

Destination: Alicante, Spain



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Period of exchange: 4th semester at KEA/ spring semester (22.01.-22.06.17)

Intro:

I chose Spain because this was the best opportunity after Italy for me, and as I found out later the perfect for me. Alicante gave me exactly what I needed to get from my exchange. In the beginning I was insisting for Milan because you know what people say for the Italian Architecture... however Spain is not any less behind! Cities in Spain have incredible architecture. I have been living and working in Bulgaria, Greece, Sweden and Denmark before I move in Spain and I can tell you – Spain has so much to offer! I thought I won't be challenged or surprised in such extend but I was. Spain has to show you one new Latino- Mediterranean world which you won't see anywhere else in the world. So many Latinos, Italians, French and no one speaks English ☺ this is incredible opportunity to learn Spanish. Also teachers who teach in English will force you to learn Spanish if you want to understand fully...

My decision to go abroad was really impulsive – one day decision literally, and Sophia made things happening so fast and smooth that I had no time to change it. I even thought about this when I came in Alicante – was it really good idea (when I got the language barrier) Fare enough this is part of the experience and as the saying goes: you never learn when you are in comfort zone. Copenhagen is great city but the need to travel and explore more pushed me to decide to apply the same day I found out that 4th semester is open for 1st year – so I was actually the only one from my class who was going on exchange.

Tip: if you wonder about the destination listen Sophia. She knows.

Mihaela Hristova

16.07.2017

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1. University experience – subjects, grading system and schedule

Schedule:

HOUR	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
9:00 – 13:00	Drawing 2			Arch. Analysis		Running	Sleeping
10:30 –14:30		Projects 5			Projects 5	Homework	Eating
10:30 – 12:30			Drawing 3			Beach	Traveling
13:00 - 15:00			Drawing 3			Volleyball	Cleaning
16:00 -18:00	Spanish a1		Spanish a1			Slacklining	Cooking

Subjects:

Drawing 2: with Jose Carrasco / 6 credits /easy subject

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B4is-wQfJMhpM2pHWGd5SXNRUW8>

Drawing 3: Justo Gutiérrez/6 credits/ challenging subject

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B-K93R5zJDqoUF9DS29IX0tHTzQ>

Architectural analysis: (hand drawing) Carlos Luis / 6 credits/ challenging subject <http://mihaelahristova.blogspot.dk/>

Architectural projects 5: Javier Sanchez / 6 credits/ challenging subject

Spanish course: level A1 / 6 credits/ easy subject

...I really like drawing, ok?

Don't expect to have the same subjects you chose in advance to study, before you get to the UA and fix your schedule there. The thing is that there are different subjects in each semester and even though I wanted some subjects it happened to have different. To match everything you want and have it in English at the same time is not that easy thing to do. Usually for one year you get interesting and not so interesting subjects as mandatory but because we are Erasmus we get the opportunity to make our own programs and schedule -which means that we can choose subjects from different years and choose the amount of credits we want to have. Well sounds good but if you get all the interesting subjects you want, you might

end up with Spanish teaching and weird timing. There are classes from 8:30 in the morning until 21:00 and up to 5 groups for each subject.

Grading system:

Percent based from 1 to 10 (=100%) resp. you need at least 5 to pass. 6 is good 7 very good / notable, 8 is excellent, and 9 and 10 almost none gets as far as I understood from the locals unless the teacher is Joaquin (project 7)☺

Spanish course: level A1 / 6 credits/ easy subject

Ok, you get free professional classes over there any level you want, my advice is to make the essentials in application like Duo lingo and sign for A2 level because you will be forced to learn them anyways, unless you don't hang only with English-speaking internationals.

A2 could be great for those who actually want to use the language not just repeating the lyrics after Manu Chao ;). But then it will be more time consuming I guess.

