

## WWC MUMBAI

### Day by day Blog

#### SUNDAY

Today I've realized how much progress I have made with myself throughout these past few months. From the moment I arrived at the airport, I introduced myself and chatted with the other students of the program; A year ago I would have not been able to do the same.

Surely, I felt nervous because I didn't know anyone and I was the youngest, but it did not stop me from establishing relationships and enjoying my time. My anxiety was not stopping me anymore from engaging and living in the moment, and I felt ready to begin this journey with complete strangers. Somehow, I was able to be in my comfort zone even while stepping out of it, even if the program has just started.

Seeing Mumbai was a shock, I was not expecting to see such huge wealth inequality in one landscape: I could see the decayed, dirty shacks right in front of the million-dollar skyscrapers. The pollution of the air was absurd, as the sky was completely white and the sun wasn't shining. The water was contaminated and full of plastic residue, and there were so many building sites that emitted waste and toxic chemicals. Barely from one hour bus ride I saw a lot, but Mumbai seems endless, so who knows what else it will have in store from us.

#### MONDAY

Today was a roller coaster for me.

I was very excited for the upcoming week and eager to visit ATLAS University. Waking up well rested we boarded on the bus and had a private tour of the facility by the University students. I connected with them and exchanged contacts, I asked questions and engaged throughout the tour. It was lovely to visit the University and attend two lectures. The first one was very interesting: even though it wasn't my field of expertise I found the lecturer engaging and clear, and he really made me feel like I wanted to start social entrepreneurship. In a certain sense, it reconnects with architecture and sustainability; Architecture has a social impact and it can help the community develop and improve, so that it can sustain itself always in better ways.

The second lecture was more about ourselves and how to solve problems. During the lecture I was shook by a comment made by one of the students in regards to me, and it really upset me. I was feeling strong emotions and found it difficult to concentrate and participate in the

workshop. But I took a deep breath, washed my face in the bathroom and came back to work in group again. I told myself that I wasn't going to let a thoughtless comment ruin my whole day, and so I did. I regained control of my emotions, rationalized, and enjoyed the rest of the visit at the University with genuine interest and serenity. I then did the same in the afternoon, when we went all together to explore the city and have dinner.

I bonded with other students in the program as we went to explore the more modern part of the city during the night, and I had a lot of fun getting to know everyone!

## TUESDAY

Today was probably the most impactful day of the whole trip. Personally, I enjoyed the morning as we learned about recycling waste and how these techniques are being implemented in Mumbai. Also, I learned about recycled tetrapak and how it can be used as a substitute to wood, and I will definitely implement it in my future architectural designs. After a very spicy lunch it was time to head to the Dharavi slum, one of the biggest slums in the world. It was truly a shocking and eye-opening experience that will take me a long time to process. Seeing the living conditions of the habitants upset me and generated in me very uncomfortable emotions that I wasn't entirely able to digest. I feel extremely grateful for the life that has been given me, and I learned to appreciate the small things more. There are so many "problems" I care about every day, when I don't even realise that having a warm roof and access to clean water is already an enormous privilege that has been given to me. It gave me motivation to work hard, so hard that in the future I will be influential enough to be able to make a significant change for these people, and I will try my best with no doubt.

## WEDNESDAY

The morning started bright and early as I went with some friends to do morning yoga with a local instructor. Later on, we changed and got ready to go to the Royal Yacht Club, where we followed some lectures and had lunch. The lectures were not at all in my expertise, although I found the first one about the stock market interesting, even if the technical language used was hard to understand at times. During the afternoon we went for a historical tour of Colaba, the southern part of Mumbai. It was beautiful seeing some parts of the city we had never explored. We even saw one of the first original copies of one of the books written by Darwin and then we went to a bookstore and I bought a book about the architecture in Mumbai.

In the meantime, I was trying to organize an architectural tour with the local guide that brought us to the slum visit. I realized how hard it was to actually plan and get something together that could be nice for everyone. So after dinner we met up, also thanks to Ludo who helped me organize, and I loved the night bus tour with the other students, even if some did not show up. Later on, we had some drinks at the Taj Hotel and had a lovely time meeting everyone better.

## THURSDAY

Today we visited two companies that were both out of my field of study. Nonetheless both the talks were extremely interesting, and I found particularly engaging the first one by Health Prime. It made me realize that in life it's important to surround yourself by diversity and to learn as much as you can from people all over the world. It gave me a sense of empowerment because, even if I still have a long way to go, I feel like I'm on the right path to surrounding myself with a close cosmopolitan community than ever before. It is also thanks to the multicultural community of Westminster that I am able to. Also learning about the process of film making shocked me. There is so much work put in the industry I hadn't even realized before!

We had a fun day all together and deepened our friendships while learning and growing. Today was the representation of the Westminster Working Cultures program and how it teaches us about the world and ourselves!

## FRIDAY

Being the last day of the program, an area of nostalgia was clouding the bus as we boarded to go and meet our next guest. The lectures were interesting and especially the first speaker thought me a lot about body language and how to behave in a professional environment. Even though he was speaking about things completely foreign to me, his body language and the speaking pace kept it stimulating. We also briefly talked about how to develop your LinkedIn profile and skills and attributes to develop to navigate the professional world, which helped me a lot since I am very new to this world. We had lunch and then went to watch the screening of a Bollywood movie of about 10 year ago. It was a really good movie, especially for the themes it talked about. Considering that homosexuality was and is still a big stigma in India, the movie was going against the convention and did it brilliantly while teaching acceptance and openness.

During the night we went out to look for gifts and memories from India around the market, and we had a lot of fun bargaining with the locals and becoming friends with them!

## SATURDAY

As our last day, we decided to make the most of it and most of our group went to Elephanta Island. We took a ferry early in the morning and visited this little island with seven temples dedicated to different Hindu gods. The island was packed with moneys, wild life, and little markets. I had a lot of fun walking around and exploring the temples, while at the same time I

had a very opening talk with some of the students in the program. They gave me a lot of tips about what to do with my future, as they had much more experience than me, but they also gave me a lot more confidence about who I am and where I am standing at this point in life. I really was able to enjoy to the fullest this morning!

But the afternoon was just as good. We went to the alumni event and chatted and engaged with the alumni from Westminster, the ATLAS University students, and the WWC members. I realized the the importance of this program and how much it has made me grow in just a mere week. I feel more motivated than ever to work hard and achieve my dreams, but nothing is going to stop me from balancing it with some fun in the meantime!

At night we went to this Indian bar, where we probably had the best time all together. I felt carefree and happy just to be in the moment, surrounded with amazing people and their own uniqueness. It was the best way to end this beautiful program.

Thank you, for giving me this extraordinary opportunity!