Let’s Sail!

Teaching in the field with students of the Master in Yacht Design 13th edition

Every year there are several external training experiences in the Master in Yacht Design promoted by the POLI.design Consortium of the Milan Polytechnic. Besides visits to studios and leading boatyards, a teambuilding activity has been re-proposed in an extended form combining the traditional dynamics of empowerment with a reflection on the technical topics dealt with in the classroom. Thanks to the experience and support of the Skiffsailing centre in Dongo (CO), two days of basic sail training were organised, with theory lessons on land and practical tests on a small fleet of six metre boats, which meant that teaching objectives could be satisfied and at the same time students could enjoy the suggestive surrounding countryside. In terms of content, teaching in the field was the occasion for trying out what the participants learn to design during the nine months of the Master course in teaching and design activities and stages. The chance to compare theoretical lessons of naval architecture with real life on board made it possible to explore in a direct and immediate way the relationship between ergonomics and stability. Thanks to outings on the water it was possible to see first-hand the principles of fluid dynamics, the components of the forces acting on the sailplan and appendages and the working of the individual manoeuvres required for handling the boat.

A multidisciplinary challenge
The two days of teambuilding ended with a multidisciplinary challenge at galley and helm: the COOKING-REGATTA. The five teams, made up of students of different nationalities, were first involved in a cooking challenge, preparing puddings typical of the nations represented (Spain, Brazil, Turkey, Russia and Germany), then in a series of races between the marks in the waters off the sailing club. It was a tough challenge for the participants, the teaching staff involved and the staff of Skiffsailing to judge the dishes created for their originality and excellent presentation. On the water the crews showed great growth in teamwork, with an increasingly compact fleet, fast off the marks and good at tactics and assessment of the course. Racing with colleagues from the course made it possible to put into practice the mechanisms of building and managing a team and acquire the tools needed to interpret and understand the working dynamics of a team. Methods of interaction to face concrete problems and reach a common objective were thus put into practice; it was indispensable to structure a rapid and clear communication network and work on the integration of the various resources and competences to attain the objectives of increasing complexity.

Finally, it was possible to experience the individual competences that make leaders and valid team builders; on board, as in the kitchen, these dynamics become immediate and easier to understand, because roles have to be defined and problems solved in a short time.