Drawing 2: with Jose Carrasco / 6 credits /easy subject

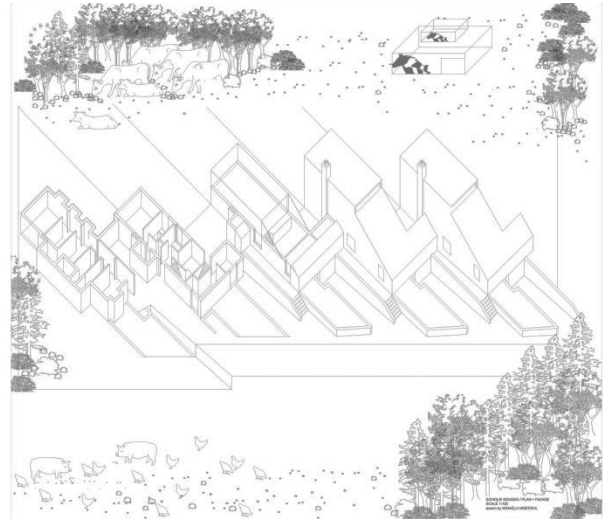
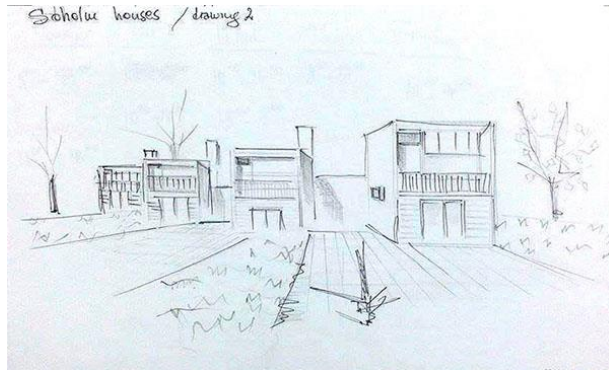
Link to drive where everyone had to upload:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B4is-wQfJMhpM2pHWGd5SXNRUW8>

This is introduction to AutoCAD and Photoshop. Individual subject, grade is based on 3 assignments and exam as following 20% of the grade from assignment 1, 60% of assignment 2 and 3 and rest 20% are from the exam. This was the easiest subject therefore I underestimated it a bit and I end up with low grade. Some students need good grades to get scholarships and this is the perfect subject for this.

This subject is about drawing so we got house and had to make plan view for assignment 1, military axonometric for assignment 2 and put some context to the military drawing for assignment 3. The exam was 4 hours – to draw military axonometric for a building. I got Arne Jacobsen's house. This

was the most relaxed subject – no mandatory presence needed, you can work on your assignment at class and it is relatively easy also you get some presentable skills which you can use after.



Some of my works for this subject

Drawing 3: Justo Gutiérrez/6 credits/ challenging subject

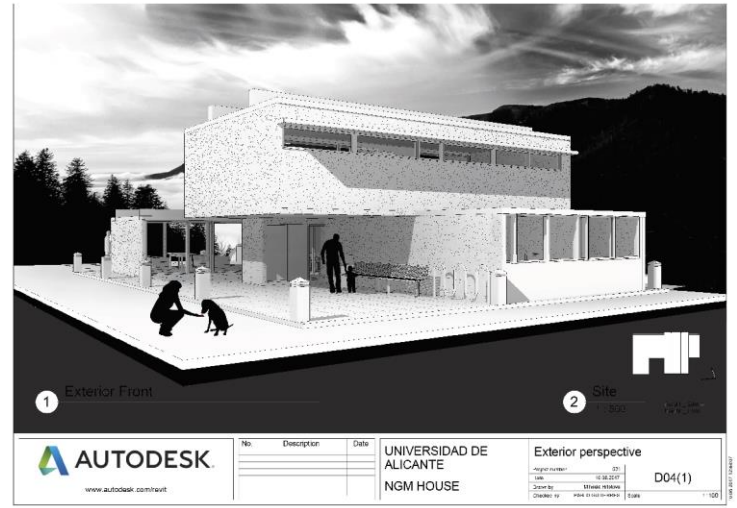
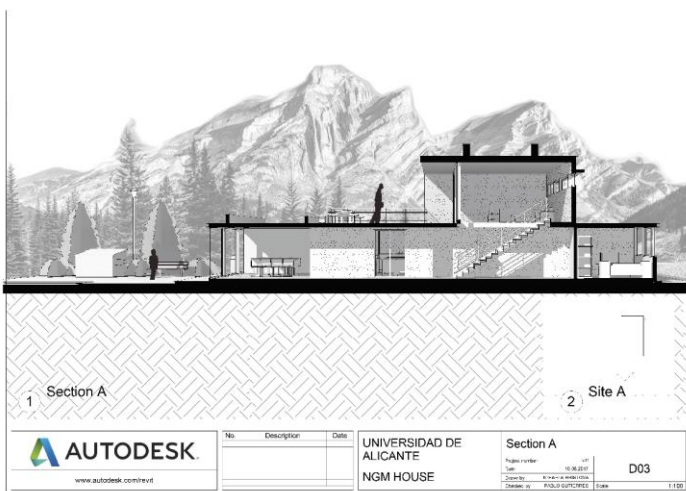
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This is the next step after drawing 3, we got more complicated assignments to do at AutoCAD and Photoshop and we also got introduced to Rhinoceros. I thought I will fail this subject because everything was happening super-fast at classes and if you miss one lesson or half of the class it's challenging to get back on track.

