va 401 PROJECT PROPOSAL

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Project Definition

My project is a international social network for erasmus students that aims to create an environment in which foreign students can know the places all around the world other then their local countries.

Conceptual Description

The main concept of my project is based on video and photography sharing. Every user must have an account to log in and they will have personal space and a profile to share their videos, photos and information about upcoming events in the countries they are staying in temporarily. The main goal of this project is to present the world from the eyes of the foreign students in order to make other foreigners discover, too. This project will provide an opportunity for students to get to know different countries and cultures and also other erasmus students in a short time of period. Because one the most valuable things when you go to erasmus is "time" and it must be used in a best way to get advantage of the city.

Goals and Objectives

This network will create a society which is well connected and users will always be aware of each other. Also it may contribute to tourism because it will be an introductory site for foreigners. This network will adress all nationalities including Chinese, African, Australian, Latin American,etc. So the interface will be designed considering the differences between cultures.

The design of the interface will be simple but in a complex way. There will be categorizations according to the kinds and features of the videos. Students can find the videos they want under the buttons of these categorizations. For example, if they are looking for an elegant restaurant, a list of videos or photos

which include classy restaurants will appear when they press the "elegant" button or if they are searching for a casual café to drink something, they can find it under the "casual" button. The videos and photos must include informations because like i said before the aim of this project is to give information to other erasmus students through the videos and photos they take. Because sometimes erasmus students discover the city too late that they turn back to their home countries before they are able to travel and explore the country. What i want for my project is to avoid this delay and give them an opportunity of finding out all the hidden beauties and benefit their time abroad. The videos that foreign students take will involve touristic or local places where they go, enjoy and want to recommend to others. They will tell how to go and where to see, from what they enjoyed the most, etc. These places can be mosques, cafes, shops or even gardens. Mainly the places they discover and want other people to discover, too. The videos can be funny, serious, interesting or even dramatic. However they wanted it to be. Also they can share photos that they took as a memory. They will share their videos and photos on their profile, but there will also be a home page of updated videos and photos and categorizations of these videos and photos. First there will be a classification of the places: Museums, Cafés, Restaurants, Historical Places and Bars. Then there will be a tagging system, the videos and photos will contain tags like 'touristic', 'casual', 'elegant', 'economic' and 'popular'. A video can have two tags since a restaurant can be both elegant and popular or a café can be both casual and economic. Also they can connect with each other by sending a message and ask questions about their videos, photos or any other personal things. It is important that the people, who take videos, make something interesting so that also the other students want to take videos of the city they live in temporary. By this means it will create an interactive environment between foreign students all around the world.

Target Audience/User

My target audience will be erasmus students all around the world. Also former foreign students, who went to exchange, can join this network and share their videos and photos, too. This site will be open to all of the foreign students from all nationalities who are using web 2.0 sites.

Background Information

I chose this subject because i spent my last 5 months in Italy as an erasmus student and i know how it feels to be stranger. Sometimes it can be challenging to live in a city which you don't know at all. Discovering the city and finding new friends are not very easy as it seems. Especially in schools where everybody has their own friend groups, it can be hard to find new friends. Sometimes they do not bother to talk to you because speaking in English can be exhausting for them. If there are not many foreign students in school, it can be difficult to socialize with new people in a short time period. Also it is the same thing for the city. Even if you go to a small city, you need sometime to discover local places. Sometimes you may need a guide to show you the city, gives you advises about where to see.

For most of the students, the Erasmus Programme is the first time of their life, living alone and studying abroad. The Programme is not only about studying and learning but also enjoying your time while meeting different people with different nationalities. One of the most popular thing about erasmus is "Erasmus parties" which is known as a multilingual events in Europe. Certainly going to Erasmus is a great opportunity because students can study abroad without paying too much money. Because in normal conditions, studying in Europe or United States can be very expensive. So it is logical for a person who wants to

study abroad to attend an Erasmus Programme. It can be seen as an advantage to go on Erasmus because some academician agrees that former Erasmus students can create a powerful force in developing the pan-European identity. According to the political scientist Stefan Wolff, between 15 and 25 years, in Europe, there will be leaders with different socialization notions from today, referring to the 'Erasmus generation'.

Of course what students need for going Erasmus is some encourangement and information about the school, the city and the culture. These things can enhance the attractiveness of education and training programmes and increase the popularity of going exchange. Also language can sometimes be an obstacle for students to come to the countries like Turkey since most of the foreigners should not have to speak Turkish or any other native languages. So they have a concern about finding someone to communicate and supplying their needs. Even when asking for an address or buying a metro ticket, finding a common language is an essential. Since we are living in a globalised world, students need international and intercultural knowledge in order to prepare themselves for the global labour market. So it is very important that erasmus students get advantage of what they learn linguistically, culturally and educationally from their experience of studying academically in another country. On the other hand, the other important thing is what they gain socially during their time abroad. They need some references to show them how they can benefit from their free time. This web 2.0 site can be the perfect referance to help them how to enjoy their limited time period.

