Software developer at an IT company in Leipzig

- Which academic career did you imagine when you started to study this Sustainable Development Master's Program?
My expectation/imagination in academic terms (the master itself) was more or less what I was expecting. It fulfilled the interdisciplinarity and interculturality, to say it in some way. Meeting people from different disciplines and different cultures was amazing. It really helped me to build team player skills.
Leipzig is very focused on academia, in combination with the UFZ center. There was not too much input for a professional path in the private sector or social (NGO) sector. Still, the info is highly appreciated and valuable. For myself, I was already expecting to focus more on the private sector and international sector, such as UN, CDP, corporate conglomerates for sustainability, etc. I am much more practical.
The master did not fulfil my expectations in: the extreme focus of the professors in Leipzig on their own research. They did not care enough for the quality of the education nor the students. As of my semester abroad in Graz, the lecturers were good enough. However, with some classes in Graz I was not satisfied. One class was not taught in a professional way, but rather subjective. The teacher did not take into account that many of us actually took the classes seriously. Anyway, to be fair, the content of the classes was interesting, and I learned good info. As for the other professors in Graz in the ISIS institute, I don´t remember being disappointed. I had fun and learned many things. And that is the most important thing.

- Where are you currently working and what is your scope of activity?
I am working in an IT company in Leipzig. The company does software for control, programming and scheduling manufacturing and production processes. My first 1,5 years I worked doing translations of software manuals from German and English to Spanish and Portuguese. Nothing to do with sustainability. But it paid the bills. After all that time, I got to convince the directors of the company to start doing a practical research on how a further software feature focused on the sustainability principles could be developed to offer it to our customers. They agreed. I undertook the project leadership and I have been doing it for the last 2 months. The main objective is to create a software feature that helps our customers to create, select, process, filter and interpret data within the production process itself and future forecasts for 4 production elements: Energy in the shape of electricity, CO_2 emissions, water and sewage, and material and waste material. Within this, I am in charge of creating and organizing the content of the "sustainability feature". Lots of communication, convincing and giving arguments. It's interesting.
In-between I got hired at nextbike in Leipzig (bike sharing system company) to do project management to expand the system to Spanish and possibly Portuguese markets, but very unfortunately things did not work out at all due to bad management on their behalf, and I luckily got hired back at the IT company.

- How is your job linked to sustainable development?
See last answer

- Did the study program help you getting the job, and does it help you doing the job?
The master programme itself did not help me to get the job. I got it myself. But they hired me due to my capacities and that is largely thanks to the master. It does help to do the job. Thanks to some experiences I had in the master programme, I built a critical thinking method.

- How did you find your job and how long did it take you to reach your current position? (e.g. Did you do internships (unpaid or poorly paid) beforehand?)
How I found it was a total coincidence. It was mainly luck. It was through my former flat mate. I told her I was looking for any job so I can pay my bills and she connected me to her friend. One week later I had the interview and next Monday was my 1st day. Pure luck I would say. Took my 2 years to get my position.

http://sustainers-graz.weebly.com/

I did internships and had previous good professional experience, but in my home country. Not in Germany nor Austria.

- Would you call your work varied and interdisciplinary?
Yes. 100%

- 3 tips you would like to pass on to future Sustainer graduates how to tackle their first job hunt?
Will give the tips that come to my mind:
1. Do your best in the master. Participate, try your best to be objective and critical. But also be kind.
2. Learn how to write academically and deliver a good quality paper.
3. Work hard and intelligent and LEARN TO TAKE BREAKS. Avoid burnouts.
4. Rely on yourself instead of expecting help from others. Go out and ask what you need/want.
5. Technical skills are basic and very important, but what gets you to do the network are the soft skills. Never underestimate technical nor soft skills. Both are essential in all areas of life. I would say soft skills are more important overall. More specifically, emotional intelligence. If possible, take psychotherapy and a course in Non Violent Communication, from Marshall Rosenberg.
6. With this I am writing, consider networking. Talk to people, ask them questions, be curious, do your research on webpages, etc. Not only to get a job, but to develop actual relationships in your private and professional life. Talk to the professors that could help you in your area of interest. If they see that you are motivated and interested, that also motivates them to teach you. If you clic, most likely the professor might be able to help you getting an internship, job, research assistant position, letter of recommendation, etc. Never underestimate anybody. Most of us spend more than 8 hours per day working in the office with colleagues. Therefore, everybody wants to work with somebody who is good, fun and interesting to work with. Never the other way round. Nevertheless, many times we end up working with not a very nice person/people. In this sense: learn how to deal with difficult people. It is also a very important set of skills.

- Any other advice you would like to share?
Pressure the master's administration to improve the master programme.
Try your best to implement / create awareness for sustainability wherever you are / go / work. There is always a way.

- Francisco Carrera

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