Anyways the teacher was very good – we could upload multiple times our exercises and improve until we get the final grades even though there were specific deadlines for everything. At the end grade is made from deliveries as following: assignments 1 2 3 4 in AutoCAD and Rhinoceros and independently making a house in AutoCAD with multiple drawings to present: military axonometric, interior and exterior views, section with vanishing point, exploded axonometric and renders.

For me this project was useful in a way that I improved my presentable skills once again and learned what are the steps are if you don't want to miss anything when you want to communicate your project with the clients. My

final grade is 6.2 as I said after multiple submissions and regularly coming to classes. This teacher always said stuff like "Ow very nice, great drawing – maybe I will give you 5" or "Now draw straight line more or less"



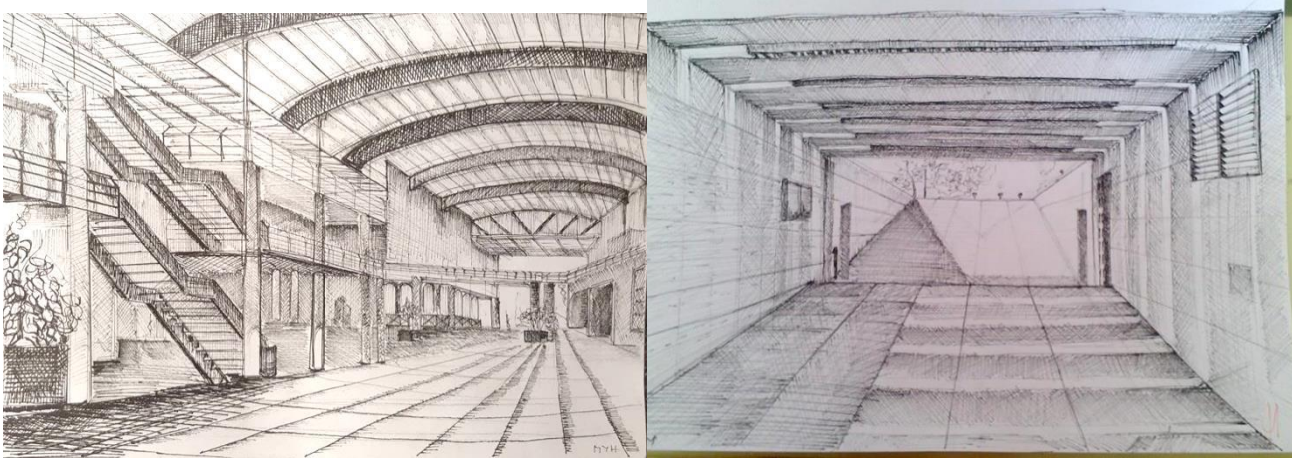
Some of my works for this subject

Architectural analysis: Carlos Luis / 6 credits/ challenging subject

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Some of my works for this subject



