to do anything about. I don't know. Maybe to give some advice, and usually money is a bigger issue for us, because our parents don't support us anymore, I mean if you are from the Nordic countries we have a different system but if you are studying when you are old in another country it is very difficult i think to afford to go abroad. To be honest I have been really happy with it so it is difficult to think of something.

How would you describe the programme if I were a first year student that was

just about to go into the programme?

I would say that it is an exchange programme between seven leading European schools, first you get two years in your bachelor so in your original school or your home school or whatever and then you go one year on exchange in school a and then you go on another exchange in school b and then in your fifth year you finally are in your master and you do that in your original school.

What do you think is the value of MEDes to employers?

I think you have someone with a very unique education, that has the experience from not only one but three schools and also that has shown that they are capable of living in a different culture, to do all the things that mean, getting to know people, getting all the practical stuff. I think you generally get a very sort of brave and thrifty person.

How do you wish to be connected to MEDes in the future?

I think it is wonderful to still have that contact. For now I am still in that Facebook group so that is good, maybe there could be an alumni group as well? When they have the different workshops, if there was an alumni night or something that could be nice. It does not have to be only for the alumni but

just to make it very clear that the alumni are very welcome for the workshop and to meet up. I think it could be good to network, because the MEDes network could surely help me, and if you are abroad or if you are self employed it would be good to have that network.

Do you have anything in mind what these alumni nights could consist of?

Just beer I think. I think it is more about keeping the connection. I think it is more about them feeling welcome, that they have a little thing just for them. Just to grab a beer or whatever.

How do you think or believe that you will be connected in the future?

I think the people that I have been in the same school as I will always be able to contact, I think the Facebook group works very well. I mean, it is nice that people can or want to show up to the workshops even when you are an alumni, I think maybe that could be something to work with.

Alright, that was my final question, so thank you very much.

You are very welcome.



Phileas Fogg and Jean Passepartout

Could you tell me a bit about each of your backgrounds before entering into design education?

P: Do you want to start?

J: Yes, this is my second degree, first I studied industrial design in a university in South Korea and therefore I have different experiences from there. But I found this MEDes course. I actually applied to the GSA to be MEDes because I wanted to experience different cultures and also different views on design education. And when you experience three different cultures you can kind of compare, the good ones and the bad ones, and then you can compare the design context.

P: I can totally relate to that actually. My design career you can say started in my hometown in England. Originally I was going to do fine art before I was going to do design, but then I was thinking that there won't be any jobs, so then I looked for a more practical way to apply creativity, and design sort of struck on. So I studied for a foundation diploma in England and really enjoyed it. I never really felt that I could get in to the Glasgow school of art, because I didn't want to put the bar so high, but then the tutor at this art college was saying "put down GSA and see if you can get an interview". The interview came through so I packed up my folio and went

through, and that's the first time I was actually introduced to the MEDes course. It was quite intriguing at the time but I like couldn't even picture myself being on that. Because I got into the GSA which was a good step on the ladder, but when it came to actually getting through to MEDes two years later then that was totally mind blowing. From traveling only to Glasgow, which was a big step for me, into an other country, that was just mind blowing. Like you said, it opens up new perspectives to add to your projects as well, well not just to your projects but to your life. A new culture adds new knowledge, new food, new understanding of the world and new thoughts.

J: I have two small daughters actually, so that meant that I could experience different childcares as well.

P: Which one's the best?

J: I think...

P: The German?

J: Yes I think the German

Can tell me about what was your first impressions when you enrolled in the programme?

P: This is so long ago at the time it was a bit stressful. Because people were planning in different directions, figuring

out if you got into the master programme or if you got into the bachelor and so everybody was a bit on edge. That added a bit of competition, you know, like you could do better than other people and to get on to the masters course you needed like a B on your final assessment. I just got in and that was all I needed. But for other people that saw that I got a B it was a sense of competition. It was the same way in KISD and Stockholm. It was a sense of great achievement, like I got on that course.

J: I mean, the experience of applying to the MEDes is really motivating. When I was trying to get in I contacted an ex-MEDes, that now was working in the design industry and that really helped me in choosing the schools because he had the experience from some of them. That is definitely the information that led me to applying to certain schools.

Nice, can you talk me briefly through the experience of the two different schools?

P: Well, we are both from Glasgow and we have both been to KISD so maybe that is a good place to start? Glasgow, it is an interesting one. Ok, maybe I can start with KISD because I think that it is a very positive example of what an art school is. I got the sense that KISD had a lot of different influences inside it, it is a lot of character. I kind of enjoyed

that everybody used to complain about the tutors, they all got this adverse personality, that is really different and unique. Sometimes you need that personality to bring a bit of diversity into a project. You know, if everybody was very relaxed and took it easy, and then someone said "I don't think it should be this way", Then you get this conflict. I think out of that conflict comes very interesting design solutions. So yes, I think the environment at KISD provided that conflict and that was very good. But the school itself was amazing, it was just so many facilities to try and experiment with all different kinds of designs. And I think that is something apparent with KISD in comparison with Glasgow or Stockholm where there is opportunities but it is very hard to do. If I want to sew something then I would have to go to a workshop induction in Stockholm or to a workshop tutor in Glasgow.

J: Glasgow, KISD and also Aalto has a very different environment. They are however all studio based environments that means that you have a dialogue with your friends and colleagues. When I came to Aalto there was a structure of a big university. They have a big studio, and they always have some projects where you can have more contact with your tutors on a regular basis. I think KISD is in between Aalto and Glasgow, the structured and the unstructured



environments. In KISD there are all these mandatory things where you also have to participate, but the different choices of lectures also provides you with options.

P: I think KISD had the best education platform that I have seen out of all the schools, where you can pick and choose your courses. That is just amazing! This week I can do this, then next week I can do that. I guess for the home students it is a more structured plan. You know, the resources, the tutors just can't offer that many courses. I really liked that, so much more fun and diverse. Konstfack was a very different school. I love the sense of culture there, I think culture really runs through the heart and soul of the school. In KISD I think it was 25 % internationals, at least when I was there, and so you get a very diverged feeling. You get a sense sometimes that there is a divide between us and the German students. But in Konstfack everybody was mixing and the swedes had excellent English.

What has your ultimate highpoint and low point of the program been so far?

P: There has been so many high points I guess it is difficult to pick one.

Is it any of them that stands out?

J: For me, that I have a family and have a lot of things to move and get

to a different country was kind of challenging. I guess that was a difficult situation.

P: It is really hard to put my finger on it but I guess one of the dinners at Konstfack with other students or the Christmas Tuesday Talk. Then everyone gathered around and Professor Erlhoff was giving a talk and everyone was drinking wine. When even the German student were talking to the international students. How is the Gutestube?

Well I am sitting there right now that is probably why it is a bit loud. Yes I think it is good, I do my shift there every Friday.

P: You do? Gutestube for life!

What skills have you learned in the MEDes programme in the different schools that you wouldn't have experienced in you home school?

P: Well, Glasgow is kind of service design. KISD just threw skills at you, I learned designing games at KISD and I learned to some extent making interfaces, photography and cinematography. Konstfack changed a lot, tutors change every ten years and so I had an interview with one professor but he changed as soon as I arrived. He had been telling me that this is gonna be a strictly industrial design institute, and I

was like "YES!", because it had been all theoretical inside KISD and I was ready to do some practical stuff, but then he disappeared.

P: The Professor coming in changed the course to a half industrial design half service design. So I ended up doing the same things that i had been doing at KISD and in Glasgow.

J: The professors have different expertise, their specialties. GSA has the user centered design and design thinking and also the social aspect. In Aalto university there were more technology based stuff, like 3d printing and Arduino. Basic prototyping stuff but you can usually take a course easily, and the professors are like professional UX specialists from Nokia. In this way you can add new expertise in design into your shopping basket.

Cool, so I have a few questions in the end about the future of MEDes. How would you describe MEDes to potential students?

P: Well, it's changing so much, I feel like we are really old right now, like we cant say anything about it. I think MEDes opens up a lot of opportunities for you. When you are at your home school you get this closed environment, and you don't experience the outside that much. With MEDes it is also a cultural

experience. It is not just the schools and the skills and the experience of the tutors but it is the culture itself that the school is in. That gives you this new perspective on the world, like we were talking about before, it neutralizes the traditions and things that you are used to. You are able to experience new traditions and new cultures and they somehow, at least from my experience, I found myself. This all turned very philosophical.

J: I think that you can get more insights from more practice. I for example had to learn German. I took a German course from the Fachhochschule, and I think that was another skill to broaden my understanding of culture. This goes especially for Germany and maybe in France and Italy as well.

What do you think the value of MEDes students is to employers?

P: I would say again, that it provides the diverse and joint experience. MEDes students got different perspectives from whom they have done projects with and also that they have found themselves. They know who they are by the end of the course, so they can better identify and motivate based on what they think is right. If I went on an Erasmus course then I only went on one exchange between my school and one other school. The Erasmus I think is like six months isn't it? I think it is six months,



and that is enough time to get to know the place, but a whole year in a place is enough to really and truly experience it. It is like the Brits going on holiday and saying that they are all cultured. You don't really experience the culture you just get a little taste. But when you are in the culture and when you are living it you see that this is how other people actually live. And then you can bring these perspectives into projects.

J: Yes, I think these perspectives are important, I think that there are many exchange possibilities, and whether it is Erasmus or MEDes your experience is dependent upon you as a person, if you really connect to those experiences and those opportunities. I think that MEDes compared to other courses gives more opportunities. It is like if you try to find the pink cover, other people choose other kinds of pink, like light pink. You are defining your expertise every year, I think that is the very big thing, cause if you are only out for six months and have no time to think about it, and it stops there. My experience is that in KISD and Aalto they see MEDes students as their own students, so it is just a totally different from someone that just goes somewhere with a programme.

Final question, how would you like to be connected to MEDes in the future?

P: I think it was very interesting hearing

about where everybody has gone when you are on the programme. Somebody is down in London or past Europe, you know European design indicate that you will only do design in Europe but I mean that is useful for the Asian market. You find people going over to have jobs somewhere else and it opens up a lot of opportunities to travel around the world. So yes, it is a huge perspective from those people that have gone through.

J: It is very important that as a MEDes you have some sort of a group that you are living and working with. You are connected to this group around the world but also in you area, and this feeling of belonging really helps when we have to introduce ourselves to the non MEDes environment.

Thanks guys, it was great!



TUTOR
YEAR ZERO
FIRST YEAR
SECOND YEAR
THIRD YEAR
ALUMNI

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Dervla Murphy

Now you are in New York, why?

Because I just graduated from Paris, and I directly went to New York because I did an internship here last year for six months. Now I'm searching for work as an industrial designer.

Yeah it's a good starting point. Can you tell me just a little bit about your MEDes experience, from the beginning?

So I am from Paris. When I arrived in ENSCI I got to know about the programme after around three to six months. You know there were strange rumours like: "yeah we heard about this programme where you could exchange and we have a lot of students coming to our school but I don't think it's really worth it and I don't think that people in Paris can go to the other schools". I was asking the other students as it seemed strange and but looked so great. I wanted to do it. I mean, that it was weird and that no one had heard about it at the time made me want to do it.

