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ARAUPEL

Araupel, Quedas do Iguaçu, Paraná (Brazil)

Intro

After graduating in System Technology in March 2014 in the field of Industrial Automation and Control Systems, I was curious about working in a different country and culture to collect unpayable experiences and insights in a big company. All this brought me via IAESTE and ABIPE to Brazil, more precisely to Quedas do Iguaçu (Paraná), where I did an internship for seven months.

Araupel is one of the three biggest wood manufacturer in Brazil. The company's focus lays in reforestation and high value wood products for the mainly European and North American markets.

Life in Quedas do Iguaçu

''I have heard of Quedas do Iguaçu, isn't it there where the beautiful Waterfalls and this huge hydro-electric power plant in Brazil are? '' This was the most asked question when I visited other places in Brazil. Sadly the answer was "No, but it is very close, just two small towns and around 250 km more further east".

Quedas do Iguaçu has more or less 40000 inhabitants and less than 0.5% is able to speak English. There is one real bar and one disco which just opens once a week. To go to the next city, it takes 3 hours by bus which leaves Quedas twice a day. Anyway, I am there for gaining working experiences.

As you can imagine, life there surely is different than here in Switzerland but it is a good, relaxing and simple life. The people are very friendly and always happy to talk to you, even if you don't understand a lot during the first few weeks. A big thing in their culture is having a very cold beer, a huge Churrasco (BBQ) or a delicious Feijoada in the CTG (Traditional Centre of the Gauchos) while dancing to Sertanejo. It is where you get to know the village folks.

Because of the long distances visiting other cities is a hard task. In Brazil, a short bus ride takes approximately 5 hours (arrow, half distance to the coast), everything less is just a cat leap. For this, two examples: Form Quedas to Rio de Janeiro. It takes more than 24 hours just to reach Sao Paulo. There you have to change the bus for the next 12 hours until Rio de Janeiro. Imagine a ride up to the Fortaleza.

For everybody, me included, who was crying because of a long way to University here in Switzerland (more or less one hour), the students from Quedas work from 7 am until 4 pm to take the 5 pm bus to Cascavel where they arrive around 8pm. After just two hours of school they take the bus back home and arrive, if the bus doesn't have any problem, at 1 am back home.

Work

During my internship at Araupel, the company changed a lot. When I arrived, the machines were mainly manually operated which is slow. To increase the productivity they bought new fully automated machines. A side job was the communication and organization between Araupel and the German and Danish companies, basically translation, schooling or revision of the machines.


Beside my side job, I had the opportunity to work on several. The first one was a fully automated watering system for the seedlings in the company's new greenhouse. The only information I received was the area where it has to be installed and the date from when it has to work. The planning, organizations, orderings, drawings, programming and the installation was totally done by myself.

At that time Araupel was building a new plant closer to the coast to safe shipping money and time. In this new plant, I was responsible for the whole electrical installation, which means the planning of the different machines, the power supply, the internet access and the hardware link of the used systems. Even if I haven't had any ideas about this, as I am not an electrician, it was an interesting project where I learned quite a lot.

The last project was the optimization of the productivity of a machine where the company was losing up to 15 minutes of production in just one hour. During this project I worked together with the mechanics in order of developing an autonomous sapling table which gets fully loaded by the product and then searches for a waiting position where it gets unloaded by the logistician.