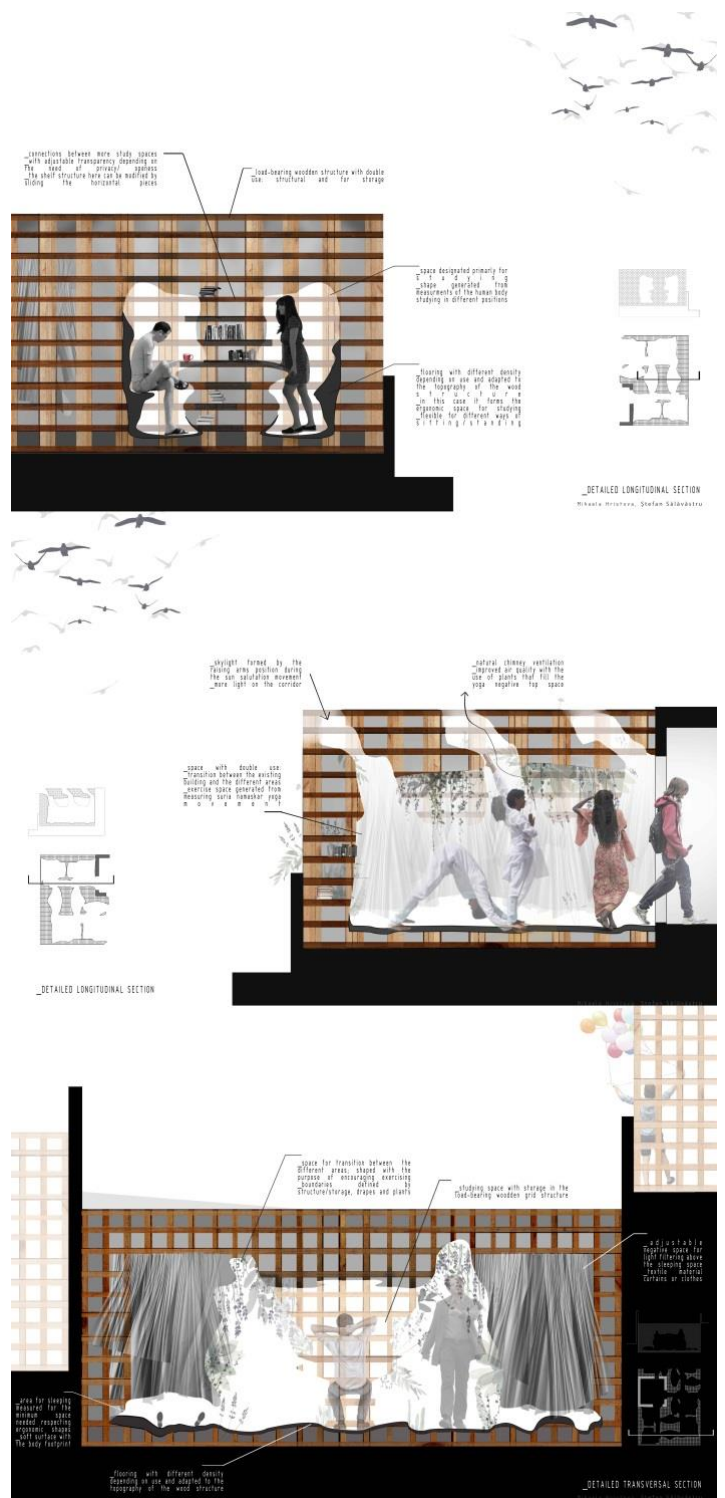
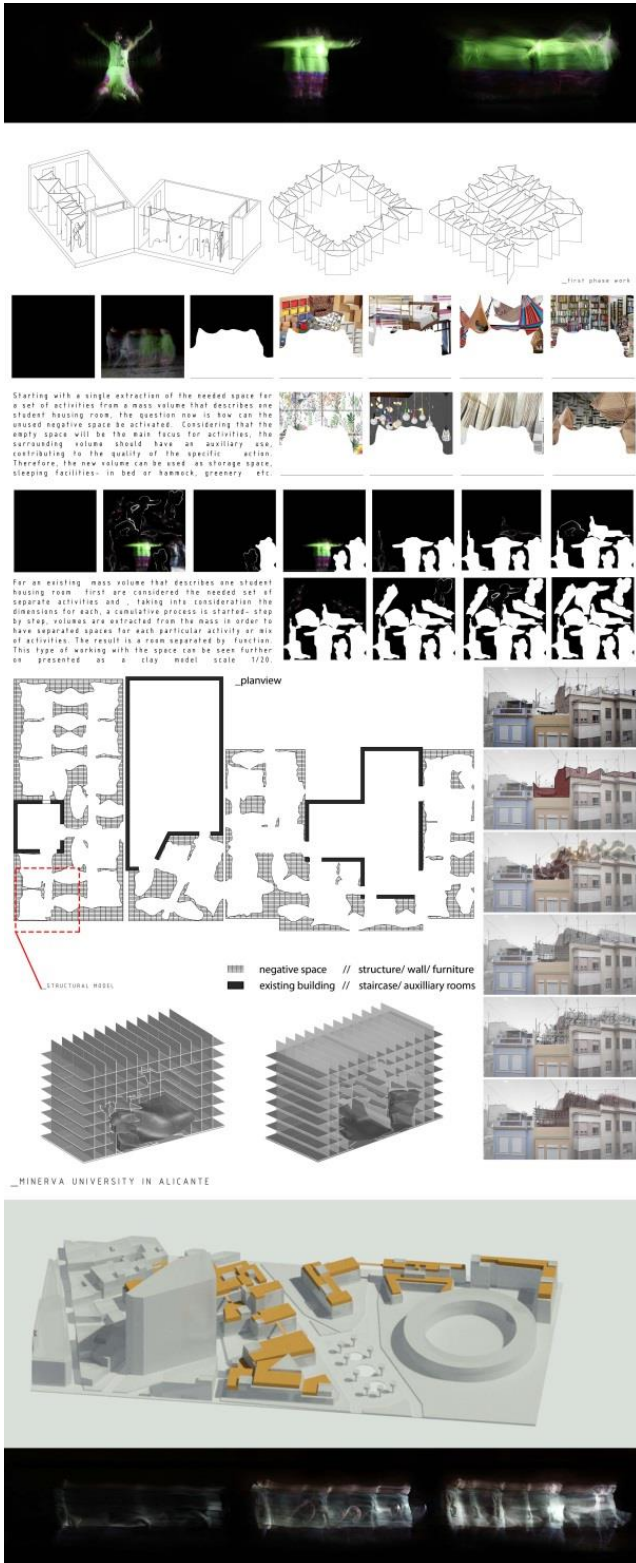
Some of my works for this subject