But nobody did the MEDes programme yet when I arrived. I went to speak to the responsible tutor, and she said: "you have to be motivated, it's open but we are actually looking to create information around the programme because no one ever went. At that time in ENSCI, when

you arrived you had a partnership with an older student so that they could help you adjust and, I don't know how to say it...

Like a Buddy Programme?

Yeah! And this girl, she got into the MEDes programme. She gave me the motivation to do it and so I applied and that was after my second year. I asked for Milan for the first year because I really wanted to have a different experience. In Les Ateliers it is very small, and it has a sense of family spirit. I knew that Politecnico has very large departments and I was also interested in the city. I mean it hosts Salone and I thought: "it's got to be great for the first year." I went there and had the chance to do Interior Design projects with two friends and I did Jewellery Design with another one and that was great and my projects got attention. Then I took a Graphic Design course, that was great for me because in ENSCI-Les Ateliers it is mainly Product design. After a year I was saying "ok that's great, I met a lot of people and I am ready to go to Stockholm."

What was the worst point in Milan?

I don't think it was bad. I mean, when you go there for a year it is good because you get to know a new method and so on. I think after a year I would have been a bit bored about the hierarchy between

the teacher and the students. There you have the teachers on top and looking down at the students. In Les Ateliers we are really at the same level, you know it's more a designer that gives you tips to define your way of designing and there is no hierarchy. It is a casual style. We did revision, we were a very small group, fifteen people with the teacher so it was really different. I think that maybe in Milan the bad point is that there is very huge class and it's hard to have a dialogue sometimes.

How about your second year?

I picked Stockholm because I wanted to go back to more product design. Another thing I forgot to say is that in Milan there were workshops but they were not well developed. I mean, there were workshops that were like small communities and all students couldn't go there. There were no experimentation.

I know, you have this badge and you can only enter with it. It is really strict.

Yeah! So I had the badge but anyway. I used it less than I would have done in Paris. Then I decided to go to Stockholm, because they have amazing workshops that are really handsome. There you can really work with things such as crafts and that was what I wanted to do. It was also more like a family atmosphere there. I wanted to have this again

because it is what I really prefer, smaller groups rather than big classes.

I have always been very fascinated with Scandinavian design, so I went there and it was really great! I did experimental work with glass in some projects and it was a great experience. The bad aspect was that I didn't like the teacher that was running the industrial design department. He did not come from design education or engineering but was more of a theoretical guy. It was a bit annoying because it was his first year and he was not really confident. He didn't give feedbacks to the projects even, which surprised me! In the end it was fine because I was more confident in what I was doing, and I spent a lot of time in the workshops. The guy was however very nice and the spirit of the department was so nice. I really felt like there was a community in the team of all the MEDes students. We were living by the school in a kind of dorm that the school was offering and it was a really nice experience, we were living together and working together.

What was the best experience there?

I don't think I would have liked to go to Milan for the second year. I really loved it for the first year. I have problem in picking the best experience, I think it was perfectly fitting at the time. When I was in Stockholm I was more free and I was



able to work in the workshop and so on. In Milan it was more strict and at that time of my education that was great.

What would you say is the difference between being a MEDes student and an international student? Is there any difference?

Of course yes! We are MEDes students! We don't just go to one city to meet people. We go abroad and we are really less afraid and more sociable. You know, in the MEDes you get an experience where you don't really know what's going to happen. When you are a MEDes students you also have a lot of friends everywhere and you travel a lot.

Are you still in contact with some MEDes students?

Yes

Is it useful?

Yes, because we share the same experience. That is different to my friends in Paris, because those two years abroad was a lot of time. One guy I met in Milan the first year and the other guys in Stockholm. I had a lot of friends there and I'm still in contact with them even though they are spread around the world.

How about the last year in Paris?

I took six months out, because when I was in Stockholm and in Milan I had credits to fill, which you don't do in Paris. So I wasn't able to do a six month internship, and I had only done a one month internship in Stockholm which wasn't enough. During the summer I did an internship in Holland, then I took six months to go to work as a design assistant in a studio in New York.

Ok, and then you return to Paris and you finished there, how was coming back after two years abroad?

I think it was great! It's kind of nice because you see your friends again, but a lot of them had already left the school. But for me it was nice. It was maybe a bit of a disadvantage, doing my project because you do a six months project where you are supposed to gather a team around you to help you do your project. It's the philosophy in ENSCI and most of the time you have your friends. A lot of my friends however were really busy because they were already working or doing their writing and so I had to find some other people that I didn't know. I needed also the time to finish all the painting and all the stuff. It was harder for me maybe, because a lot of people didn't know me because I was not in the school for two and a half years. Finally I gathered a team around me and it was great. Some guys from the first year got to help me which I think was great.

That's the difference when I came back. Sometimes it can be tough but it was great.

Are you interested in getting in touch with other MEDes students?

I think, it's very interesting and very helpful to have MEDes alumni. In my school in Paris we have a small school and the Alumni there is working very well. MEDes is also a very small structure and I think it could work very well and could help. In my school we have an alumni thing on the website that you can access with a password and then you can enter any name and you can see when they graduated and where they are now and so you have the professional mail address of the company where they are working and where it's located. You can search either by name or country, for example when I came to New York and I was searching for work I looked at the alumni in the United States, and I found a list of fifteen people. I checked where everyone was and if I was interested in what they were doing. Then I had the address and I could contact them which was great.

So you think it's nice also for work. If alumni would have been invited to the workshops, do you think that you would have gone?

I'm not sure if Alumni would actually

go there or maybe they would. Maybe if someone was interested in finding work in Milan. I missed a lot of workshops that I would have loved to go to, the Glasgow workshop I missed because I was doing my thesis. Most of the alumni are all around the world so sometimes is a little bit hard.

Did you go to one or more workshops?

I went to every workshop I was supposed to go to, to show my portfolio.

What do you think about the workshops you went to?

I think they have to give a task to work around a subject together. For me it's more the chance to meet the other guys and be together. Sometimes it was so badly organised, like when I was in Milan, people were complaining because it was badly organised. For me it was basically to meet with other guys it's like a pretext, a way to meet basically.

Can you describe MEDes with only three words?

I think it's a community. It pushes your ambition, and it's the best decision I took in my whole education. It gave me so much, I'm so glad I did it!

I think that was all the questions. Thank you for your time!



Vasco de Gama

Can you tell me a little bit about your MEDes experience, from when you heard about it until now?

It started in Cologne. I got to know it because I did an exchange programme when I studied graphic design in Brazil. I'm from Brazil. When I was in Cologne I was looking for a way to continue my studies, and I saw the MEDes as one of them. But I was just an exchange student on Erasmus. I then talked with my prof. about the possibility of me going into the MEDes but not from the beginning. I wanted to start from the third year so I could start in my home school, then two years abroad and my last year back. So I went back to Brazil, I finished my degree, and then I started MEDes in Cologne where I did some projects as well.

I then went to Glasgow, then to Paris and then back to Cologne. The experience was really good, I would recommend it. Of course there are downsides and good sides of doing it, the downside is that you lose contacts with lots of people. I realized that in Cologne, that from the time I went out to the time I came back I didn't know anybody anymore just the people in the same programme as me. This is kind of hard because you have to make friendships that last but it's difficult when you stay one year and then you are going out, moving on. It's cool however to see people who are in your situation. I still have contacts with many

of my friends, it's cool to see what they are doing. The programme has a good size so you know a lot of people, much more than you would do by staying in your school. Also, when you say I know Paris and you went there as a tourist it's not the same thing as living there. It's different to see Paris as a tourist and living in, you really get to know the city. You only realize how good your school is once you get out of it.

What did you like about your school?

Well, in Cologne there is this philosophy of you doing your own studies, so you could pick your projects and they would mix everybody so you would do projects with people from the first semester and from the third semester. They don't separate graphic and product, you just pick whatever you want.

Glasgow was not like that, not everybody follows this model and I realized how good it was only once I got out. Glasgow is quite small if you compare it to Politecnico, where there are huge amounts of people. I think you have to find your way in Politecnico. I have been there for workshops. It's not somebody taking your hand like in other schools, but there is a good side, I know many people who studied in Politecnico and were very happy about the Milan lifestyle and design style. That's cool I think.

What happened when you returned to your home university?

I did my master and I graduated together with my friends, we were a small group of MEDes, five or six people from Germany going back. I graduated with two girls from Italy and two guys from Finland. We didn't use to speak a lot, we started to speak during the last year when we were back and had gotten to know each other we became friends because we felt like a sect, separated from the others in the school.

Are you still in contact with some MEDes students?

Yes many of them. I have the contact of all of them, but with some of them I still talk. It's really hard, for example I studied with a girl from Switzerland, she went back to Switzerland after studying in France and Finland. This other guy was in Italy and Finland and the last girl went to Paris and Stockholm. I was in Glasgow and everybody went out of Cologne in the end. I am now in Norway. I graduated and continued working in Germany for one year in the service design network. Then I was hired by this office in Oslo, so I will be here for one year and a half.

What do your colleagues think about MEDes, have they heard about it?

We used to talk about it a lot, we all think it is a unique thing to do. We heard some rumors that MEDes was going down, that Stuttgart was not anymore in MEDes, that Sweden was thinking of going out. It was really sad because we thought it was unique to do that, a huge chance. It would be impossible for a normal person to study in three schools in Europe like that. The amount of things you learn.

We also felt that the last year back in Cologne was a bit like the experience had already passed us, we questioned if it was the correct thing to do or whether you should do something else, we didn't know that because we felt like strangers in the last year. But overall the experience was amazing, we were like "wow they don't know what they are missing."

What is the most important thing you learned from MEDes?

Hard to say, I think it's that you have to understand that what you are learning now, where you are is not unique. You should not take that knowledge for granted. There are a lot of people studying at the same time and learning at the same time other things that you might not even imagine. This doesn't make their design less good than yours. You have to go out and see, otherwise you will always be in the dark, you have to get out of the box, I think.



Which were the most difficult parts of the programme?

Well, for me as a Brazilian the most difficult part was dealing with the bureaucracy, visa, bank accounts and this kind of stuff. And being alone actually. Even though you are in your twenties, it's not so simple to leave for a year knowing that you won't be able to buy any furniture or anything fancy because you will move out and throw things away.

If there were something arranged for alumni during the workshops would you come?

Yes, I would love to meet people, the problem is that the workshop of MEDes is for people who are looking for the next year, and very few alumni go there. It's not really the event to meet people who have finished MEDes. But it would be great to see people again because there is a lot of cool people there who did this programme. I know you guys are probably liking it, but you should meet the people who did it they are all great, fantastic.

Do you have any suggestions for what alumni could be interested in?

The only thing we have is a group on Facebook but it includes everybody, people from all the countries and people

who finished and people who are still doing it. The problem is that I feel this group is more for posts like "I need a flat in Paris", "I'm leaving my flat in Cologne". For alumni this is just gone, over. I know it's really important.

