Maribor, Erasmus September 2022

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Day 1 – Sunday: gathering at the bus stop, Flix bus with a broken seat and funny drivers, stop at the frontier and good laughs when checking our passport photos, Jerko’s Dinamo card from his young age and here we are – Maribor, as if we never actually left the country; big and nicely done bus terminals, reminds me of a mixture of Austria and Italy, cute red public transport buses and we are already on our way to the hostel, walking down the streets of the new and interesting little town we reach the hostel, squeezed in bunk beds, intimate small rooms serve us well with the ideal colleagues-pairs distribution and former acquaintances, we are ideally settled, our spontaneous dinner of the whole group in an Italian restaurant having delicious Vezuvio pizza couldn’t have been better as it already was, but then some guys came and started singing, playing music, there was even some dancing…tired after the long day we just vanished into sleep, tomorrow we’ll meet our mentors and will be introduced to our tasks…

Day 2 – Monday: our recently met DVIGALO and constant jokes, excellent start into our adventures, we met our mentors, learned a bit about each of them and about what they do so we were able to choose whom to join; a great group gathered around our lady mentor and it was clear from the start that it would be a serious working atmosphere our aim being to produce a traditional art piece that would be connected to led lamps with pre-programmed codes to put them in motion so they create a story as a whole; we got to know better our mentor and the topic of our work, we started developing ideas and discuss possible outputs; further thorough walks in Maribor discovering the town and its charms and then, as usual and as planned, no doubt about it, we all gathered and had a decent gourmand feast.

Day 3 – Tuesday: the usual kick for the day - a solid breakfast, took DVIGALO to our rooms and the working day was ahead of us. Our mentor introduced us to Arduino and the programming, presenting to us the schemes so we could by ourselves try on various variations of led lamps connecting in order to better understand how it all functions. Along this first introduction to Arduino we were finishing drafts for our main art work. Within the MARS courtyard there is a big hazelnut tree and the small stage that came handy as our gathering spot where we could reflect on our drafts; more walks in town later on at which occasion we made sketches of interesting motives since our drafts had to be finished by next day. Jumbo pizza at our already familiar Italian place was the inevitable round-up for the day.

Day 4 – Wednesday: It was agreed everyone should have their drafts and ideas ready, be able to precise on the material we wanted to use and on the quantities so later on we went to get the stuff at the art shop. I had an idea for the wooden sculpture, the chosen motif meant to be a hornet hive damaged at one end where I could pour in some vax in order to make it more real, then polish and finish it by coating it in varnish. We have also worked with and programmed LRD sensor that changes the lamps functioning, when you press it or provide sufficient light, but stops as soon as you remove your finger.

Day 5 – Thursday: Today, the work day, away from the monitors and on to our tasks, agreed who does what and off to shopping. Together with our mentor Irena, we got the needed tools and equipment so everyone can proceed to their tasks efficiently. My material was a bit more complicated to get but it all came out well since the lady mentor od the mosaic group generously volunteered to offer me a nice piece of wood and all the vax I needed to finish my work. There was also that issue related to my tools, as I could not get a good quality chisels, so I was only able to mark an outline of the idea on each side of the wooden block. The rest of the day we walked, made photo, did some drawings, had a nice time together and got to know each other better, ending up the day around a nice dinner.

Day 6 – Friday: It seemed that would be another day without the needed tools, meaning I would not be able to start my work, but mentor Natalia, of mosaic group, jumped in again and from the other part of the town brought a brand new U-shaped chisel, with which I managed to do the job. In the afternoon we went to Maribor park with Jerko, walking to the pyramid and the lake and afterwards we went to ‘gramofonoteka’ where I paid 13 euro for a barrel aged beer, we started paying more attention to prices after that experience. More walk later on and the usual end up with a nice dinner.

Day 7 – Saturday: Weekend is free so we decided to go to Ljubljana. A voluntary and enthusiastic group running to catch an early train, skipping breakfast, warmly dressed, looking forward to visit Ljubljana. From the train station we walk to the centre like ordinary tourist looking fervently around so not to skip a single sight of an artwork. Our plan: to modern gallery first, but we had to stop for a coffee and a toast and then to the exhibition. Personally rather disappointed, but then again, I did not expect much. The city was absolutely amazing, the opinion shared by those who did not come for the first time. Amazingly enthusiastic people, all nicely set and running, seemed so warm and bright, full of life. Many charming little shops and cafes by the river and in the adjacent streets. Tena and I briefly left the rest of the group while they were still looking around the gallery as we wanted to see some churches, then also stepped into an antiquity shop and even tried on the cheese-cutter machine. We joined the rest of the group to take a funicular to the Old town, the castle and the nice belvedere and then returned following the path through woods, almost running out of hunger to the recommended pizza place. Have eaten extremely well and then headed towards the station when it started raining, as if the rain wanted to see us off. Some fell asleep, some opted for the chatter. Tired, we returned to our rooms.