I got the subject in Spanish but he is fluent in English himself and always spoke in English to us when we asked him in English. This is a hand drawing subject with pencil mainly, but we also had to make colorful compositions. Every class we just got to the room for little lecturing and rest we spend outside to draw the campus buildings. This is the most time consuming subject – I haven't been so productive in a long time. We got at least 6 hours of homework every week. Presence is mandatory and he checks, even so I don't know how this reflects on the final grade. You can check out the blog we made at the end with all 35 works during the semester in the link above. My final grade was 7.2 and I really enjoyed the subject.

Architectural projects 5: Javier Sanchez / 6 credits/ challenging subject

Javier Sanchez is also international coordinator for architecture in University of Alicante. He won't let you be lazy for sure but he will organize a trip for you in Spain. He knows how to deal with exchange students. His wife is Islandic and often came to our classes too. And at least during my studies he was every week in different country or city for lecturing or work. When he couldn't come to our class we had online skype tutoring with him. Every week we had to present addition to our project and constantly developing it.

The project itself is opportunity and freedom to do whatever you want to do with architecture – or everything which you can't do at KEA so it is worth it for the new experience. There are projects each semester from 1 to 7.





The exam day is really different than what we have at Kea. Instead of worried students and serious faces everywhere, in Alicante exam day is a celebration day. Our Campus building was turned into a huge gallery. Every room was different and in the parking lot there were installations 1:1. We were supposed to spend the whole day looking at the projects and after that party with the teachers. In the exam there were no digital materials included. Everything was printed and making a model was mandatory. The picture below is our class from Architectural Projects 5 with Javier's wife.



2 Social experiences – free time and network



Murcia



Barcelona



Valencia – Las Fallas

Free time: There is no free time unless you don't take it.

Many things to be done, especially regarding the time you have to spend at the University and also on all of your assignments + sleeping + traveling + party + networking. It is just not enough for everything. I had to go at the university every day and I had to prioritize in my free time. I like sports so I was spending my time on this mostly while many liked to party all night. Alicante is popular party destination and there are so many tourists who come because of the festivals and the party life. So there are many things to be done. In the beginning I signed for some hiking tours with the sport center from the University. It is worth to sign there as well you get to use gym, pool and more for the entire semester just for 44euros. The beach lines allows you to run up to 30 km, there are many rocks around for those who like climbing and in the evening beach is full of volleyball players and slackliners.

Party starts after midnight and finishes around 7:00...or 10:00 a.m. It is true what they say that it is literally on the streets. Many street performers and also many people spend time outside the clubs for smoke and talks so streets are full all the time. Spain is opposite Denmark – everything is happening outside and people don't hesitate to approach you with or without reason. The wine is excellent and really cheap: for 3 or 4eu you can have bottle of good wine which here is minimum 100dkk.

