

RESOCONTO AL RIENTRO DELL'ESPERIENZA DI SCAMBIO 2011/2012

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Testo

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Abstract

This report is regarding my Student Exchange Program in National University of Singapore that had just ended. In this semester, I embarked on a student exchange program to National University of Singapore. On a personal level, this exchange is a milestone of my life chapter, with ample experiences of interacting and making new friends with different cultural backgrounds. Not only that, living independently in Singapore and seeing Southeast Asia in a different perspective, is overwhelming to say the least.

Introduction

The National University of Singapore is Singapore's oldest university. It is the largest university in the country in terms of student enrollment and curriculum offered. The university is widely considered to be one of the most prestigious universities in Asia. In 2011, NUS was ranked 28th in the world and 3rd in Asia by the QS World University Rankings. NUS has a semester-based modular system for conducting courses. It adopts features of the British system, such as small group teaching (tutorials) and the American system (course credits).

Exchange Life and Education System

The first thing that hit me when I arrived was the different weather. As it was in the season of winter, but Singapore has no different weather the whole year. So it's so hot in Singapore even it is in January. The temperature change was really hard to cope with in the beginning. The temperature there can be as hot as 30 degree Celsius. However, once I got used to it, I learned to appreciate the beauty of all summer semester.

Meal is not a problem to me in Singapore as it's similar as Chinese food. Singapore is full of delicious southeast food. Here you can enjoy all you want to eat about southeast food such as Malay, Indian or Thai food. Due to different eating habits of different societies, getting used to the food they eat everyday can be an interesting thing.

The OSA (the Office of Student Affairs) took great pain to organize activities for all international students to let us settle in fast. These include activities like welcome party and canoeing for us to get to know each other. That was such an interesting experience for me because I get to hear stories from different countries and make friends easily.

The system in NUS is rather more flexible. The school gives the students more power and choices in choosing the courses that interest them, making education more captivating. The courses I took were Design for Culture & Identity, Design in the Urban Settings, Design Case Study. The courses there are all collaborated with companies or local organizations. That let me get in touch with local marketing and have the opportunities to know more about the local context. This exchange program really gave me the chance of expanding my understanding beyond my majors.

Classes in the university are rather small, averaging about fifteen to twenty students, but they also have lectures filled with undergrads. However, it depends on the kind of courses we take. The semester was divided into several periods which have recess week and reading week in between. Basically, each module usually took up the whole semester. The courses were intensive but interesting. One can have up to 10 hours of workload per week per course. Students here have their own studios and the professors' offices are quite nearby. I feel that such environment provided much more opportunities for questions and doubts to be raised and also facilitating interaction. It's also good that the professors were very approachable and we are encouraged to look for them off classes and treat them as friends.

Generally, there is a big difference between Italy and Singapore in culture. I personally find that Singaporean students are more efficiency and productive. They all worked very hard on their studies. Generally, they'd like to stay in the studio or library to do their projects the whole day from early morning till the night. Sometimes even stay over the night in the studio. You can't find this happening in Italy. There is a higher quality of life as life is not just about school and work, but time and space for own personally life. Depending on the individual's character, some might find it comfortable but others might not. I don't mean to judge which one is better, I just feel it is very interesting to experience different kind of lifestyle.

Through this exchange program, I get to foster a lot of friendships all over the world, most of whom I still keep in contact now. Although it is hard to share quite the same bond as we used to when we were still together in Singapore, I believe the friendships forged will not erode away either. It is easy to make friends with local Singaporean students. I guessed the reason was that we shared a sort of common culture and values which facilitated the interaction. However, I also have made some close European friends from Germany, Switzerland, Sweden and Italy.

Fate and opportunity always play a huge part in our friendships. I have known from some of my other friends that they 'lacked the opportunity' to make close friends during their exchange program and thus for me, I feel that it is indeed a blessing to know such good some exchange students before I left. It could be counted as some sort of mini carnival where we played games, cooked ourselves and had a big party the last night. Food and drinks bonded us closer.

Not to mention my stay in Singapore was filled with trips around the city, a few parties and also weekly trips down for groceries. I get to see really different things, cultures, taste different foods and experience a different life. Perhaps the backpacking was not material enjoyment but a feel of that particular city life. This feeling was truly exhilarating and refreshing.

In short, I have truly enjoyed the short stint in Singapore and love every part of it. The beautiful garden city, the friendliness of Singaporeans and their way of life, everything has mesmerized me. Being in a foreign culture has helped me see how shallow I used to be, and in addition, how small I am. There are countless different cultures out there and I truly hope there will be another chance to experience it all over again.

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

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