Now you can buy your furniture.

Yeah! It's important to keep contact but I think we need something different. You know, when we were in Paris we did a video about Paris. I don't know if you saw it but it was exposed in Salone in 2010, and it was the idea of this video. I talked to the tutor at that time and she said it would be cool to get all the people who studied in Paris to say something about it. So I contacted people who studied there, people who I didn't know, who had been there before me and they all contributed with their experience in Paris. I asked what they thought about MEDes and about Paris, and they all sent something, like photos and audio.

This is really interesting do you still have this video?

Yes it's all on Vimeo, if you look for MEDes experience or MEDes Paris.

Do you have the contacts of the people you did this with?

I got lots of contacts from the director, because she is a friend of most of them.

I got the email and talked to them and they sent me their material. It's not hard to take it, I think the best way for you to get the alumni together is to take people who studied in the same place, like take the same generation who studied at Politecnico. I work with a guy who was in Politecnico and it's easier to get groups because they know each other. What year are you in?

It's a good suggestion. I'm a first year in Cologne, and next year I will go to Paris.

Do you speak French?

Not yet.

You'd better! But all the Italians who studied there learned it very fast.

You speak French now?

Yes you have to otherwise you don't survive there! I don't want to scare you.

No I think it's just the truth.

But it's fine. It's not so difficult for you as an Italian, German is more difficult.

Yes, I didn't learn German because here we only speak English.

Also Cologne is a small city, in Paris you get a shock, you don't have the easy life you get in Cologne. There's a lot going on.

Thank you for your time, maybe we'll see each other at the next workshop or Salone.

Yes sure we must keep in touch between MEDes so we don't let it die. Companies also love people from MEDes, big companies. I have friends working in good companies of design. They just love people from MEDes.

This is also interesting. There are different opinions about it. Yesterday I interviewed an Italian girl and she said that for her it was difficult to find work in Italy because no one knows about MEDes.

Well I know that the people I studied with got a lot of things published, and they are all working in good companies. I think it's like a luxury that you are in this programme, enjoy it!

Thank you again.

Keep in touch, bye.



Amelia Edwards

I don't know if you have seen the blog or the new website?

Yeah, actually I have. I like the website and the blog but there is not a lot of content on it yet but I guess it's normal, it's going to take some time. It's great that you did the website because there was a website which was linked to Cologne before. The address was actually from Cologne and not from MEDes and it was a little bit strange, we as MEDes knew why, but if you are from outside you were thinking if this is an international programme or linked with only one school. So I think the website is really good. I was thinking about one thing which is that on the old website there was also the list with all the student which are part of the MEDes and some of their projects. I think maybe it's good also at some point to have something about that on the new website. It's just one feedback.

It's really good to have it. Can you tell me a little bit about your MEDes experience, from you heard about it until now?

Ok I could speak for hours now. I'll try to keep it short. First of all it is good for you to know that I was one of the two first students in Paris to take part in the project of MEDes. We were the first to leave Paris. It was a little bit difficult because nobody had done it before and

there was no feedback on how it worked. But from then on there was students leaving almost every year and I felt that I was a pioneer or a kind of experimental student or something. And if I had the option to do it all over again I'd do it definitely. So talking about leaving. My first year was in Stuttgart which is not part of the programme anymore. I don't know which kind of information are you looking for because I can tell you a lot of things.

You can tell me a little bit about your experience there, like for example the best parts of the school?

Ok, from a personal point of view or from a study point of view?

Both.

Ok, then I start with the personal one. I think that MEDes helped me to get to know a lot of people and really get more social in a way. Because it actually puts you in a situation in which you don't know anyone and where you might be a little bit uncomfortable because you are in a foreign place. Then you kind of try to figure it out and go to people and become open. That is from a personal point of view but maybe I can connect that to a study point of view or also a professional understanding. As you get trained in that, being in situations where you don't know anyone or where

you don't know how it works, you also become open and a person who takes initiative.

Ok, so I would say that, also from a personal point of view. I met people in MEDes that became my friends. But I also made myself an extensive international network which is great. If you only study in one school you can go abroad doing Erasmus or something. But in MEDes you have both the network from your school which is more national, plus you have this huge network which is international and where you get a lot more feedback on the way things are being done and the design work in Europe and not just in France or in Germany, or Italy or something like that.

Are you still in contact with MEDes students?

A lot! I also sometimes do projects with students from MEDes via Skype. We are working together even though I'm in Holland at the moment. I got one very good friend in particular, we are doing a project together but she is in Germany at the moment. We work a lot together and we both have a lot of friends in common, which are people from MEDes. I know someone from MEDes and they know someone else who again know me so you know sometimes is really strange. Though at the moment I'm not traveling a lot, I still feel that there is a lot of

contact and it goes further because I have contacts from MEDes and they also know people outside of MEDes. You know it is not just about MEDes, it is more than that.

What do you think about a MEDes alumni tool? Could it be useful?

Maybe I'm not communicating it enough. Usually when I tell people where I came from it's a very long story, you know. You have to explain people that you were abroad for two years but it wasn't Erasmus but something more serious and you have to say that there are several schools and all the information. So it depend on the situation, sometimes I cannot tell the full concept because it actually takes a long elevator speech to do it. Maybe I'm not communicating about it enough, but maybe MEDes can also try to communicate more about its alumni and try to be more present on the international design student scene? Or design education? Be a little bit more visible because people don't know about MEDes and so I don't even have it on my website, sorry. Maybe I have to change that. Actually, I will because now there is a website and I can put the link. I still think that even if people don't know that I did MEDes I can really see the difference. I'm not trying to be arrogant or something by saying this, but I feel that at the moment I'm working as an assistant in a design studio and I look at



the interns that we have. I'm comparing, they are the same age and year as me when I was in Germany, finished my first year in Germany. I feel like having done MEDes and having been in this situation where I don't know people, that are completely unknown, a different way of designing and you have to adapt. You get much more reactive if you did something like the MEDes. The students take more initiative with trying to find a solution. They try to figure things out without people having to tell them what to do. So I think this is something that MEDes produces. It is not something you can put on your CV and it is not part of a specific course or anything but it's just a fact. MEDes students are put in this situation where you have to figure it out and it becomes one of their tools later for doing their design. Is it clear?

Yes, and I really agree with you.

Yeah, cool.

Your first year abroad was in Germany in Stuttgart and the second year was in?

Helsinki

Could you tell me about your time there?

Well first of all, when I was in Paris I decided to do product design. In Paris there is this kind of ambiguity between

students who want to do more service based design and students who want to go more to product. So people were asking me, "what's your identity?" And what I wanted to do basically. In my second year they told me that I had to choose and I was like "what the fuck, I don't wanna choose now, I don't know yet." From that point I decided to finish the year more with product design and I wanted to try two very different types of design approaches which had nothing to do with each other, which might even seem to be contradictory.

Out of that I would be able to understand what my point of view was. So basically taste different things and then see ok, there is this way, there is that way of doing things, now I have to be critical and choose for myself what's the best. So basically not having only one type of design education. So first year in Stuttgart was more about product design, very hardcore, like just making models and beautiful shapes, cool materials and great fun. Second year in Helsinki from a cultural point of view was really interesting. I really loved it! I had never been in the north of Europe so that was really amazing. From a study point of view it wasn't really my thing, but I had decided that I wanted to try something I didn't know and at first sight wasn't so interested in. This was Service design and more strategic design and in the end I realised that it wasn't my thing.

That was my first conclusion. But still I think it really enriched my way of seeing design especially user inspired design, often associated to services, I think that was something I've never done before and it was great. I also concluded that maybe user inspired design can in some way also be applied to product design. So this is what I'm doing at the moment.

You take the best part of both.

Exactly! That's it. You get a little bit of everything so that you can take the best part for you. I came back to Paris feeling more confident about my choices and I learned how to write in Helsinki, another thing that was great because in Paris students just really don't learn how to write. Nor to research or do design research like the way we did in Helsinki. I came back to Paris and I felt more confident so I could do my last year in the Paris style but still with my own critical distanced way of working.

What was the best moment in MEDes?

I don't really know. At some point I really enjoyed being in Stuttgart. Via a friend from ENSCI who had been in Stuttgart one year before me introduced me to a friend of his who also became a MEDes student. She kind of gave me access to all her friends, she gave me the key to her apartment and her contact list. So I got really integrated into not only the

MEDes group there because we were just three MEDes students, but also really into the German and Stuttgart school of art community. I was almost not only a MEDes anymore but also a student of the art academy in Stuttgart. I would say the best experience was to become not only an exchange student having a great time but also becoming part of this school where you are. I think is a really nice experience.

If there were something arranged for alumni during the workshops would you come?

Yes, if I can financially and if I have time and also if there is people I know who will come. This is one of the problems of the MEDes workshops. It's great when you are part of the MEDes programme because all your friends are going there as well but when you are an alumni you don't need to. I felt that when I was in Helsinki during my second year and I didn't need to go anymore because I didn't need to choose another school. It was in Stockholm, I went because I want to visit Stockholm and I thought it was a good opportunity, but I didn't know that many people from the workshop anymore. It was a bit like I was hanging on to nostalgia, you know? It's nice if alumni go to the MEDes workshops because then they can actually meet the student who are part of the MEDes programme at the moment but there



is also other people you really would want to see again who might be coming as well. I think if it would be done also for alumni you would have to invite everybody so that as many alumni as possible come. It's also good for me because everyone is spread around and if I want to see a few friends from MEDes I have to go to London, and then to Hamburg, then I have to go to Berlin, then I have to go to Stockholm and then to Paris. That's a lot.

Do you have any advice for the programme?

I have the feeling that MEDes is quite known inside the schools, maybe mostly in Politecnico? I heard from a few friends who did not participate in MEDes that they heard about MEDes by accident, randomly. Maybe they can do more communication inside the schools? I think I would focus on communication outside the schools, so communication about MEDes to the rest of the world. I think MEDes is a great school and it should be a lot more present so that people know what it is. Everybody knows about the design academy in Eindhoven even if it is not the best school, but everybody knows about it. ENSCI I think is at least as good as the design academy in Eindhoven but no one knows about it because they just don't communicate right and I think MEDes is a little bit the same. It's a pearl but no one knows it.

We call it the best kept secret.

Yes, but it shouldn't be a secret anymore. It will give benefits to everyone. But it's great that you are working on it. It's necessary and you've done a great job so far, continue like that and keep your energy.

I hope to see you soon, I don't know, maybe the next workshop or somewhere else.

Yeah sure! Keep me updated.

Thank you for your time.

If you have more question or anything let me know, no problem. Have a good day!



| | | | |
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Why did you decide to apply for MEDes?