Traveling is another big part of the exchange experience. If you have no ideas what to do or where to go just get closer to some Latino or Asian friends and they will show you. My Brazilian roommates literally travelled not only Spain but the whole Europe. My recommendation is to do it as much as possible, use every opportunity. There are many institutions who organize the exchange students and giving constant spam of the coming trips. I prefer little groups and independent transportation for quality experience (less time loss) but in the beginning is normal that you don't have network and sign for those. I think they are great for closer destinations and after that just get bla bla car and travel further on your own. There are also many exchange students who are staying entire year and they also have good advices.

Tip: Whatever you are up to make, sure that you also take the initiative about it. None will come to you and make you do things.

3 Practical experience – city, housing, eating, costs



My balcony's view

City:

Live in the center, not San Vicente. Everyone is there and everything is happening there. The beach is there. The party is there. People are there. There is not night transportation from San Vicente to Alicante, last but is at 10 and taxi is 10 euros for direction. University is only 25 min with bus (30trips card cost 28 eu). I don't think there is big difference with the prices.

Housing:

My host's WhatsApp is +34 670 20 90 63 Esperanza Ivorra Dias, text her. I got the contact from Elizabeth and Kristina who were there the previous semester and I had small (really small) room in big flat (5 people) for 150 euros. She also has three other apartments – 3 rooms each and the prices there are 200 per room (if I had to change something probably would be to live with less people in apartment). My monthly bills were around 35 – 55 euros (in Spain bills are separated from the rent) depending on the use of water and electricity. The location was great (Plaza de Torroz) and I recommend the place.

Make sure you check what you are paying for every month, don't just believe to your host when tells you what you have to pay – they have papers with bills for this purpose. In overall there are many possibilities to find a place, but also hosts don't speak good English at all. However many also got hostels or Airbnb and just walked around to find places. I post her contact if you want to have something to start from in the beginning. Otherwise check out www.easypiso.es but when you send mails don't expects English respond, use translator ☺

Tip: you will spend much more time outside your flat because the weather is just great. Traveling, beach, university, party ...you won't even have time to sleep. My room was real tiny but at the end it wasn't big deal.

Eating:

Delicious food, tasty fruits and vegetables and good wine. Prices are okay (depending what you are comparing with) Comparing to Rumania, Germany, UK, Bulgaria is similar price, even expensive, Comparing to Sweden, Denmark, France, Netherlands it is cheap. Eating out it approximately 10 euros. Don't miss 100 Montaditos – should go there first, one of my favorite places, La tavla – for tapas, Bodhygreen (try 'hippie burger' mmm). There is variety of food places. I preferred to make my own food in general because the markets have really nice products. And in the old city there is the best Italian ice cream ever. There are tons of bars and restaurants for tourists. If you want something alternative check out Refugio bar – there make drunk and draw sessions, language tandems, Freaks bar organizes language exchanges and also drawing session with models.

Conclusion

I will finish with description of my first week in Alicante. After the orientation (it is actually useful so try not to miss it) we got straight into series of international workshops. The main responsible is Javier and Joaquin. They had collaboration with students from Nicosia (Greek fellas) and we spent some time with them. First class we were asked to group with them and come on the beach to present out idea, or more specifically to perform the Erasmus house we are going to build without saying a single word or using digital materials. Indeed having classes on the beach in January feels so good! Later on we kept the idea for further development of the main assignment for the semester.

Another unusual thing was that at some point we had to build installations 1:1 (yeah, materials might be costly and we pay for them) in one of the group members room in a ways that he keep it until the rest of the staying...so one day the whole class was going from house to house around the city to visit the room and see presentation of it.

Two more workshops with the Goat guy (more inspirational than useful) and Steinunn from Iceland who taught us to knit with hands really big things. You can check it in the pictures bellow and also maybe see it when you go to the uni if they are still there. Don't hesitate to get involved into workshops because you also meet new people there as well as learning stuff.

Final words: these 5 months felt like 5 days, don't hesitate and go and once you get there take the most out of it – travel and talk to people ☺



- 1 The big net we made with Steinun;
- 2 Knitting process;
- 3 Joaquin chilling in one of the nets;
- 4 Picture together
- 5 San Juan beach (use tram to get there)