Day 8 – Sunday: On Friday I have agreed with the mentor to bring all the equipment to hotel so I go to MARS on Sunday and proceed with my work so to make sure to finish the sculpture, since it required more time to be finished. We did manage to slip a bit longer in the morning but in the evening we were again eager to spend time together in a newly discovered café where even member one of the Rijeka group joined us.

Day 9 – Monday: Tok tok tok tok, all day long, sound of my mallet against the chisel echoed down the Maribor streets, tok tok tok tok, made me famous. Everyone knew who, when and where, I guess they only wondered why. While others were slowly finalising their work, I will still be producing echoes for few more days. When you work hard you have a great appetite so the habit made as gad a great lunch and later form the dinner we went to a Serbian restaurant and had a very nice meal, great food, even better sleep.

Day 10 – Tuesday: Some more of my tok - toks...the rest of the team already fully in programming. It takes quite some time to find all the lamps and connect them, program the code, program and weld wires and connect it all to function well. It became very intense as I still had a lot to do on by piece of wood. I worked all day long, however we had to finish an hour earlier as a visit to the local artist exhibition was planned and after lunch we all gathered to visit "Umetnostna galerija" where we saw a good quality paintings and I was mostly intrigued by works of Ludovik Kuba. Later we did some water colours painting and went to rest a bit earlier, still tired after Ljubljana visit yesterday.

Day 11 – Wednesday: echoing on the wood continuous, but now – how to put the wires through and cover with Arduino, I gave it some thought and concluded the best would be to drill a hole, mask it and glue it from behind and expose the work the way it will not show. I was promised to get a drill, but it was not coming, but the worker from the yard kindly enough offered his drill to make it easier for me. Some more mallet and chisel echoing and lot to do about programming. I had to finish earlier due to a conference being held at the courtyard, so the noise would be a problem. So I started with the programming. Afterwards we gathered around our Vesuvio jumbo pizza, our habit by now. Wandering down the streets, hanging around together, however it touns out, never a dull moment.

Day 12 – Thursday: The day before the exhibition, it is all nearing the end, not only our works but our Maribor adventure as well. By working all day long, everyone was near to finishing their work, some encountered more problems, some were more relaxed. Once I had the whole drilled, I was finally able to start connecting wires and deciding on how to present it. The echoing is done and over, today was the last day, Friday is left for programming and vax coating. Not very eagerly, later on we went for a walk to say good bye to Maribor, with a nice dinner in a Bosnian restaurant, with a gentle rain drizzling the streets. Later, we played a Russian card game called ‘durak’ gathered in our rooms.

Day 13 – Friday: The last day came, the moment we worked hard for. Excited and sad, we would want another two weeks in Maribor, but there is still some work to be done, and exhibition to be installed. Tena helped me finalise the programming, to weld the wires and to connect the LDR sensor. We had to boil the very nice bee vax and modelled it to look as the real honeycomb and once connect with how it looked like we only had to check whether it would all function. The lamps did not lit. After some finetuning of the code it all came out well, however I did not have enough time to coat the wood as it would take time to dry. The exhibition installed and the works exposed it all came to its end. Nice speeches, excellent animation and creative works mark the finale of our workshop. Grateful to all our mentors, thankful for beautiful memories, we said goodbye to everyone. Our last evening we spent and marked in our pizza place with our dear Jerko and visited the nearby café for a farewell.

Day 14 – Saturday: Our bags and rucksacks packed, we also say goodbye to very tasteful breakfast and with this beautiful town. It all went by so quickly, yet we feel we only just arrived. Enriched with new friendships, interesting experiences and lifelong memories, we walked to the bus station under the fine drizzle. Settled in the bus in no time we arrived to Zagreb, goodbye to everyone and we went our separate ways. It was all so delightful, we do hope to be able to live such experience again. We liked Maribor very much.