YEAR ZERO

- 001. Because it's a great opportunity to learn and improve, in different ways, my design skills!
- 002. It seemed too unique, an opportunity not to miss. It seemed exciting and I wanted to study abroad. As an English student, it was never an option financially to take a degree in another country as I am dependent on my loan and maintenance grant, with two years abroad MEDes is the nearest thing to taking a degree in another country and seems more beneficial than one semester abroad as you get a more immersive experience.
- 003. I applied because it is a unique opportunity that I hadn't found anywhere else. I consider myself to be a very international student and I was interested in merging my love of other cultures with my passion for design.
- 004. To experience new ways of learning and new aspects of designing that maybe I would not learn in my home school.
- 005. I wanted to have an international study experience. I thought this was the best chance to have it.
- 006. I applied because it is a great opportunity and a challenge. We

have the chance to learn in two different schools.

- 007. Because I love to travel and I really wanted to study abroad, so this looked like the perfect opportunity.
- 008. I wanted to study abroad.
- 009. I saw it as an exceptional opportunity to meet new people, explore new cultures and experience the different ways of how product design is taught in different schools.

FIRST YEAR

- 010. Because comfort zone is boring.
- 011. Push it to the limit. Get the best from everything. Seek perfection.
- 012. Giant possible of opening my perspective.
- 013. International experience, new adventures.
- 014. On one side, because of my desire to collect international experience (personal and educational). Before my studies, I read about two opportunities of majors at KISD, BI & MEDes. So I talked to students there, but no one could tell me anything about MEDes. All I knew about it was written in a couple of sentences on the KISD homepage. The fact, that there is no

information, made MEDes seem to me like an exclusive and mysterious challenge, what made it attractive to me. The connection of BDes & MEDes was also a reason.

- 015. I love the possibility to study in three different universities and get to know their cultures, languages and way of studying.

SECOND YEAR

- 016. Initially the opportunity to travel, I don't think I knew enough about it before I applied but I had heard some stories from some returning fifth years and it sounded like something I would enjoy. To be honest, I had very little knowledge about the participating universities or what the programme entailed really.
- 017. Because I wanted to live abroad.
- 018. Go away from that university as long as I could and travel.
- 019. If you have the opportunity to do it, why not?
- 020. I wanted to get in before I got into my school. I wanted to see different cultures, explore and grow from the unknown. And avoiding Paris as a city was healthier for me. I knew I needed to speak English as well!

THIRD YEAR

- 021. It sounded much cooler than the other course I could choose (integrated design). The structure of having to spend two years abroad in Europe caught me and having my masters (hopefully) after only five years of study sounded really good.
- 022. I liked the idea of traveling and living abroad during my studies. I guess that was the initial reason to apply.

ALUMNI

- 023. I wanted to go on exchange during my last year of bachelor, and that was not possible with Erasmus. I also met the exchange MEDes in my school and they seemed very cool people (just like I am).
- 024. International experience. Gaining understanding of the European design education. A good reference to my CV (at least that's what I thought).
- 025. A high quality international vibe.
- 026. Because it was a unique experience to enrich my design education and to travel.
- 027. Studying in the same city for five years would make me slightly claustrophobic.



- 028.** I've been moving around all my life so moving during studies seemed natural.
- 029.** I was very eager to know about different approaches and perspectives on the design field.
- 030.** I wanted to open up my way of working, get to know how design projects can be conducted in different ways in order to choose which method(s) is/are best fitting my design approach.
- 031.** Meet a very international network of super motivated people and make friends with people who are multi-cultural and open minded.
- 032.** Traveling.
- 033.** I wanted to have the chance to live in two different countries and to experience something other than the education at my home school as I didn't like it very much.
- 034.** To try a unique experience.
- 035.** I thought the different understandings of design taught could only be beneficial, and the gathered experience from different countries might offer advantages when searching a job later.
- 036.** It was an incredible opportunity to discover other design methods and cultures : Italian design and Scandinavian design.
- 037.** The experience.
- 038.** For getting to know the world better and myself on the side.
- 039.** The experience and exposure to multicultural perspectives to design (and life!), And of course, the community!
- 040.** Because I loved the idea of studying abroad and the programme gave better opportunities than Erasmus.
- 041.** Traveling, widening my culture, learning more freely about design, get outside the boundaries of POLIM!!
- 042.** I read about the MEDes programme in the GSofA catalogue and so I applied to GSofA.

YEAR OUT

- 043.** I really wanted to travel! I didn't feel my home school alone satisfied all my design needs.
- 044.** I wanted the opportunity to study and travel at the same time. Because I'd started university straight from high school I felt I had to get out and see the world, open my mind, and grow up!
- 045.** To travel and broaden my learning.

And do you have any comment about the application process?

YEARZERO

- 046. It was a bit intricate. We didn't have all the informations in advance.
- 047. General organisation and a clearer procedure would have helped.
- 048. Ucas is never much fun...
- 049. It was hard to understand what was the best school for you and which schools were more recommended for the BA degree and which for the MA one.
- 050. My class was the only one that was told about it. Other courses just received an email two weeks before the deadline, so there's a bit of disorganisation.
- 051. No.
- 052. I almost didn't apply because I didn't have any information about it.
- 053. No.

FIRST YEAR

- 054. Mmm... It is difficult to decide. For the kind of design education in POLIMI it is ok. I still wonder how some people managed to pass though.
- 055. I think it's nicely done, and better other than other universities. It's based on talent and motivation, as it's supposed to be.

- 056. Should be more clear and well explained.
- 057. There seem to be no structure and very little information of how decisions are made. I was happy to have a great contact person who did make the process feel more structured at the time, but looking back it was very little information and felt quite DIY...
- 058. The application process is quite difficult.
- 059. It changed now anyway, but definitely needs more encouraging professors in Cologne. No one there feels really responsible.

SECOND YEAR

- 060. I think at GSofA the application is quite thorough, which is good, I feel that they take the time to understand if the student is ready for the pressure and step up. However, I would say that during my time of applying to GSofA and then putting together my portfolio my focus was taken from the work I was doing in pd at GSofA. I found that period really quite stressful, thinking back I remember it as a time with serious lack of sleep.

THIRD YEAR

- 061. It sucks. 5 Years back, when I had to take the decision whether to do MEDes or integrated design, there was already the rumor that those who choose MEDes would get in at KISD directly. And today, barely nobody knows about it. It is not well communicated.
- 062. They are changing it right now, towards a better system I believe. Before you had to choose to be MEDes right from the beginning of your studies. No they gonna do it the Glaswegian way, two years in and a decision for or against the MEDes. I like!

ALUMNI

- 063. It could be more transparent, and give the impression that it has a clear structure. Besides, I think people should have more time to prepare for the application (usually the preparation of the portfolio ends up being very close to the deadline).
- 064. The application process was very fast and strange and I really didn't understand completely what I was going to get myself into.

- 065. All fine.
- 066. Not clear at all. GSofA is revealed that we have MEDes once we reach second year. It was send in your portfolio if your grade is more than B3 then you can join.
- 067. It should be and stay a process where every student is considered individually, his/her motivation are very important: is he/she eager to learn new languages? Is he/she willing to take up the challenge to leave for two years (it's a big thing, this is more than just an Erasmus).
- 068. No.
- 069. They make decisions for people that will completely change their lives, yet they don't really know much about them and what might be good for them. I think there should be more time taken to speak to the students about their reasons for wanting to do the MEDes.
- 070. No.
- 071. It worked very well.
- 072. It was a bit of a leap of faith... But it worked for me. Maybe others didn't have the same experience. I remember making decisions based on what people told me about the schools. GSofA didn't help much on that front. But that's the natural way to do it, isn't it?



- 073. Well, the grapevine only tells you some things. One might want to hear more official stuff as well, even though its boring.
- 074. I did it through ucas, which is pretty standardized and simple.
- 075. Well I think it has changed by now. I had to apply to KISD first and then we could apply again for MEDes after passing the intermediate exams.
- 076. It should be promoted more officially and more widely by the school.
- 077. I can't really, really remember but there was an internal evaluation at the midterm review before we could apply to the exchange schools with our portfolio.

YEAR OUT

- 078. I can't really remember it to be honest... A whirlwind!
- 079. I only had to let the tutors be aware I was interested, write them a letter of intent, and make sure I got at least a B for my final grade.
- 080. Very personal which is good but some cross checking would be beneficial.

When you said "I'm doing the MEDes!" your family said...

YEARZERO

- 081. It's great! Chase your dreams! We'll miss you...
- 082. Wow! But you don't speak the language/where will you live etc... I can't find any information about it on the web.
- 083. "Yay! Which schools?" They have always been very supportive of my decision to do the MEDes. And then had set opinions on what schools they thought I should end up going to.
- 084. Ok... We need to talk better about it...
- 085. You're doing what??
- 086. My family was really proud of me and supported me to move forward with this idea.
- 087. My family was worried because we knew very little about it. They said "oh my god so is it a real thing? Are you really going?".
- 088. Are you sure?
- 089. Congratulations! So we heard Milan is an expensive city...

FIRST YEAR

- 090. So proud of ya.
- 091. You're crazy.
- 092. Wonderful!! What is it? And then they supported me

- 093. Ok, what is that? Can you get work with that?
- 094. Ok.
- 095. Great we love it. You are so lucky for such an opportunity.

SECOND YEAR

- 096. They were excited because they knew it was something that I wanted, but like me they didn't know exactly what it really meant... I still don't think they do!
- 097. Oh that's great! We're gonna miss you but it's a great opportunity. First you go abroad then we follow.
- 098. Great!
- 099. Sounds interesting.
- 100. Well go go, that's an amazing experience I don't think I would have the ability to do it myself!

THIRD YEAR

- 101. ...If you need any support, let us know.
- 102. They didn't realise what it meant. Being away for two years etc. But since I started quite late in age they were not part of the decision process anyway. I just told them and they went: ok!

ALUMNI

- 103. Ok. Whatever makes you happy!
- 104. Great! ...And helped to kick me out of their house.
- 105. It was part of the plan... :)
- 106. What?
- 107. What is it?
- 108. We support you in whatever you do, as long as you're sure it's the good thing for you.
- 109. Coolio! (Not the exact words).
- 110. I don't know, it was a long time ago. They probably were excited for me as my parents were hippy travelers back in the day.
- 111. You are leaving us for too long.
- 112. That sounds like a great programme!
- 113. Great !
- 114. Germany and Finland? 2 Years??...! :((Ps. Well done).
- 115. Good for you, seize the occasion.
- 116. You're studying medicine? No, they didn't really get excited. My mother just said, finish studying quickly, I miss you.
- 117. Great!
- 118. Are you crazy? Are you sure? Ok, we will support you whatever you do!
- 119. Great!

YEAR OUT

- 120. Woohoooooo!
- 121. Woooooo!!! I actually don't remember what they said... I don't think they said anything to be honest.
- 122. Sounds cool. See you in a couple of years.

Someone said that MEDes is "the best kept secret". So how exactly did you hear about MEDes?

