

# UNIVERSITY OF ALICANTE

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## Introduction

My name is Michaela Palnková and I am from Slovakia. I decided to study abroad so I came to Copenhagen, but it was not enough for me. Since the beginning of my studies, I was sure that I also want to experience Erasmus exchange. At first, I didn't know where and when to go. I was considering more possibilities (Alicante, Cork, Krakow, Melbourne, Nottingham). My requirement was architecture school and not only school of architectural technology. I wanted to experience hand drawing and more artistic architecture and design than we are doing at KEA. I discussed everything with our international coordinator, Sophia, and she recommended me a few universities. Finally, I decided to go to Alicante in Spain and spent there my 3rd semester.



## Experiences at the host university

First, I would like to mention that there are many differences between University of Alicante and KEA, which is based on technical education, mainly technical solutions for key junctions in the buildings. The education at UA is combining a bit of technical teaching with, for me, very abstract subjects based on projecting and concepts. You need to think out of the box and use your imagination. At KEA, we have one main project, which we are focusing on whole semester and it relates to all the subjects. Group work is very important also at UA but working with 5 different groups for 5 different subjects was a bit confusing for me. University of Alicante is located approximately half an hour by bus from Alicante and it has very nice campus. Palm trees, cactuses, pine trees and fountains all around. I had 5 architecture subjects and Spanish course. I decided for Architecture theory 3, Architecture design studio 4, Basic building systems, Singular building systems and Urban planning 1.



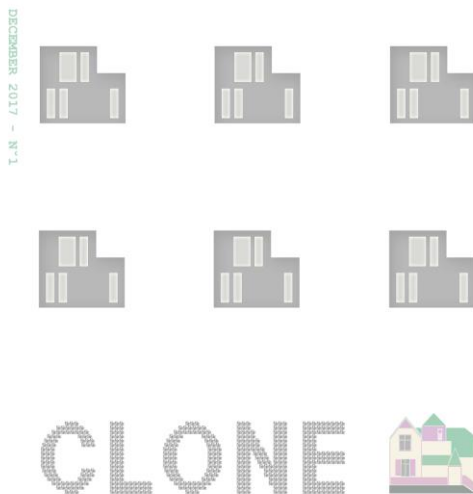
UA Campus



View from library

### Architecture theory 3

We do not have any course devoted to art and architectural history and that is why I decided for this subject. For me, it was very interesting to learn about the most significant and influential architects and their works of last 3 centuries. Theory classes were very intense, so many things in 2 hours lecture without break. At the end of the semester there is an exam of all the units studied during the semester. Part of this subjects was also practical class. We had 4 assignments developed in groups (monument, exhibition, magazine and analysis and small intervention of the house) and at the end essay about our semester in Spain. This subject is not easy, but if you are interested in history of architecture, why does the modern architecture look like it does, and you find out more about most influential architects, I recommend this course.



