

Alicante Exchange 2017

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Host school: University of Alicante

Host coordinator: Javier Sanchez

Period of study: September to January 2017/2018



List of contents

- Introduction
- Course descriptions
- Experiences at the host university
- Social and cultural experiences
- Practical experiences
- Conclusion

Introduction

I had serious doubts about going on exchange. I was not sure, that I had the personality to do it, but I had a feeling, that if I didn't do it, I would regret not going.

So I went back and forth for a while, but what made my decision in the end, was the opportunity to "play around" with some subjects abroad. I wanted to try some more artistic and more architectural subjects, and the university of Alicante offered me that.

So I applied to go abroad in my third semester, which I with help and guidance, had decided was the best semester to "miss" back home. KEA's counselor Sophia Vejlgard helped and guided me through the application process, and suddenly I was on my way.



Santa Barbara Castle in Alicante city

My subjects

The process of choosing your subjects is super confusing, luckily you can get help at the university's mobility office. It took me about two weeks to get all my classes in order. Unfortunately the university of Alicante didn't offer many of the creative subjects I wanted to take. Either they were not offered in English or not on the winter-semester.

Here is a list of the subjects I ended up taking:

Architecture design Studio 4 (6 ECTS)

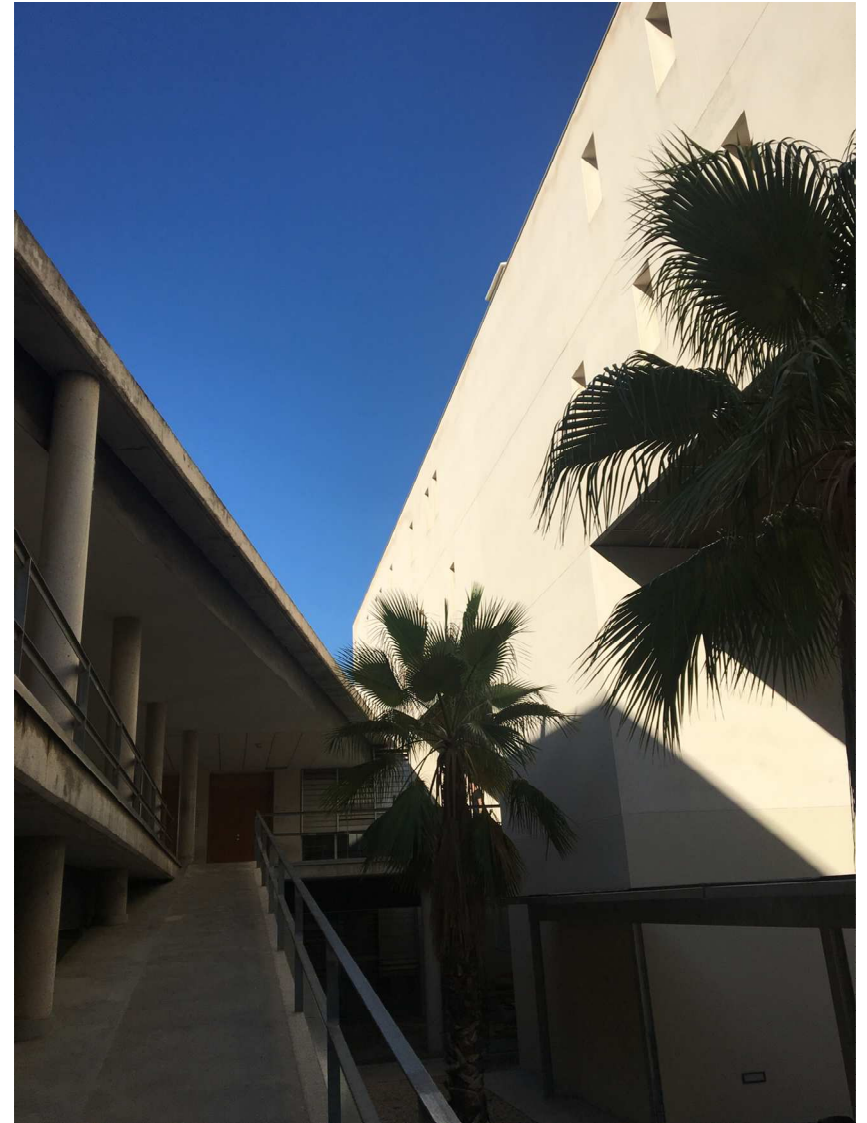
Basic Building Systems (6 ECTS)