YEARZERO

123. Out teacher P. Ciuccarelli said something about MEDes during a lesson!
124. Accidentally attending a product design talk by Ian grout at a GSofA open day - I was killing time before a communication design talk but was won over by MEDes immediately.
125. My dad discovered the MEDes on the website of l'ENSCI, a school I interested in going to. He then told me about it and linked me the old MEDes website. From there I looked at the schools and applied to both GSofA and ENSCI.
126. I've heard about students that want to learn more and more experiencing things in first person. I heard about people ready to go and take care of themselves together.
127. My professor told me about it, being him in charge of MEDes project in my school.
128. I only heard about MEDes this year when our teachers told us about this opportunity.
129. I heard about MEDes because my teachers did a presentation about it so that we knew that it existed, and how to apply.
130. When the teachers from all the schools came to introduce the

programme to my university.

131. It was in the end of my first year when I spoke to one of my friends from my course and we talked about our future studies.

FIRST YEAR

132. Engaging presentation by Anne before my class. With hot Cevenini special guest.
133. Poster hanged in the coffee machine area in POLIMI.
134. Presentation of prof. Ciuccarelli at POLIMI.
135. On my interview to the GSofA I were informed about the programme and how it works.
136. I read about it. In the application form of KISD I had to choose for my applying major, BI or MEDes. So I began to research about both.
137. I searched a lot online and found the MEDes programme for the school on Stuttgart, to which I applied until they told me that it no longer exists. That's when I found out about the possibility in Cologne.

SECOND YEAR

138. I wouldn't describe it as a secret in my experience. I first heard about it when I went to the GSofA open day

in 2009 it was discussed as part of the pd talk. At that point the details weren't discussed and it was spoken of as an exchange programme. I found it really interesting and is probably the main reason I applied to GSofA and not other universities in Scotland.

139. From the website of POLIMI.
140. The same you can get reading the description on the new MEDes website.
141. From reading the GSofA website.
142. Into the website of my school.

THIRD YEAR

143. By the time I applied at KISD, I had to choose right at the beginning whether I wanted to do the integrated design course or MEDes. The difference between both of them was roughly explained at the KISD website, but very badly. I actually didn't quite understand the difference of content, just the points I mentioned above: two years abroad plus Master degree in five years. It was then still possible to change once I got accepted at KISD. But the more I got involved in the school, the more I got to know MEDes better (namely mainly through the MEDes students who

were doing their exchange at KISD that year).

144. On the KISD homepage about fields of studies, European design was one of them.

ALUMNI

145. I randomly stumbled upon a link on the website of the school.
146. From my school's MEDes coordinators. They mentioned it in a side sentence...
147. Since I heard about the POLIMI degree I chose, I heard about MEDes. Not a secret, then.
148. I never heard it.
149. GSofA syllabus before I join the uni.
150. Only once I was already studying since a year in my home school.
151. Presentation during lecture at university.
152. Through ucas I just read about the BDes course in their programme. Also, I heard through teachers and friends that the GSofA has a good reputation. I didn't really know much about MEDes until I was on the course and had the choice to apply in 2nd year.
153. An ex MEDes student came to a class I was taking to present it.
154. Word of mouth. I never read about it anywhere before... Or really after for



that matter...

- 155. During my first year, I talked to Liz Davis in charge of the MEDes at ENSCI, that's how everything started.
- 156. I first heard about it at the GSofA open day, when I was in high school. It wasn't a secret at all.
- 157. Through the grapevine, as with anything worth hearing about.
- 158. My high school prepped the students to research their university since grade eleven - so I had two years to research not only what, but also where I wanted to study. Design was obvious, and MEDes was like, "fuck yeah! Study in three different countries!".
- 159. I heard of it when I applied to KISD. Back then one could not apply directly for MEDes but had to chose the diploma course and then change after a year and a half.
- 160. Friends at university.
- 163. Through the university prospective. So I already knew about the programme before I even started uni.

YEAR OUT

- 161. I read about it as an option when I applied to GSofA, and then one of our tutors spoke to us about it in 2nd year.
- 162. At the open day for the product design course at GSofA. So this was at the time I was still at high school

If you had the chance to change two things about the workshops, what would they be?

YEARZERO

- 164. Organisation was appalling. Short workshops/projects to interact with lots of students then one that went on for 3 days.
- 165. Organisation (GSofA tutors had no idea what was going on, and didn't share much information) and how the students were divided (would have been great to have been all together!).
- 166. Having more chances to visit the city.
- 167. Its fine that way.
- 168. Maybe fancier food.
- 169. Create a timetable, follow the timetable.

FIRST YEAR

- 170. Projects.
- 171. More connection between first and second years. Alumni storytelling.
- 172. The organisation of the GSofA one, not separated workshop for new students and master students.
- 173. Better information earlier and a better structure in what is expected and when things are happening.
- 174. Improving the information giving in advance. Have an own choice to select on of several given topics/projects.

- 175. Let everyone come to the workshop also people that are in their first study year. It's a great experience. But definitely more time to get to know the city!!!!

SECOND YEAR

- 176. I will talk about Helsinki because this is the one I participated in most. I think this workshop was quite stressful, the expectations were high and I think it put a lot of pressure on the students, especially those applying for their second year.
- 177. Organisation, themes.
- 178. Work less, enjoy people and cities more (like Köln 2013).
- 179. Make it shorter. Make it less serious.
- 180. The point is to present the schools, the students, create a link between all this and not making good design project in one week.

THIRD YEAR

- 181. More invitation and participation from alumni.
- 182. Every year there are the same question about organisational stuff. Proper information in advance would help. And financial support

of course.

ALUMNI

- 183. I don't have the impression there are many constant things in the workshop, and I think that those that are constant (school presentations, 2nd year introductions, tour of the school) should stay that way.
- 184. Something interesting for the alumni to do (2 day seminar?) No need to send a printed portfolio for the schools that we are applying (changed already?)
- 185. Making them longer.
- 186. More interesting projects to do during the project and more guests.
- 187. Milan had no preparation . The outcome was pointless. First, don't make an excuse of just find something for MEDes to do. Second, find a project that is interesting (culture related, making/building related) things to do. Stop trying to create a website every fucking time and just create a website for real. Give budget to the project, makes it a proper projects, create competition between uni and the best uni wins. Then hand it to professional to build it.
- 188. More open to alumni and better communication about the programme (but the website for the Helsinki workshop was great!)
- 189. Activities and topics of the lectures.
- 190. To make the decision process a lot more transparent and the people who don't get their first choice to hear directly from the tutors why they made that decision. More talks and events from external speakers, less of a one week project that has little purpose.
- 191. Having to work.
- 192. Instead of bullshit stuff make everybody work on marketing the MEDes better.
- 193. I think anyway it's an opportunity to meet, don't take it too seriously!
- 194. I'd focus them more internally - get designers etc. in to talk, sure, but not about themselves, about something more relevant to our network. We should be designing a better experience for ourselves - and challenging ourselves a little more. I think there have been a lot of bullshit activities going on in these workshops. Like when we made paper airplanes in Milan. Utter p*sh. I'd also build in more experience of the city. More sightseeing and cultural activities. It's important.
- 195. More local and current, less



- panicking about there and then.
- 196. Less work and more drinking would be nice? I mean more socialising and getting to know others. Or at least the workshop/work could be designed so the students can interact and get to know with each other more.
 - 197. Don't have it during the exams at KISD. Invite alumni more.
 - 198. Distance between students and teachers.
 - 199. They have probably changed a lot already.

YEAR OUT

- 200. There would be less 'group work' and more exploring and learning. I would also ask that the home school pays for the trip.
- 201. More free alcohol and partying, and the way the exchanges are announced is always quite intense.
- 202. More free time for meeting/ socialising.

My favourite experience so far has been...

YEAR ZERO

- 203. The team work done during the workshop!
- 204. Yet to come (about to go abroad.)
- 205. The Glasgow workshop!
- 206. A travel.
- 207. In the workshop.
- 208. I haven't had one related to MEDes yet.
- 209. Meeting everyone.
- 210. The MEDes workshop.

FIRST YEAR

- 211. Workshops.
- 212. MEDes workshops, studio work.
- 213. Learning from other students.
- 214. The various workshops.
- 215. Discovering my roots in Italy.
- 216. Getting to know the MEDes family at the workshops.

SECOND YEAR

- 217. It is extremely difficult to say, but I really enjoyed a project I did at POLIMI on the PSSD program, the project was 5 months which was a lot longer than I was used to, we had a real client and we exhibited our work at different locations including Salone.

- 218. The fact that I can visit friends in basically every country on the globe.
- 219. Living in Köln and studying at KISD.
- 220. Hard to pinpoint anything in particular. But both exchange years have been fantastic. Made some great life-long friends, experienced the way of life in Köln and Helsinki and learned so much more than just design.
- 221. The MEDes.

THIRD YEAR

- 222. The workshops and that thrilling moment of getting to know where they will send you for the next year. Exciting times!
- 223. Traveling across Europe, experiencing different course structures.

ALUMNI

- 224. Getting to know everyone during the workshops.
- 225. Living in Glasgow with two other "MEDesians".
- 226. My year in Helsinki, and of course all the workshops!
- 227. Living in Cologne.
- 228. Getting to do the fuck I want on my

thesis and able to reach out to so many people around the world to help me.

- 229. All the people I've met.
- 230. Aalto.
- 231. (MEDes experience??) If so - learning to make dresses in Milan.
- 232. Meeting so many people, having the time of my life, really.
- 233. When moving to Finland I got help from the MEDes guys. I left the MEDes two years before that but I was still part of the family without them knowing me before.
- 234. I am a huge fan of MEDes, it has been my best choice I did in my education. Having a broad network, knowing so many cities...
- 235. Living, learning and traveling abroad.
- 236. Now, this is getting difficult and personal. If I could pick one I'd think a huge chunk of my life a waste. Luckily that ain't the case.
- 237. I'd say almost everything about my 6 years in Europe!
- 238. Being part of the MEDes family (which carries on even 4 years after graduating).
- 239. The whole MEDes.
- 240. Too vague a question. Many great experiences through MEDes.

YEAR OUT

- 241. The whole lot! Especially having friends come to visit me in Paris, Swedish midsummer, Stockholm and NYC design weeks.
- 242. I think the workshops are always the highlight of my year. It's so nice to be with a group of people who go through the exact same experience as you, you don't have to explain it. And everyone grows such strong bonds in such a short space of time. It's crazy. And we only see each other once a year!
- 243. Meeting new people.

My worst experience so far has been...

YEARZERO

- 244. I didn't have one!
- 245. Some of the organisation.
- 246. Applying for the MEDes, so stressful...
- 247. A loss.
- 248. No bad experience yet.
- 249. I haven't had one yet.
- 250. I don't know.
- 251. Stressing to give in the portfolio.

FIRST YEAR

- 252. Not receiving any answer from my Italian tutors.
- 253. Being brutally exposed to tea. Damn it I want to stick to beer.
- 254. Pecha kucha preparation.
- 255. The start of my exchange year.
- 256. Leaving friends & family.
- 257. Feeling lost with the differences of how each school does their bachelor, and no one (MEDes tutor/ professor) being responsible for mine.