VIEWS TOWARDS SEA



VIEWS TOWARDS TREES

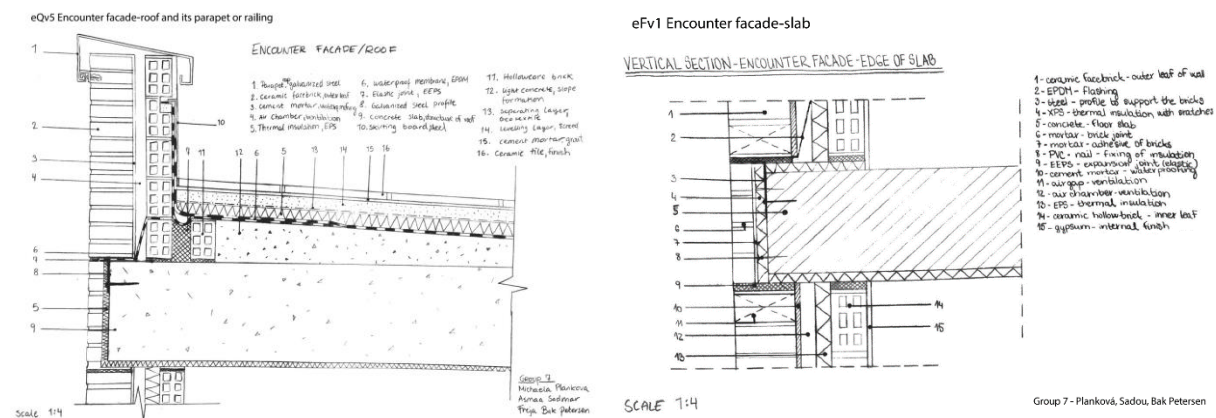


## Architecture design studio 4

I am disappointed with this course and international coordinator who was the professor of this course. You need to think out of the box and use your imagination to satisfy professors very strange requirements. I thought that it could be great, something free, imaginative, but I was frustrating and disappointing. At the end I was afraid of passing the subject, even though I did every assignment and missed only one class. In my opinion, whole semester was unstructured, chaotic and based on weird projects, even though the themes were interesting. Part of this course were 3 workshops, which I expected to be much better than they were. We had to pay everything (transport, accommodation, food), so we spent a lot of money because of that. Last workshop to Madrid was organized as collaboration of 3 universities (Alicante, Dubai, Madrid) and this one was great. You can check the blog with our works: <https://thepopupco.wordpress.com/>

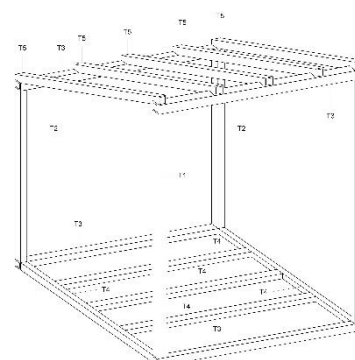
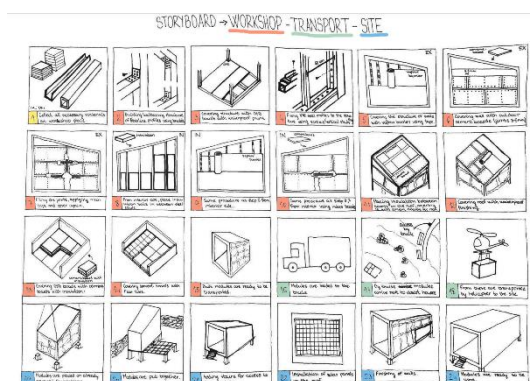
### Basic building systems

Basic building systems are like subjects which we have at KEA. It is based on real building project, technical details and everything has to be drawn by hand. We have done technical details for pitched and flat roof, façade and foundation. Solutions were very different than what we are doing in Denmark, since the climate is so different. This subject wasn't easy but neither difficult. You have to draw a lot by hand, submit assignments during the semester (group work) and at the end there is an exam, drafting technical details (individual).



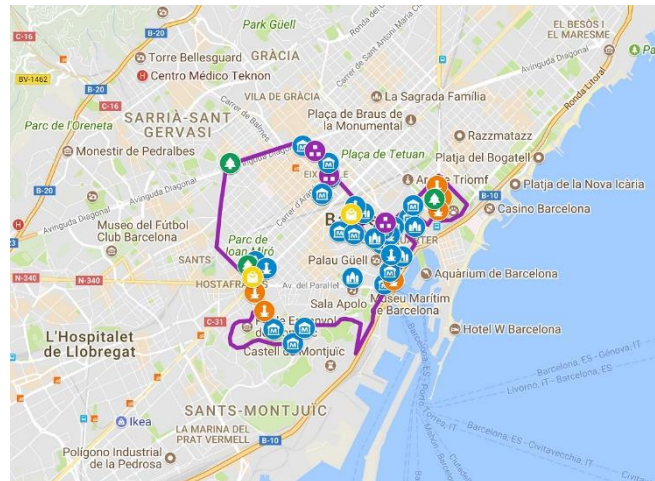
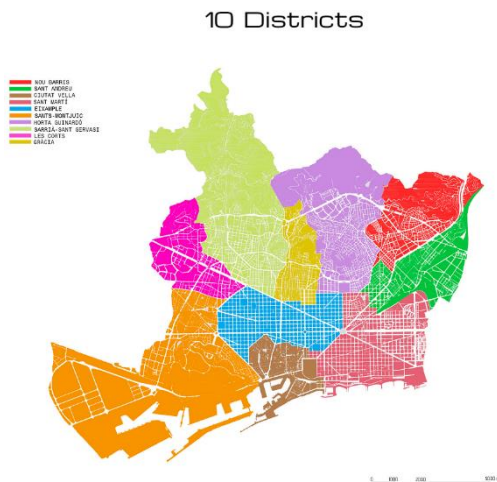
### Singular building systems