Building Services 1 (6 ECTS)

Singular Building Systems (6 ECTS)

Urban Planning 1 (6 ECTS)

Spanish (6 ECTS – but KEA don't allow you to use these points)



Description of courses:

Architecture design Studio 4 (6 ECTS)

This course was the most promising for me, and the one that disappointed me the most. I choose this class because it had three workshops, and it seemed like a very creative subject. It turned out to be really stressful, confusing and uncomfortable. The teacher, Javier, which was also my coordinator, were absolutely rude, and very mean to many of the students. He took pleasure in humiliating us and didn't care if he hurt anybody. He got very personal with some of the students, and I personally found him and his subject simply awful. I do not recommend this subject.

Basic Building Systems (6 ECTS)

This class is very similar to what we do in KEA. During the semester we taught about Spanish construction solutions and rules of their building code. It has been very interesting to see the different way they build in southern Spain. They build in ways that would never get approved back home in Denmark. This subject had a lot of work and assignments. But because this is what we study at KEA, I didn't find the work too hard, you just have to study the solutions and know them by heart for the exam, which consists of 4 hours drawing by hand.

Building Services 1 (6 ECTS)

This subject didn't even start until late October, and I think we had around 4 classes in total. The class is similar to the subject installations we have at KEA, except that you don't get lectures, you just get to present about your country's building code and how we do plumbing with hot and cold water. It's a simple and easy subject, but I didn't learn anything.



Language Center on campus

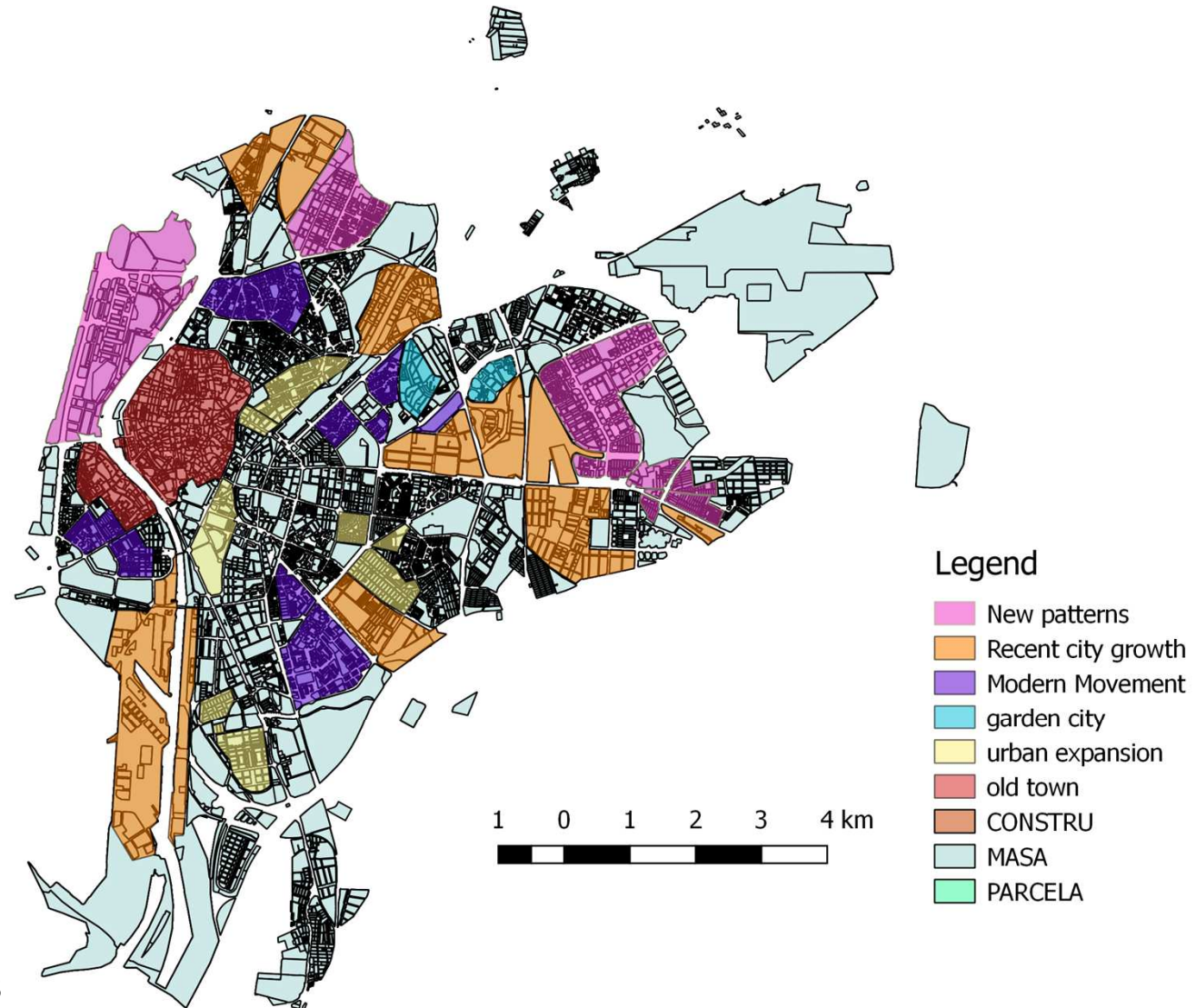
Description of courses:

