



Univerzita Hradec Králové
Filozofická fakulta



A Short Story about my Erasmus+ Exchange at the University of Hradec Králové

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The first time I came to Czech Republic, I had never traveled to a foreign country. Everything was extremely new to me, and after 10 months since the time I first came here, I think things changed drastically. I am not the same person I was, not only because of how many things I experienced here, but also because I *actually* lived here, that is, I spend part of my life in a country where everything is anomalous from what I was used to before.

One of the first things I noticed when I came here was how the weather was different. It amazed me, because one of my dreams was to see snow, which is something that I did so often that now it has become something ordinary, part of my daily life. Nonetheless, I must admit that having to step into snow on my way to UHK (University Hradec Králové), or facing -13°C , has been a very exotic experience to me, as a Brazilian, to say the very least.



My way to the pedagogical faculty, where I took German classes, full of snow.

My Erasmus was not only made of Czech culture, I have been influenced deeply by the Slavic world in general. For example, in the middle of the first semester, I fell in

love with a girl from Ukraine. Nevertheless, I did not only started a relationship with her, but also with her language (Ukrainian), culture and interest in defending her own country against colonizers (Russians). We had a lot of experiences together, we even traveled to three different countries: Slovakia, Poland and Austria, apart from Czech Republic itself.



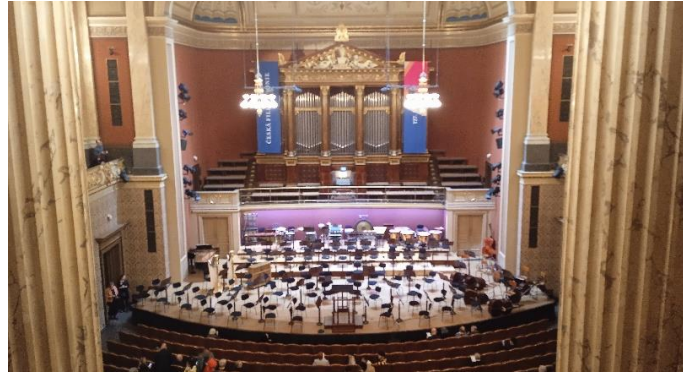
The most beautiful picture we took in our trip to Vienna.

As a philosopher, all this made me ponder a lot about my future, what I want from my life and the kind of person that I feel like I must be. It changed me profoundly. Moreover, even though the relationship with her did not last, my love for the culture, philosophy, language and everything related to Ukraine did survive in a very miraculous way. This is how I found out how much I am interested in their country, and now I dream of going to Kyiv some day and living there for a while, as well as studying the philosophy of Shevchenko, one of the heroes of Ukrainian literature and philosophy, who spoke extensively about the topic that I have been studying since before I came here, which is freedom of thought.



Picture of our trip to Auschwitz, in Poland. The meaning of the sentence written on the small boat is “For human thinking” (*Für das menschliche Denken*). It represents my struggle for improving freedom of thought through neurophilosophical studies. It is a symbol to me of how important what I study is for the world, and the consequences of not paying attention to freedom of thought and to tolerance. During the academic year here, I had the chance to observe and get to know a diversity of symbols, statues and thinkers of freedom and freedom of thought.

When it comes to art, in total, I went to 3 Operas, 5 Concerts and 2 theater performances in 3 different countries. Most of them took place in Prague, which has already become my second home (I went there more than 15 times, I really love the city and its food!!). One of my hobbies was to visit galleries and museums in the countries I traveled to.



Picture of the Dvořák Hall, inside Rudolfinum, when I watched the Czech Philharmonic play with Seong-Jin Cho, a prodigious pianist, together with a friend.

At the end of the first semester, I decided to prolong my studies at UHK, because of the fact that the University offers the students an amazing opportunity to develop linguistic skills by giving them the chance to study different languages at various levels, not only in English, but also in the target language, which is something that I did with German, English and Czech.

In this context, one of the most adorable things I did in the exchange was to teach small kids about our country, together with my Brazilian friends, at the Elementary School SNP. We even had the chance to teach them about the importance of defending human rights. It was very interesting!



Through my German classes in the Pedagogical Faculty, I went to a Conference in Bad Kissingen, Germany. It was a great opportunity to make new friendships with people from Czech Republic, Hungary and Ukraine (Central Europe).



A picture of all the participants of the Central European Meeting in Bad Kissingen, Germany. On the far left (below) you can see a girl with a purple T-shirt and brown coat. Her name is Kateryna (Ukraine), she became one of my best friends. I am at the right side (below), with the brown pants and black T-shirt.

Moreover, as a part of the celebration of the fact that I had passed the Goethe-Zertifikat C1 proficiency exam of German language, which was conceived by the Goethe Institute of Prague, I invited my best friend, Bruno, to Berlin. It was the first time that I went to the city, and going there was one of my adolescence dreams, since I started to study German by myself at the age of 14.



One of the photos of myself, taken by Bruno, next to the Brandenburger Tor, in Berlin.

To sum it up, my Erasmus has been one of the most beautiful things I have ever had the courage to execute in my life. It is not easy at all to live far from your home country, but the challenge pays off to those who are brave enough to face it. I am leaving Czech Republic with a huge smile of satisfaction and pride on my face, along with all the friendships, memories, knowledge, habits, languages and everything else that I got only

because of this exchange period of one year at University of Hradec Králové, I am really grateful for everything.



Me and Alina (Ukraine), one of my best friends from the exchange. She taught me so much, and I am really grateful for her friendship.



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