

**EXCHANGE REPORT****Name**

Yunfan Li

Year and term for exchange

2022-2023 Autumn term

Exchange university

Aalto University

Degree programme

Master of architecture

Studying in Aalto - Busy but Exciting!

Before departure

The main reason for my application for exchange study is to experience the study life in different countries. The concept of architectural design is very different in different countries. I hope that after the exchange study, I can look at architectural design from different angles. When I choose the country and school to apply for exchange study, the first thing I consider is the teaching method and content of the school's architectural design studio. A large part of the reason why I chose Aalto University was the wooden architecture studio they opened, which interested me very much, as well as their sustainable development concept. Before going to Aalto University, I very much wished that I had studied architecture and sustainability in more detail and practically applied this knowledge in design classes.

Because Finland is an EU Schengen country, KTH students who hold an EU residence card do not need to apply for an additional visa. However, one month before arriving in Finland, you need to apply for mobility notification on the website of the Finnish Immigration Service. It is very simple and will be completed within one week.

And for language, Finnish and English belong to two different language families, therefore, learning Finnish is a bit difficult for most people. However, the vast majority of Finns can communicate in English, and group discussions at universities can also be held in English. Moreover, Aalto University has also set up a basic course of Finnish for exchange students, so exchange students do not have to worry about language problems.

Upon arrival

I arrived on the first day of school because my rental contract was effective on September 1st. Aalto University has a week of activities for new students, including various introductory courses and student activities. Before the start of school, the student union will send emails to the new students, and they will use the software Telegram to communicate afterwards. In the Telegram group, the Student Union will publish promotional posters and notices of various activities, and anyone can register and participate in the activities through the link. In addition, freshmen of different majors will be guided by seniors to visit the school and familiarize themselves with the different buildings and various facilities.

Financials

I got a scholarship from Erasmus+, which pays 580 euros per month. In Finland, for students, the consumption is lower, because there are more places in the school with student discounts. Erasmus+'s subsidy is 70% of the one-time payment, and the remaining 30% will be paid after the exchange period is over. I didn't realize at first that I could apply for a grant from Erasmus+ and missed the submission deadline. But when I applied after the deadline with the mentality of trying, I still got the grant, just received it a month later than others. So, don't hesitate, everyone should try to get this grant.

As an exchange student, the student union membership fee is not mandatory. When the freshmen arrive, the coordinator will issue a handwritten and stamped paper student card to the exchange students who only stay in Finland for half a year. With this student card, they can enjoy it in cafeterias, convenience stores, public transportation and many other places. to student discounts. But if you pay the student union fee, you can register for an electronic student card in the frank app, and there may

be more discounts. But as far as my personal experience is concerned, the discount of the paper student card is completely sufficient.

Accommodation

My accommodation was an on-campus shared apartment that I applied for on the AYY platform. At the beginning, I applied for a furnished apartment for exchange students through the Haos platform, but due to the large number of students this year and the shortage of housing resources, I received an email that I could not be allocated accommodation in June. The friends I met through Telegram knew that I could apply for AYY accommodation, so I took the time to understand the application process. There are two types of accommodation in AYY. One is a single-person apartment. The housing supply is very tight, and it usually takes more than a year to be allocated. The other is a friend's room, which needs to be queued up with a friend to apply together. There are more housing sources, and usually one room will be queued in two or three months. The premise is that you have to find a good roommate by yourself. Whether the life during the exchange period goes smoothly has a lot to do with the roommate. I found roommates in the Chinese exchange student discussion group. The two of us were arranged to live on campus more than a month after registering in AYY. The accommodation conditions are very good. Our apartment had a large balcony facing the sea with a great view.

The price of a Finnish student apartment is very low for me, because it is a shared apartment, so the monthly shared rent is 250 euros, including the cost of water and electricity. And the laundry room is also free, you can make an appointment directly at AYY. It should be noted that when paying the first month's rent, AYY will charge an additional month's rent as a deposit, which will be returned after confirming that the apartment is not damaged after renting out. So, it is very important to fill out the occupancy report during the first week of stay to make sure that no extra amount will be paid. It is worth mentioning that students can paint one wall of the room to their favorite color by filling out the application like AYY, and AYY will provide the necessary tools.