When i was thinking about my project, i was inspired by the works of International Exchange Erasmus Student Network, generally known as ESN. It is an organization which supports student exchange all around the world. It offers a volunteer service to 150.000 students and it gives you necessary informations about the before and after process and helps you during the whole study abroad period. ESN

assists in giving information about the academic aspects of studying abroad and also about practical issues such as accommodation, administration, costs of living, local culture, etc. The main goal of ESN sections is to develop the social integration of exchange students and to represent their needs and rights. There are more than 300 ESN sections all around Europe which organise a lot of activities for exchange students to integrate them in local community and support them. As an example, they are organizing orientations and welcome parties, language exchange projects, trips and events. If students face any difficulties, injustice or unfairness by their home or host university, they can contact their ESN section that will protect their rights and needs against the involved institution. Also there is a survey in which former erasmus students share their experiences. Students, who turned back to their home countries from Erasmus, can sometimes have difficulties adapting their normal life. ESN is also offering them a support to continue living the exciting international experience. ESN tries to create an education environment that is more mobile and responsive by supporting and improving the student exchange from different levels, and obtaining an intercultural experience also to those students, who cannot attend the Erasmus programme, thanks to the programme which is called "internationalisation at home".

The other inspiration for me was a web 2.0 website called Viva Erasmus which is created by group of former erasmus students to help future erasmus students in their Erasmus period. It helps students finding accomadation to provide a mobile phone, but the main priority is to make students enjoy their time. Viva Erasmus is offering students advices about Erasmus life in a foreign country. It is a website that is being updated by former Erasmus students. It also has a events section which informs students about what is going on. The website also calls former students to join the site in order to give future students information by transfering their experiences. It has different sections like event, travel, blog, Erasmus Wiki.

For example, from the travel section, students can book their flights and hotels. In the blog section, there are updated news about Erasmus and exchange students. The Erasmus Wiki part is for the advices that former students have to fill. Mainly, this website is similar to what i want to do for my project.

Another erasmus project which i was inspired was a website called "Erasmusu". Like the others, it also helps students find somewhere to stay and connect with other Erasmus students and exchange students. It gives informations about cities and universities in Europe. It has the forum part that users share their ideas and experiences. It has the "cities" section where there former student's comments about their experiences according to the city. So you do not have to read all of the comments to find the city you are looking for. The website is mainly focused on finding accomodation and giving advices from ex-erasmus students. There is a photo gallery section and students are sharing their memorial pictures. The photos are separated according to the universities. There are weather and map parts, they show you the temperature and the map of the countries in Europe. Erasmusu has also blog part which shows the news feed of latest Erasmus news. I found this website very inspiring and successful and it has a lot of users which means that it has reached it's aim. It is good that there are websites which are particularly taking care with erasmus students. The challenge in my project is that there are many websites about helping to facilitate erasmus life, so mine should be a little different from them to come forward. I want to do something more than a website. I desire to create a society of foreign students who can serve each other as guides by giving information about their countries through the videos and photos they upload and by the events they share.

Detailed Project Description

My project will carry the features of introducer to present the world to foreign students by the videos and photos which are taken by foreign students as well. So in this project, the main concept is divided in three parts:

-video sharing (it must have introductory part as well as entertaining parts)
-photography sharing (it can be pictures of students themselves which they took as a memory picture or it can be city pictures)
-event sharing (informing about upcoming exhibitions, parties or festivals)

-These three things will be posted on student's personal profiles but also there will be a homepage which will show the updated videos, photos, news,etc.
-There will be classifications of the places which are divided in 5 parts: Museums, Historical Places, Cafés, Restaurants and Bars. After they press the video button, they will see these 5 options of locations. When they choose one of them, there will be another categorization of kinds.
-Also these are divided in 5 parts: Economic, Touristic, Popular, Elegant and Casual. So that if someone is looking for a popular café or an elegant restaurant, he can find the video options which is directed by these tags.