This subject is higher level of Basic building systems. We were creating our own project based on the ruins of old house of shepherd in the mountains of Alicante. Connection of old and new fabric, place of building and idea of light prefabric construction was very interesting. We were working in the groups. We started with hike to the ruin, each group had a different place, but unfortunately, I couldn't go because I sprained my ankle the day before. Then we created an idea for our project, started drawing, from simple thing through the materials and process of building to technical details. At the beginning we were supposed to draw by hand and then continue drafting on computer. This subject was good and if you are doing what you are supposed to, it is easy.



## Urban planning 1

I was enrolled also in Urban planning 1 course. The professor was very nice, I have learnt something about urban morphology, evolution of modern urbanism and we were doing interesting assignments. We were working in groups and most of the semester we were working with one city, Barcelona. I really enjoyed this course and I highly recommend it, if you are interested in learning some basics about urban planning.



## ENSANCHE

Ensanche - Urban extension

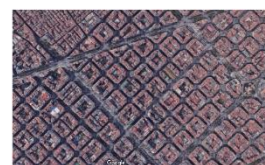
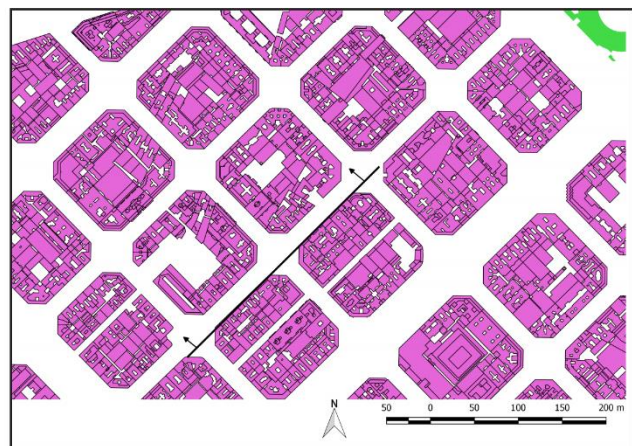
Ildefonso Cerdà - 1850's

Urban solutions for healthier, more livable conditions for the people

Octagonal city blocks based on square grid (133.3 m)

Chamfered corners (45° angle)