University and studies

I feel that the Art Institute is not as big as KTH, but the art courses they offer are more than KTH. The building connected to the metro station is the building used by the architecture and art college, including architecture, costume design, film, game design and a variety of majors. Therefore, there will be a variety of exhibition facilities in this building, at the end of the course, especially in the middle of the school term and the end of the school term, the various lobbies in Väre will have various professional works exhibition. And some majors will conduct a lecture presentation in the exhibition, and other students can also take part in the exhibition.

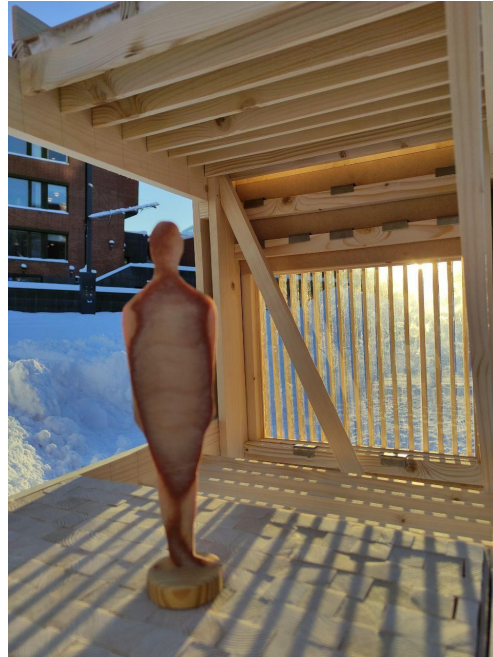
A normal study day at Aalto University includes some courses and a lot of group discussions and time for personal reflection. For the architectural major, the major class from twice a week at KTH has become once a week at Aalto University. However, every studio will match a relevant lecture course, so you can learn more knowledge in the lecture course. And you can also choose other lecture courses, so you can learn more about it.

Courses

At Aalto University, I chose courses of 30 credits, namely wood architecture studio(ARK-E1020, wood lecture(ARK-E4020, sustainable principle(ARK-E3020, building design lecture(ARK-E2020 and Design of structure theory (ARK-E2520. The course structure of this course is very similar to the course structure of KTH in architecture, including studio courses and lecture courses, but I chose more lectures to learn a wider range of content.

I think the wood architecture studio course and the woodlecture course attracted me the most, because I have not been in touch with wooden construction projects in detail before. In the curriculum of wood studio, the principles of sustainable development and the details of wooden architecture are combined, and the whole process is gradual. We start with the structure and look for the vertical flexibility of the

space. Then, through group discussion, data query and solid model making, a prefabricated wooden building system was gradually developed to meet our imagination of the sustainability of the building space. In the last two weeks of the course, we mainly focused on the details of the building and drew construction drawings of various details. Even consider how many and what size bolts are needed for wooden structure nodes to fix. These aspects were reflected in our final model, which we spent a long time building. The final result was very satisfying.



City and country

I think Finnish culture has some similarities to Swedish culture. I really like the attitude of the Finnish people towards the history of their country. I once sat in on a course on the history of Finnish architecture. When the teacher described the war between Sweden and Russia in Finland, his attitude was more like a bystander. There are still many Orthodox churches built by Russians in Finland. Although the Russians have done such excessive things to Finland, the Finnish people still choose to leave these traces of history.

Leisure and social activities

In my spare time, I mainly visited various museums and art galleries in Helsinki with my Chinese students and friends, because we all like the style of modern Finnish architecture very much. I don't know much about Aalto University's sports and cultural activities, but I can often hear music and see people in sports clothes on the way home.

I really like the Aalto space app provided by Aalto University. It not only functions as a map, but also allows us to book event rooms, which makes organizing club activities or private parties more convenient.

Sustainability

Aalto University and Finland as a whole are very passionate about the concept of sustainable development. Finland will carry out detailed garbage classification, including paper, ceramics, glass, plastic and so on. Moreover, Aalto University has made the principles of sustainable development one of the compulsory courses for architecture, landscape and planning majors. And from my conversations with my friends, I learned that all studio courses also take architectural sustainability into consideration. For example, when we make solid models in the wood workshop, we collect redundant but well-shaped wooden blocks and put them into recyclable material buckets, so that they

can be used in models for other projects. And before starting to make models, we were also asked to look for materials in recyclable material buckets.

Other recommendations and observations

Although Helsinki and Stockholm have similar latitudes, the winter in Finland will be colder, with more than 20 centimeters of snow, and even some road sections will be completely covered by snow. And there will be strong winds in Finland, so you must bring a warm coat and non-slip shoes when living in Finland.