SECOND YEAR

- 258. Both during my first and second year my family experienced loses, I found these periods very difficult because although in the MEDes

you are surrounded by people those relationships are still new so being far from home is very hard. This year I wanted to come back for the funeral but decided not to because it was at a crucial stage in my project, if I had gone the project would have been sacrificed and I wouldn't have received credits. Due to the nature of MEDes and having to align with different schools policies regarding credits this would have been really complicated to try and work around. I am not sure what the answer is really.

- 259. When friends left in the middle of the year.
- 260. Living in Hellsinki and studying at Aalto.
- 261. KISD was a challenging school to be as an exchange student. It was very unorganised and I struggled to get the necessary credits as many courses were canceled last minute and some professors unfairly refused to give me credit.
- 262. Polictecnico's hugeness and the matriculation number!

THIRD YEAR

- 263.Saying goodbye.
- 264. Unreliable group work.

ALUMNI

- 265. Disorganisation and miscommunication about bureaucracy.
- 266. Some of the lessons in Politecnico di Milano - please learn English and have some respect for the students.
- 267. Coming back to Milan.
- 268. Nothing.
- 269. Not able to turn back time to try all the schools.
- 270. I skip this one.
- 271. The activities during the workshops.
- 272. Feeling socially awkward in Germany on my first year of exchange and temporarily becoming a bit of a hermit.
- 273. Feeling lonely with everything year after year.
- 274. Trying to get any for of information or organisational help concerning the MEDes.
- 275. I didn't had a bad experience ! MEDes gives you opportunities and it is you to turn it into great experiences.
- 276. The depth of Hellsinki's winter x a bad project, and no good beer to help. Just kidding, I find this question a bit tough to answer.
- 277. Perhaps a bad collaboration with a company in France. But shit happens, also that taught me

things, so it was valuable. Do not try to avoid bad experiences.

- 278. Being stranded, sans wallet, in London trying to get a Swedish Schengen visa...
- 279. Being broke in Stockholm
- 280. Some loneliness during the path

YEAR OUT

- 281. Struggling to find places to live, having to say goodbye after a year.
- 282. Every time I have to leave wherever I've been, it's heartbreaking to leave everyone. I was also surprised how much of a come down coming home is when I thought I missed it.
- 283. Finding a place to live.

If the MEDes was a party what kind of party would it be?

YEARZERO

- 284. A party full of interesting people.
- 285. One where you aren't planning a big night out but before you know it it's 8am and you've been to three different house parties in one night.
- 286. A flat or house party: invite everyone over, see who comes and end up having a weird and yet super fun selection of people show up for a unique, unreproducible party.
- 287. A picnic in Alaska.
- 288. MEDes is a party. It's a house party, with different people sharing experience and everyone dance in his own way.
- 289. A glow party.
- 290. I guess it would be a very big one, full of different cultures.
- 291. Friendly.
- 292. A house party full of great people wanting to talk and socialise and play drinking games.

FIRST YEAR

- 293. Drunk smart fancy cool nice fun international people drinking dancing and socialising. Love MEDes lifestyle.
- 294. Carnival.
- 295. Barbecue party.
- 296. Crazy house party where you are

unsure who the host is, who half of the people are how you got there.

- 297. MEDes party.
- 298. International-night-crazy-loud-different-foods-familiar.

SECOND YEAR

- 299. I don't have an answer to this question.
- 300. A party that has a certain status, a certain aura around it
- 301. Hipster.
- 302. New years eve. High expectation, excitement, the ticket is expensive and if you don't like it... disaster.
- 303. Big family meal with allowed alcohol!

THIRD YEAR

- 304. 3 Day summer festival on an isolated island with many mixed drinks, cool people and amazing conversations.
- 305. I see the MEDes as a jam session! Everyone brings their instruments and plays along, maybe with a different melody!

ALUMNI

- 306. As in get-together party? It would

probably be a speed dating party, lol.

- 307. A party inside a sinking ship. All the elements are floating freely, new students try to cling into each other, old students are on some floating rafts and either help or try to row away. At the same time the party goes on later when you've survived to the lifeboat. Then your MEDes friends will remember you and help you - we all survived.
- 308. A picnic.
- 309. Tropical music party.
- 310. That day in Köln where people go parade crazy and drunk.
- 311. One happening in several places at the same time, but it's still one party. And the people don't all know each other when they enter the party, but manage to quickly get the atmosphere to be very good.
- 312. A Camden kind of.
- 313. A party with a lot of highs and lows, dancing hard and throwing up, then dancing hard.
- 314. A really good one, where you are never alone to attend it.
- 315. An awesome outdoor dancing party somewhere in the woods. It takes some effort to get there.
- 316. Erasmus.
- 317. All I can say is thank god it was not an Erasmus party.
- 318. Uh, not sure whether I wish to

imagine this. I guess acid tests in the sixties came close.

- 319. A never ending one - but you never get tired of it...
- 320. Party as in political party or as in celebration?
- 321. Ethnic grunge and very underground.
- 322. Extremely multicultural, full of energy, good vibes and exchanges, sharing a common goal and creative.

YEAR OUT

- 323. The Eurovision after party (but with more style).
- 324. The best party ever - full of alcohol and so many types of people and dancing. You might think you know what to expect from the party but really it's all out of your control!
- 325. Mental. One of those all nighters that you hope keeps going.

MEDes is about...

YEAR ZERO

- 326. Personal growth.
- 327. Adventurous designers.
- 328. Not defining students by one single university, making your path to a career in design more rich, having some fun!
- 329. Dreaming.
- 330. Education and being open.
- 331. Learning a new thinking way.
- 332. I'm not so sure yet because I haven't been in the MEDes programme yet but it's about experiencing many kinds of design in different cultures and schools.
- 333. New approaches to design.
- 334. Learning how to get out of your comfort zone and becoming a responsible open-minded human being.

FIRST YEAR

- 335. Growing.
- 336. People.
- 337. Opening minds.
- 338. Being confused, getting over it, and then becoming an overall stronger designer.
- 339. Discovering, fitting, growing, learning.
- 340. Experiences, openness, networking.

SECOND YEAR

- 341. Gaining from different institutions approaches and methods on teaching. Understanding different cultural contexts and building international relationships.
- 342. Self-discovery.
- 343. Getting you to struggle with life challenges, become more open-minded and international.
- 344. Living-moving-adapting-socializing-growing-experiencing and challenging!

THIRD YEAR

- 345. People, places, emotions and exchange of simply everything.
- 346. Connecting people more than about design. The single universities are in charge of the design education, but the programme has a different task.

ALUMNI

- 347. Innovation, internationality and design as strategy.
- 348. Connecting with the other European design students. It should be as well about pushing us graduates further.

- 349. Knowing lots about lots of sub-fields of design. Which is great!
- 350. Exploring.
- 351. Knowing that design is not just a thing that can be define so easily. It's about giving a chance to open your eyes to the world.
- 352. Opening up the design field, crossing barriers, making new connections.
- 353. Networking.
- 354. Meeting new people, having broad and varied experiences, seeing the world and absorbing/learning as much as possible.
- 355. Exploring yourself while exposing yourself to all sort of different things.
- 356. Defining what kind of designer you are.
- 357. A lot of energy and ambition. And great friends!
- 358. Broadening your horizons first and then focusing on becoming the designer (or whatever else) you want to be.
- 359. Participating the world and one's life as fully as a student can.
- 360. Creating, sharing, and exploring...
- 361. Connecting the dots.
- 362. Personal growth.
- 363. Learning, sharing, growing...

YEAR OUT

- 364. Forging your own path within design. Learning what you choose to learn. Making friends and experiencing cultures.
- 365. Being pushed out of your comfort zone to open to new experiences and create your own amazing network.
- 366. Finding out who you are and going for it.

Why did you pick your first university?

ABK

- 367. Because of the hands-on approach.
- 368. I love sauerkrauts, beer and their learning by doing approach.

ENSCI

- 369. Because of the well known school. The possibilities of project etc. in school, the language and city.
- 370. I wanted to learn about product design and model-making.
- 371. I wanted to go to ENSCI because of it's reputation and the way it works, and the fact that I could be in a school and learn and speak a foreign language.
- 372. I spoke some French already and loved the idea of a small school, as well as the emphasis on experimentation!

GSA

- 373. I liked the city and I thought the university was well organised. I was interested in their programme.
- 374. Because I've searched about and really loved the school and country.
- 375. I did a bit of research about the schools and Glasgow looked like the best fit for me, in terms of what

we will be studying. The fact that is an English speaking country also seemed like a good place to start.

- 376. It's a different approach to design from what I'm used to.
- 377. Well I didn't really get to choose but I thought it was good for me at that point of my design education.
- 378. I met some students from GSofA that where at KISD the year I had to choose. They were amazing people and so skilled. I thought "if I go there, I will be just as amazing as they are"
- 379. Wanted to brush up my English. (... Scottish).
- 380. Speaking to Paolo Ciuccarelli we decided that would be the best option for me.
- 381. Loved Scotland and was right!

KISD

- 382. I didn't have real information about the schools. I just tried to understand something on KISD's website: it seemed interesting and with the possibility to choose the courses.
- 383. The ability to pick and choose a variety of courses and the German culture as I think it is very influential on design.
- 384. Suggestion of professor Ciuccarelli,

possibility of choose the courses and the design field.

- 385. Inspiring subjects.
- 386. English speaking, cross-disciplinary education, choice between Milan or Köln.
- 387. It was the most aligned with my current studies at the time.
- 388. Because was the best to explore different fields of design.
- 389. GSofA have no course variation.
- 390. As it had a broad range of courses to choose from, people spoke English and I'd heard great things about the school from past MEDes students.
- 391. I got told it was like a playground. That's what I wanted.
- 392. Advised to take this path and it felt right.

POLIMI

- 393. I was hesitating between Cologne, Paris and Milan. I ruled out Paris because I just came from there and wanted to experience something new. I then choose Milan because of the structure of the school. I felt that Cologne had a too relaxed atmosphere or work ethic that I was not ready for.
- 394. I visited the university over the winter break and I was really pleased by the facilities and the way

the course was run.

- 395. Strategic point of view, the most product (excluding my school) one, Italian language and the feeling that I needed to go there, and compared to the others I was seeing myself just there.
- 396. I wanted to discover Italian design and have a very different experience from ENSCI. Very small school versus very big university.
- 397. Farthest from home in all the senses of it. Also Italians have a decent reputation in design.
- 398. I wanted to get away from rainy Scotland. It seemed I could only choose between Köln and Milan for my first year, so I chose Milan!

Why did you pick your second university?

AALTO

- 399.** Throughout my education I feel like I've had a lack of resources to realise projects, and it seems like I have never gotten over the "cool idea but not feasible" stage. I would therefore see a school that seems to have a bigger amount of resources as well as a quite structured and well planned course.
- 400.** Because I understood the education very high and in keeping with what I wanted to learn in my second year. The city of Helsinki wasn't that appealing to me, but I felt for a second year choice this wasn't an important factor.
- 401.** It was the less worst.
- 402.** Scandinavia, almost mythical country, collaborative and strategic design, international.
- 403.** I had to list pro and cons for Paris and Helsinki to come to the decision that Aalto fits better to my understanding of design. Also I just love Scandinavia!
- 404.** It sounded generic but solid. And it was.
- 405.** Best of all and refine choice of courses.
- 406.** Because I wanted to go North to see a region of Europe I didn't know yet. And have a contrast with the previous year - strategic design,

service design, user inspired design. A less hands-on approach and more research-based approach, so quite the opposite of the previous year. This choice of two "opposites" was on purpose and was my plan since the day I decided to apply to MEDes.