Wide streets providing enough space for cars and pedestrians



## Social and cultural experiences

This was the first time I visited Spain, so it was also a big cultural experience for me. Fact that shops and almost all facilities are closed every Sunday and every day in the afternoon and are opened again from 4 until night was very surprising and I needed time to get used to it. Alicante is very nice city with beautiful beach and mountains behind the city. Coming from school in the afternoon, longboarding to the beach and swimming until late November was really great. All the coast of Costa Blanca is amazing to see. Since Erasmus program is not only about studying but also about traveling and getting to know new people, cultures and places, I was also traveling and tried to see as many places as I could. Workshops organized by Architecture design studio 4 offered me a possibility to see part of the south Spain, where influence of North Africa and Arabic culture is evident. Another workshop connected to the same subject took place in Madrid. This was collaboration of 3 universities – Alicante, Dubai, Madrid and it was definitely best one of all three workshops. During this trip we visited many interesting places. Most of them are old buildings which are refurbished and now have different function or old buildings with new extension. We have visited Reina Sofia Museum and it was very exciting to see Picasso's Guernica, paintings of famous Spanish artists, like Joan Miró, and also many international artists. Besides these two trips from university, I was traveling also on my own, with my friends or family. I had some "must to see" points on my list which I luckily have seen during these 4 months in Spain. One of them was La Muralla Roja in Calpe, which is right next to his other work, Xanadu. I really liked that place, buildings with red and green color situated on the cliff with amazing view on the sea and the rock The Penyal d'Ifac. And also hike to the rock was really nice. Point 2 – Barcelona and the Catalan Modernism. I was very excited to see Casa Batlló and La Pedrera, even though I heard from some people that it was disappointing. I love mosaics, colors, curved shapes, organic inspiration and materials like wood, ceramics and bricks. So, seeing, these two houses were very impressing for me. I was amazed with curved wooden windows and doors with tinted glass and colorful façade and kind of parapet wall of Casa Batlló. To continue with work of Gaudí, I also enjoyed the visit of Park Güell a lot. Another important thing for me, was art experience. Visit of 2 very exciting museums, considering the exhibitions and the buildings in general. I was in Fundació Joan Miró and The Picasso museum and discovering the evolution of their art and personalities. The Picasso museum situated in old town of Barcelona is very nice project, old the houses, built in 13<sup>th</sup> century, were joined, refurbished and extended several times. Connection of massive stone walls, gothic arches and brick vaults with new glass walls and junctions of interior and exterior were impressing. Building of Fundació Joan Miró is much newer. I felt like there is a very good dialogue between the building and the art works, which are in the interior and exterior as well. Since the museum is locates on hill of Montjuïc, terraces and glass walls are offering nice view of Barcelona. These are the most important and interesting experiences from places which I have visited during this semester. It was also very important for me to eat typical Spanish food in Spain – paella, jamon serrano, tortilla, tapas... so many different things to taste.





Barcelona



Granada



Madrid



Calpe



## Practical experiences

I lived in shared flat close to the center of Alicante. I lived with 2 other girls (Serbian and Spanish). I had my own room and we shared bathroom, kitchen, living room and terrace. I paid 200 euros + bills. I consider living in Alicante better option than living at university. I did not get to use to is so cold environment in the buildings during winter months. Everyone is freezing inside even though it is 20 degrees outside. Having almost no thermal insulation or not having it at all and living without heating system is very uncomfortable. I got ill 4 days before I was leaving Alicante and it was the time of my exams, believe me writing 4 hours exams with fever is nothing good. Prepare yourself for very cold interior.

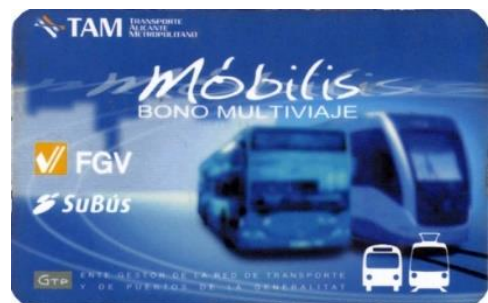
When it comes to the shopping, there is a lot of shops in Alicante. There are few big shopping malls, where you can buy anything and for grocery shopping I usually went to Mercadona, which was right by my place and it is quite cheap.

For the public transport I bought card (blue color) and then the ticket is cheaper, but you can get also student "joven" card (green color), which is even cheaper. If you want to travel outside Alicante you can use BlaBlaCar (share rides), ALSA (bus) are quite cheap and RENFE (train) are a bit more expensive but very comfortable and fast.

**Bla Bla Car**

**ALSA**

**renfe**





## Conclusion

All in all, I really enjoyed the semester in Alicante, I learnt things which are not taught in my school, met a lot of new people, get to know Spanish culture, visited new places and enrich my art and architecture perception and knowledge.











ENJOY YOUR ERASMUS IN ALICANTE!