Singular Building Systems (6 ECTS)

I really liked this subject and this teacher. Singular building systems was about prefabricated elements. We did a project where we had to put new extensions of prefabricated modules, to old ruins in and around Alicante. It had to be a dry-concept building (no concrete) and it had to fit into a grid. This project was difficult and very interesting. I was challenged and worked hard, but I really learned something.

Urban Planning 1 (6 ECTS)

This subject was awesome. I learned so much about urban patterns and history of cities. The course has four deliverables during the semester, that you have to present and upload, but as long as you follow the lectures, it's manageable. I really liked the teacher of this course, and found it very well structured.



Example of work from Urban Planning 1

Experiences at the host university



Library at the University

My personal opinion of the university of Alicante is, that it is very unstructured. All the teachers are late to classes, every deadline can get postponed, nothing is clear and consistent and everything is slow. It's the Spanish way of living, with the "mañana" attitude. That said, it's also something you can learn from. We do tend to be very stressed in the North, so I guess it is an opportunity to try another way of living. I must admit, as a Dane, that I found it stressful that everything was too unstructured.

As I stated in my description of courses, I cannot recommend Javier or his course, Architectural design Studio. His teaching methods were not professional at all.

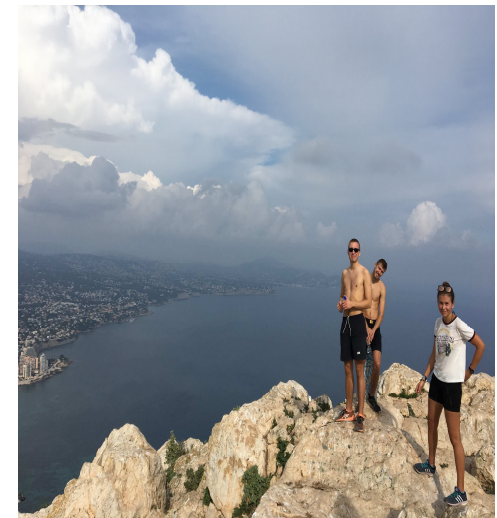
I do however, recommend Dani Sirvent who teaches Singular Building Systems, or Almudena Nolasco who teaches Urban Planning. Both teachers managed their subjects very structured and I learned a lot from them. I also feel like I can use both the knowledge from Urban planning, but also Basic building and Singular buildings systems. This knowledge will be useful.

Social and cultural experiences

There is plenty of opportunity to be social in Alicante or to experience cultural things. I went on some ESN-trips, which the school offers, where I met some lovely people and had some great experiences. After a while, you go to the same classes every week, and you get to know people that way.