Scope of The Project

This web 2.0 site will be:
-create an interactive society between erasmus students
-introductory and informative
-help students discover the different countries and

cultures
-increase the number of exchange students

will not:
-provide students accomodation or any services
-organize trips or parties
-concern about students's complains
-solve any educational problems

Required Know-How and Resources

Softwares are needed for this project:

-Adobe Dreamweaver (for making html webpage)
-Database MySQL (to enable people to create an account)

-PHP: Hypertext Preprocessor (to enable people to upload videos and photos)

Resources are needed for this project:

-Must create an entrance video in order to orient

Difficulties and Risks

-Since i do not have a lot of experience about creating a website, the most difficult part of this project will be creating database and writing html codes. -

-The other difficulty will be announcing this website all around the world without any advertisement and also there are lot of risks if this project is really going to create a link between Erasmus students . Because they can feel unmotivated about this video taking process or they can feel unsafe about sharing their videos or photos online.

-Since there are lots of Erasmus networks around, there is a possibility of not taking the expected attention. Because people are generally not paying to much attention on the "about us" part of the website and they think all the networks have the same concept.

Phases of The Project

-Making necessary researches, learning softwares and Adobe Dreamweaver.

-Preparing pert chart, gantt chart and flow chart.
-Buying a domain name.
-A database and Php must be created (Database and interface design).

-The overall design must be done to start functioning (Logo design, site map decision, visaul language-deciding background color,font, font size and color, etc).

-Must connect with the Erasmus students.

-Videos and photos from former or present Erasmus students must be uploaded on the website to start this interactive project.

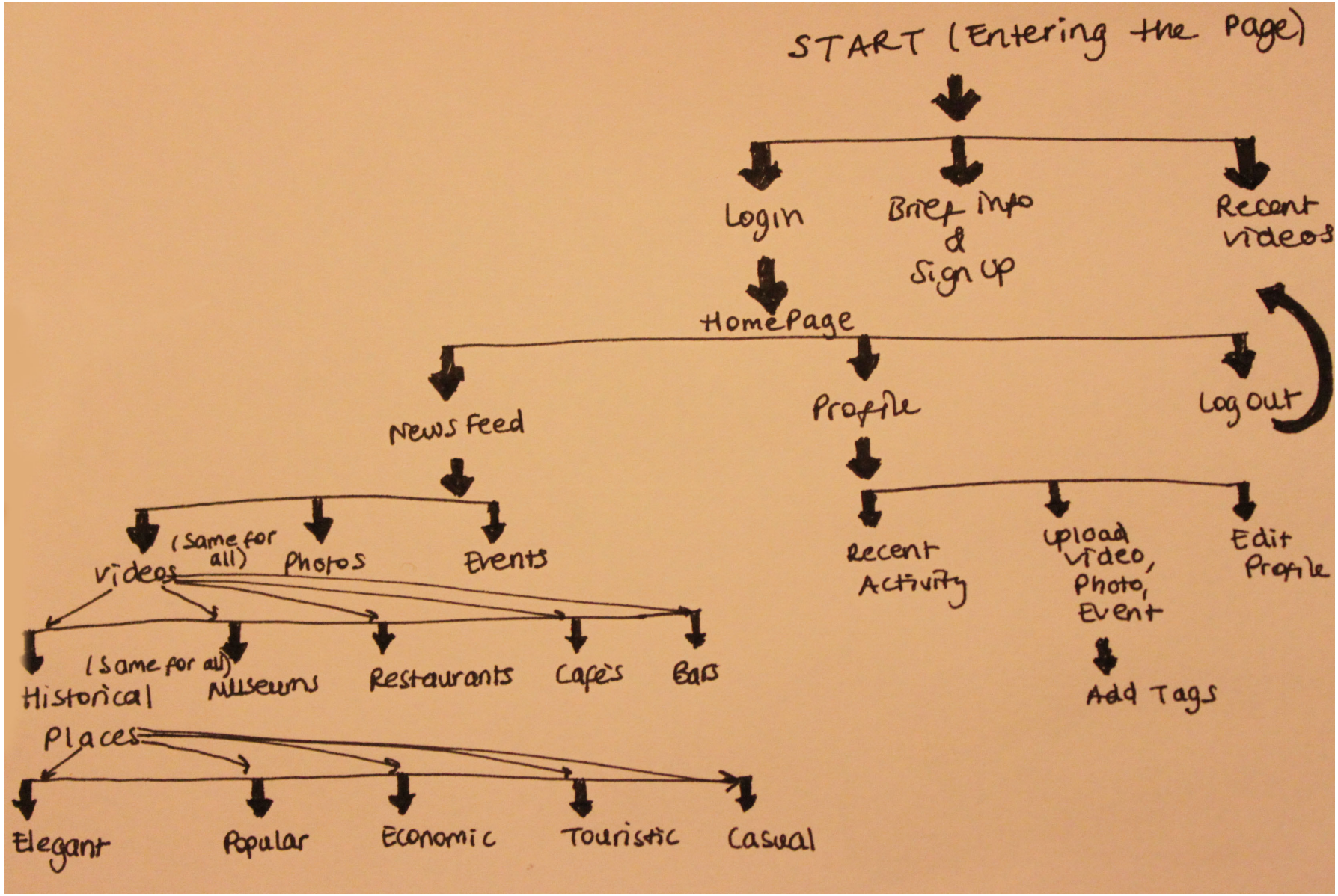
Criteria of Success

-If this project can really help the Erasmus students get to know different countries better and spend their time discovering the countries and cultures through visual information they collect from the website.