- 407.** I always loved Finland and I had spoken with ex Aalto enthusiasts.
- 408.** I was beginning to feel grown up. I needed to mature as a designer. I knew what I wanted to get from Aalto.
- 409.** It was actually my first choice since the beginning. I thought the perspective on design in Finland was quite unique and interesting.
- 410.** Wanted to go to Scandinavia but still be on a strategic design course.

ENSCI

- 411.** Because Paris is Paris, I really like what they do in ENSCI. And the weather should be good.
- 412.** Because after 1 year at GSofA I had enough of service design and wanted to get my hands on material and actually produce stuff. Plus I was scared of the cold weather in Scandinavia.. And I was keen on challenging myself to learn a completely new language. So ENSCI it was!

- 413.** French design, philosophy, history, language. And then there were family reasons as well.

GSA

- 414.** Feeling! Was no Stockholm in the choices so was there or Aalto for me but I didn't see myself in Finland at all... And neither in Germany. Would have been Portugal a school I would have been there as one year exchange for sure... but... too late!

KISD

- 415.** For the variety of courses available and the reputation of Cologne as an exciting city to be in. And to improve my German.

KONSTFAK

- 416.** It suits my design thinking best.
- 417.** Go back to craft, experience workshops. Discover a very different design than Milan: Scandinavian design
- 418.** I originally wanted to go to Konstfack in the first year. But then I had a great time in Glasgow studying a more strategic and research based approach. After that I wanted some more hands

on industrial design, which I get in Stockholm.

- 419.** Wanted to learn about Scandinavian design.
- 420.** Scandinavia has always appealed to me and I visited Konstfack when they held the MEDes workshop a few years ago. I thought it looked amazing, and was especially keen to use their workshops.

POLIMI

- 421.** I wanted to go to Paris but there had already been agreements with other student from my country to go there... For personal reasons I chose Italy. (I didn't really want to go there but I had to learn to understand Italian culture and get closer to my Italian partner's family)

UNIVERSITY OF AVEIRO

- 422.** I like the concept of the university. I think that I can catch up a lot of knowledge there, which I couldn't somewhere else. And it seems to be quite familiar, what I miss at POLIMI, referred to KISD. The city is probably in contrast to the other ones. It could be a chance to experience something new and different in the frame of MEDes.

When you went on exchange it was exactly what you expected?

FIRST YEAR

423. I was not expecting nothing special. I was ready to be surprised.
424. Of course not.
425. Of course not, but at the end it opened my mind, and that was what I expected.
426. No. First of all I must say that KISD was horrible at information. There was no letter of acceptance, there were no information of when things started and how it works. I ended up getting there at the wrong time, getting frustrated with the change and felt a bit helpless as there were no one except my MEDes friends to talk to about it and they didn't know more than me.
427. No, definitely not!
428. I didn't have to many expectations in a certain direction. But I'm definitely happy about my first years choice!

SECOND YEAR

429. No way, I don't think these things ever are. But then I also wasn't expecting anything in particular, I knew it was going to be totally new.
430. Not exactly, but quite close to my expectations.

431. No.

432. I try not to expect anything in particular. Of course there are unexpected incidents. That is what exchange is about.
433. I didn't expected anything so I'm happy of how it has been and I have no regrets!

THIRD YEAR

434. Not at all. In fact, I didn't have that many expectations. I was just curious and excited and let myself be led by this... It was amazing.
435. Not at all with my first year. For the second year I guess everything gets easier since you already know how it feels, what to pack, etc.

"In 5 years I want to work for..."

YEAR ZERO

- 436. Don't know yet..
- 437. Somewhere that applies design to businesses rather than being a creator and designing interactions etc.
- 438. For myself, or in collaboration with a design firm and research center, merging design and science to design for specific users and their needs.
- 439. Mmm... Hard to say, I would like to start teaching, but it's a long way.
- 440. An advertising agency.
- 441. Don't know yet, but maybe in editorial design.
- 442. A big design agency? A small one maybe? I honestly feel that I don't know yet I need to see more of what is out there.
- 443. I have no idea.
- 444. A design company comprised of a small group working together, but achieving big goals.
- 447. I don't know, maybe I will found my own studio.
- 448. A design consultancy. Size is not the biggest thing for me, but working project based but with a more permanent residence sounds very appealing...
- 449. NASA.
- 450. Some new but promising startup that has their focus on sustainable design.

SECOND YEAR

- 451. Ideally myself.
- 452. A design consultancy working with the public sector.
- 453. Rai.
- 454. International strategic design consultancy.
- 455. The opportunity that will suits to me at the moment! Live day after day.

THIRD YEAR

FIRST YEAR

- 445. Wanna make money. I don't know yet really.
- 446. I believe in startups and small companies where one is valued and team work is key. Apple still stands out though.
- 456. A company where I work with nice people doing things that allows me to continue learning and meeting new people... Somewhere in this world.
- 457. Myself. I'd like to collect a few years of working experience in design agency. But from there start an own little business.

How would you like to be connected to the MEDes in the future?

YEARZERO

- 458. Fast and as simple as possible.
- 459. Friendships, some organisational structure. By reputation.
- 460. Ideally I would want to be working with other MEDes alumni in various design firms, meeting up with them and crashing the workshops.
- 461. It would be great to work together to make this thing bigger and bigger.
- 462. I'd like to have the chance of keeping in touch with other MEDes people.
- 463. Of course.
- 464. I don't know yet.
- 465. Only time will tell.
- 466. I would like to see how everyone else is doing.

FIRSTYEAR

- 467. Beers and jobs opportunities. Working together maybe. Creation of a MEDes society, a masonic lodge.
- 468. A lot.
- 469. Maybe an annual meeting.
- 470. I think I would be if there were a forum for it, like a alumni workshop or forum.
- 471. Social networks, reunions.
- 472. Help students to be able to live such great experiences as I did.

SECOND YEAR

- 473. I would like it to have a more known reputation so I can use it for applications etc. I would like to have updates, a magazine or something, saying who the students are now and what people are doing. I feel the community feeling is really lost once you are out of the system.
- 474. I would like to be connected but not in a too invasive way: I'm not only a MEDes alumnus.
- 475. No.
- 476. Invited as guest lecturer.
- 477. The MEDes contact list if a big richness!

THIRD YEAR

- 478. I hope to continue being in touch with the people I am today... I know I can count on them more than on other people, even I don't talk to them every day.
- 479. Online for sure, maybe not on so many different channels, but one central. Would like to come to the workshops and meet other alumni from my year. Alumni workshop that runs parallel maybe.

ALUMNI

- 480. Being showcased in a public database of MEDes-related people.
- 481. I'd like to know more about what is going on with the people. Perhaps know more about the job opportunities around Europe.
- 482. This has to be a high level community. One open meeting a year for alumni/etc is absolutely necessary.
- 483. I would like to participate in workshops/lectures etc.
- 484. A lot. If they ever communicate back.
- 485. Hear about the projects/schools/ students taking part at the moment and staying updated about the activities of the alumni.
- 486. Facebook and this website.
- 487. I would like a yearly gathering where there was a workshop that integrated the alumni and the past, as well as the MEDes students of the future. The sense of community has diminished a lot. It would be professionally (and socially) good to stay connected.
- 488. As if everyone was different from each other and eager to find out who found their passions and where.
- 489. I would like the MEDes workshop to be more alumni and alumni network focused.
- 490. Have a map to see where everyone lives now, and maybe make a reunion for alumni once a year somewhere!
- 491. I'd like to meet up twice a year. The alumni should have their own thing too.
- 492. I think this is fine this way.
- 493. Global alumni meet-up? (I just met a few in Bangkok this year, and München and SF last year)
- 494. With regular news and meetings.
- 495. More dissemination of the program would make me very proud.
- 496. It'd be great to be able to see what students and graduates are doing.

YEAR OUT

- 497. Through a good website with a alumni log in. Fb/Linkedin are ok just not very 'alive'.
- 498. I would love to work with people I met from MEDes again. Have places to crash when I go on holiday. Maybe make our own workshop weeks away from the school application process and more about supporting each other in the world of work.
- 499. Loosely but still connected.

What would you say employers think about the MEDes?

ALUMNI

- 500.** They usually don't know about it, and when I tell them they usually just briefly comment on how cool such an experience must be (cool in the fun sense more than in the excellence sense).
- 501.** Of all the things that I've done after graduation I would say MEDes isn't in my CV as a name of a programme but it is there in the international projects and language skills. Employers are just interested in the working experience and unfortunately staying abroad for two years and not having time to create contacts in my own country nor getting work experience has been a problem. They don't understand that studying abroad is way more work than partying and sightseeing.
- 502.** They mostly don't give a sh*t. Sorry to say so, but it's what I found.
- 503.** They think it is extraordinary.
- 504.** I'm the employer. Yes, I love it and go and do it.
- 505.** I noticed that MEDes students have a huge advantage compared to students who haven't done MEDes experience with a lot of very different types of projects enabling to adapt very quickly to situations, experience with working in multi-cultural teams and sometimes even with language barriers, also enabling to understand the issues at hand. Experience with figuring things out and working independently.
- 506.** "Coolio! (Not the exact thoughts).
- 507.** I'd say they don't know much about it and unless they have/had contacts with one or more of the schools they don't get why MEDes is so awesome."
- 508.** They are surprised that I was able to study at three different schools and seem to think it sounds like a good course, although they have never heard of it.
- 509.** Flexibility, not scared of leaving and changing, broad views, wide cultural background, not afraid of exploring.
- 510.** I am still studying design at Aalto. I left the MEDes after my first year abroad to study full time in Aalto
- 511.** They don't know about MEDes but they are always impressed by the range of experiences and international opportunities I had.
- 512.** Masters is like eye candy, but nothing more. They are always intrigued by your experience. Mainly culturally, I think, and also your personal experiences.
- Certainly as a junior they want you to have human experience... For design experience they look for internships.
- 513.** I think the experience gets appreciation, though it might deserve more. That might be to do with me not crediting it and myself enough, or clearly enough. Anyhow, getting employed is up to sucking up skills and bending over, for which MEDes experience does not prepare. (For its merit, to make this clear).
- 514.** I'm the employer, and, if my company wasn't based so far away, I'd hire a MEDes grad asap!
- 515.** Actually I'm working on a project that I'd like to fly MEDes students over during summer holiday to do internship.
- 516.** As I am self employed I cannot answer that question accurately. But so far everyone I told about the program thought it is an amazing experience.
- 517.** Great educational path.
- 518.** They don't really know about it but they recognise the diversity of skills I have and the broad outlook that MEDes develops.