Alicante is known to be an Erasmus-student city, and it is. If you like to party, there is plenty of that all weekend. I didn't go out much, but there is also rich opportunity to go out and listen to jazz or Cuban nights at wine bars. There is something for everybody. The city itself is small, so I enjoyed going on trips in the weekends, before school got too busy. It's easy to get around by either renting a car for a day, public transport or blabla car.

It has not been difficult to find something to do in Alicante. You must remember, that the city is full of young people like yourself, that also is here on their own.



Trips to Guadalest, Huelva, El Rocio and Calpe

Practical experiences

Finding an place to live

Obviously, the first question that come to mind, when you get the acceptance from the university is: "Where am I going to live?"

I reached out the another student from KEA, who was currently in Alicante. She gave me the contact information's to her landlord, and through her I booked a room in Alicante.

When I arrived, I had already been in contact with the landlord, and she met me at the apartment and explained the basics. That was really nice, being good prepared. Others from my class did not find anything, and when they got here, they were stressed out. But before school started, everyone had found a place to stay. There are LOTS of apartments for rent in Alicante, so no worries! I ended up, with moving out of my room, because I didn't like my roommates. They were unhygienic and noisy and I didn't want to stay. So I went on a Spanish webpage and quickly found a room that I stayed in the rest of the semester.

First place I lived was 15 minutes from the beach, around Plaza de los Toros. The landlord has several apartments, be aware though, she want's to earn money, so remember to ask for bills when she asks for money!.. But her rooms are a bit cheaper than some others. I paid 150 Euro for a very small room in an apartment with 4 other students and the bills came on top of that.

Contact information:

Esperaza Diaz

+34 670 20 90 63

Secondly, I found a great flat downtown Alicante 5 minutes to the beach. I found it on a website called "Easypiso.es". Here I rented a big room in a apartment with 2 other girls. It was perfect for me, but also more expensive. I paid 260 Euro pr month without bills, which is approximately 25 Euro pr month (depending on which semester you are here.. Winter/Summer). The landlord is a very sweet French woman, who always send you the bills 😊

Contact information:

Cynthia

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Practical experiences

How to go to school

The university is not in Alicante city, but in another city called San Vicente de Raspeig. It takes around 25-30 minutes with the bus to get there. It is bus 24 that goes from the city center. You can also take the tram, but often it is a bit slower, because it has more stops. You buy a travelcard and put money on it, at the university you can also get a student travel card, which should be a bit cheaper. A bus ticket costs 1.45 Euro, and with the travel card, you get 10 trips for approximately 9 Euro.

When I went to Madrid I shared a ride with a Spanish driver through BlaBla Car, when I was going back I bought a bus ticket on Alsabus.es. We also rented a car one day and went hiking in Calpe. There is plenty of opportunity to get around, some more economical than others. But bus and Blabla Car is economical.



Practical experiences

Food

Food, is not expensive in Spain. Compared to Denmark, everything is really cheap. In the beginning I went out for dinner often, but that quickly became too expensive to do 😊

So, luckily they have good vegetables and meat at the local market (Mercado Central). Alternatively you go to the supermarkets where they also have meat and fish.

The food culture is special in Spain. They eat all the time, and lunchbreak is 1-2 hours long. They eat heavy meals for lunch, such as paella or warm dishes of other sorts.



Conclusion

I had been in doubt before leaving for my exchange, and I was very disappointed that I couldn't get so many creative subjects as I wanted. It was a very uncomfortable experience to be in Javier's class which also made an impact on my exchange.

That being said, I enjoyed being away on my own. It has been a great experience to live in another country, that does everything so different than yourself. I have learned and gained a lot personally and culturally.

I wish I had learned more professionally. I don't think the university of Alicante reaches the level of KEA, and I found the unstructured system very frustrating.

I'm glad I went on exchange, because I think it's a great opportunity for anyone who is just a little bit curious about other cultures and ways of living. It's a good opportunity to meet new people from all over the world and socialize with them. It's also a good opportunity to try to be alone in a new country.

My expectations were not met professionally, but socially and culturally im very satisfied.



Fell free to contact me if you have any questions! 😊

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