-If this site create a well-connected relationship between students who met thanks to this network.

-If this website will be internationallay popular and can reach many users.

-If this project can reach it's aim, there will be a group of foreign students interact with each other from all around the world. Thus this network will create an interactive group of people from different nationalities.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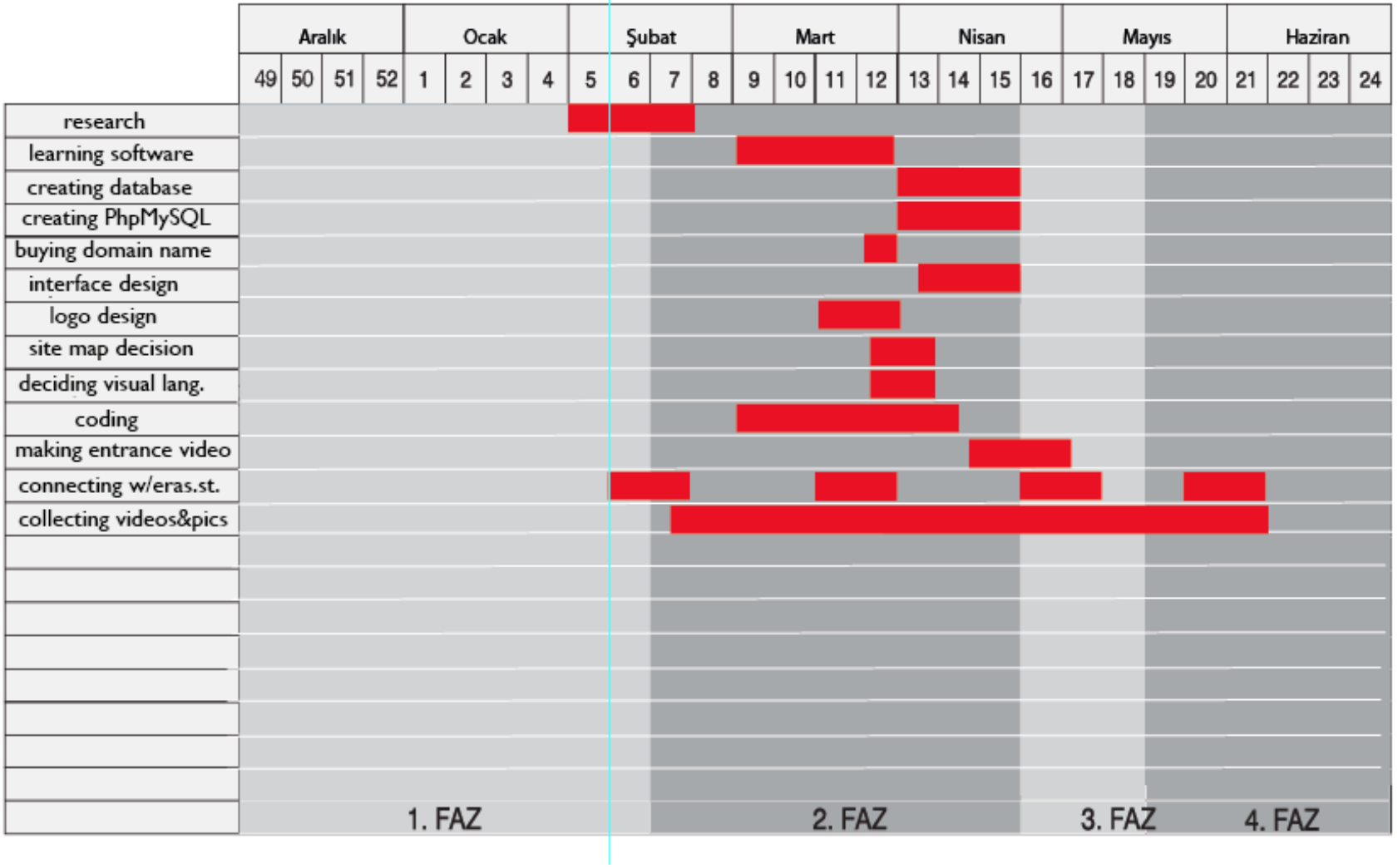
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