I think MEDes is good at...

YEAR ZERO

- 519. Group motivated students!
- 520. Providing amazing study opportunities.
- 521. Creating networks, drinking, being unusual.
- 522. Thinking.
- 523. Raising students.
- 524. The connection between people like a huge family.
- 525. Making students get out of the comfort zone, and providing a way to bring the world to design students.
- 526. Connecting people.
- 527. Showing students that getting out of your comfort zone can also be fun and full of unforgettable experiences.

FIRST YEAR

- 528. Adapting, socialising, improving.
- 529. Enabling deeper levels of thinking.
- 530. Creating links between people.
- 531. Providing experiences, educating self driven designers.
- 532. Versatility, flexibility.
- 533. Making contacts, learning to learn/ think in different ways.

SECOND YEAR

- 534. Building international connections, both professional and friendships. Teaching a wide range of attitudes and approaches in different cultures and settings.
- 535. Making you understand things about yourself.
- 536. Make you discover different designing and teaching approaches.
- 537. Throwing you out into the wild.
- 538. Make us grow up.
- 539. Third year.
- 540. Showing you life is not easy, but therefore amazing.
- 541. People! Awesome crowd.

ALUMNI

- 542. Sharing methods and attitudes.
- 543. Forcing to socialise with international students and creating an understanding of the European design field.
- 544. Creating designers with a very solid background.
- 545. Learning how to approach different kinds of projects and works and building a great network.
- 546. Exposing student to different perspective of living not just design.

- 547. All the stuff that was the reason which I decided to do it
- 548. Teaching.
- 549. Teaching you how to be flexible and adapt well to change.
- 550. Making you feel part of something, like a family, shows you the bigger picture.
- 551. Being your second family.
- 552. Exchanging ideas, networking.
- 553. Making friends and learning from each other.
- 554. Messing up one head for a while. That enables one to build on a more solid foundation and from own interests.
- 555. Connecting like-minded people.
- 556. Creating a network of great people the instant you join the program.
- 557. Teaching cultural differences.
- 558. Opening your mind to different ways of seeing and doing things.

YEAR OUT

- 559. Creating a broad and varied design education with a fantastic network of students and staff.
- 560. Helping you find what you love.
- 561. Workshops.

I think MEDes is bad at...

YEAR ZERO

- 562. Nothing in particular!
- 563. Presenting itself as a real degree/ understandable to the outside world.
- 564. Communicating, advertising itself, organization of students and credits, deadlines.
- 565. Not being incisive.
- 566. Letting people know about his existence.
- 567. Not bad at all, only challenging.
- 568. At providing information about it self.
- 569. I'm not sure.
- 570. Giving itself justice.

FIRST YEAR

- 571. Selling itself.
- 572. Cooking pasta.
- 573. Communicate itself.
- 574. Information.
- 575. Organisation.
- 576. Advertising.

SECOND YEAR

- 577. Communicating exactly what it does and the benefits the students get from going through the program.
- 578. Giving you a sense of stability.
- 579. Guiding the students through their

study experience.

- 580. Nothing I can think of.
- 581. Finding boyfriend.

THIRD YEAR

- 582. Showing its full potential to others.
- 583. Organisation across the unis.

ALUMNI

- 584. Making its reputation last after graduation.
- 585. Ensuring we get a job after graduation. 10 000 € Out of the window for better language skills and understanding the European design field... Hmmhh...
- 586. Introducing designers to employers/ real work.
- 587. Keeping alumni close to the programme.
- 588. Advertising itself.
- 589. Communicating about its programme and even more about communicating about its students great projects and achievements.
- 590. Updates.
- 591. Organisation - therefore the branding has never been properly implemented and promoted and people don't have a clue about the course, it has no reputation outside our own circles.

- 592. Once you are exposed to so many different approaches, you know a bit of all, but you are no expert in anything.

- 593. Showing the world what we are capable of and what a unique community we are.

- 594. Constructing a reputation.

- 595. Clarity of information.

- 596. Well, basically the above. It is hard to picture a straightforward career path this would help, but such a thing is not healthy for anyone really anyway.

- 597. Connecting to the outside world - or explaining who/what we are.

- 598. Advertising itself.

- 599. Promoting itself!

- 600. Keeping connections with graduates (except if you can be in the place where it's happening), although this blog is a good step forward to involving everyone.

YEAR OUT

- 601. Having consistency/continuity between all of the schools. The 5th year seems to be the weak point.

- 602. Supporting each other beyond the workshop week.

- 603. Communication to the outside world.

What are the main things you've learned from the MEDes until now?

YEAR ZERO

- 604. I'm gonna be shocked and enthusiastic by the experience.
- 605. Independence is crucial!
- 606. Everyone has a very relaxed attitude, as if everything will magically fall into place, and that is almost never the case.
- 607. And on a more positive note, the people I will be meeting will always be there to help with everything and anything, just like family.
- 608. That there's a lot to know around you and that everybody can teach you something, not only a professor.
- 609. I have feel the energy and the great connection between people.
- 610. Expect the unexpected.
- 611. It's a closed community, very friendly, who love to party.
- 612. That everyone is a little bit scared, not just me. We are all in this together and none will be left behind. Even though we are all from all over the world, at the end of the day we are all the same and share the same thoughts, experiences...

FIRST YEAR

- 613. Understanding.

- 614. Adapt fast, work in teams.
- 615. To stay open to everything and than draw my own conclusions.
- 616. I think I have learned that you can not assume that anyone will teach you something. You need to be the initiator that says what you want to do, and then you learn the rest from people around you on your way towards that goal.
- 617. International competences in social fields and design. To play a part in a cultural team. To break through all obstacles. Solving social, cultural and educational problems.
- 618. There are no rules. / It will all work out somehow. / Being abroad makes you think nicer about your home school.

SECOND YEAR

- 619. I have identified my own skills within group contexts as well as individual skills. I have become more flexible and adaptable to different situations because of language barriers and cultural ones.
- 620. To avoid idealizing a place or a field of study: keep your mind open and be ready to adapt.
- 621. I'm not sure if I want to be a designer anymore.
- 622. Survival, opportunistic, social, open,

generalist.

- 623. Its precious and it needs to be precious to our eyes and future employers.

THIRD YEAR

- 624. How to tolerate people.
- 625. How to work in teams.
- 626. How to not be afraid and face things.
- 627. How to appreciate moments of solitude.
- 628. That design was indeed the right thing to choose to study.
- 629. To try out! And give different approaches to a solution a chance.

ALUMNI

- 630. Hard to give a brief answer. I guess it's mainly about being able to shift perspective and approaches very easily, and being able to deal with very different kinds of people (from different education or different cultures).
- 631. I should have been more selfish. I should be socially more active with the community. I can survive from many problems around the world.
- 632. None directly from MEDes, too many to mention from my experiences at workshops and in my two years abroad.
- 633. To work with other people.
- 634. Design is not a way to create object. Its a way to create object that matters.
- 635. Getting better at design, German, Finnish, User inspired Design, Drawing, Listening, Photography.
- 636. Making awesome models.
- 637. Meeting people.
- 638. That I hate paperwork, like new technologies and love living abroad. Ah and I like design too, I learned that I am good enough to be a professional.
- 639. How to deal with change and uncomfortable experiences. To question, reflect and make intuitive decisions about my life. Anything is possible.
- 640. MEDes as an institution kind of vanishes, relationships stay.
- 641. ...That design is perceived different everywhere and that's all a right to some extend!
- 642. Flexibility, organisation, sociability.
- 643. Travel is so important. You can always learn more from your friends. Stop complaining and taking things for granted. Make the most of opportunities.... And one that I haven't put into practice well enough, 'stay in touch'.
- 644. Italian and French. Other than that I can't say because I did not take



MEDes at the same time.

- 645. The concept and scope of design can vary through culture.
- 646. Working with like-minded, open-minded people is the best thing in life (next to having a drink with them, of course).
- 647. That I can easily move around and get on with all kinds of new situations I am put in.
- 648. To be open to people.
- 649. Open mindedness, adapting to new situations, challenging oneself.

YEAR OUT

- 650. Many design skills, languages, independence, to be myself and have confidence!
- 651. To be more confident in myself and my abilities.
- 652. Push yourself. Always try. Say yes.

If you could give your younger self advice about the MEDes, you would you say...

YEAR ZERO

- 653. If you really care about it just ask to anyone!
- 654. Don't worry so much about details.
- 655. Keep working towards your goal of doing the MEDes, but keep it simple stupid.
- 656. Go!
- 657. Don't think, just throw yourself in it.
- 658. Just go.
- 659. I'm just starting.
- 660. I'm only just starting so I don't know yet.
- 661. Follow it more and keep up with the updates.

FIRST YEAR

- 662. Live it.
- 663. Lol.
- 664. Stay open, try everything.
- 665. I would say, think thoroughly through if you want to do this, all the change and all the traveling is fun but can also be challenging. I think I would still have made the same choice, but I think I would have made me more aware of that it is not only fun.
- 666. Have fun with it, but be prepared for everything. Keep yourself always up to date.
- 667. Don't worry be happy.

SECOND YEAR

- 668. Take a lot of pictures, try everything.
- 669. Do it do it do it.
- 670. Do it. Don't trust anybody. Go to Köln.
- 671. Encourage others to do it as well.
- 672. Enjoy, go!

THIRD YEAR

- 673. Nothing. Just have fun.
- 674. Don't take things toooo serious in your projects abroad, spend more time out and about.

ALUMNI

- 675. Nothing; I'd rather go with the same cluelessness I had at the time (i really did not know what to expect at the time and it was great).
- 676. Read more about business, take more courses about web design, understand big companies organisation charts, learn more about processes, socialise with business and engineering students, give your contact cards to everyone you meet.
- 677. Get prepared for a job. Talk to people who could become your employers as much as you can.

- 678. Just do it.
- 679. Work your butt off, do everything, leave nothing behind and be ready to fail.
- 680. Go for it again, don't think too much and just do it.
- 681. Don't go back to POLIMI.
- 682. It really doesn't matter which school you go to and although it hurts if you don't get your choice, it's not a sign that you are just shit. Rejection is hard. There are surely reasons why you didn't get your choice, but try not to be bitter about it and just make the most of the lot you are given. You are still extremely lucky to be on such a course that allows you to study in any 3 places, no matter where they are.
- 683. You don't have to prove anything to anyone, you just have to use those experience as much as possible to find out what you want and what you are about.
- 684. Go and do it! And try to become a local wherever you go!
- 685. Go for it !
- 686. Enjoy it more, idiot.
- 687. Nothing is given. Go!
- 688. You're about to embark a fantastic journey, my son.
- 689. Save up more money in advance.
- 690. Just go for it!
- 691. Go for it.

YEAR OUT

- 692. Go for it... You'll not regret anything!
- 693. Not to be so homesick, you don't miss out on as much as you think!
- 694. Don't stress. It always works out in the end. And if it hasn't work out yet then its not the end.