

# BERLIN

## Place

Beuth Hochschule Für Technik  
WS1516 – September 2015 to February 2016

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## 1. Introduction

This report will cover my study abroad in Germany, which took place between August 15 and February 16, as a 5<sup>th</sup> semester student. I will explain my thoughts and experience about spending the time, and give some advice for future students, who consider going to Berlin.

At the beginning, before I started studying at KEA, I decided to have an exchange semester, but didn't new where.

I decided to study in Berlin for two reasons. First, because I got an internship in an English speaking department, therefore I thought it could be fun to improve my German.

Second I like Germany, and always want to live one year in Berlin. For that reason it wasn't hard to choose Berlin over Detmold, which is the second partner institutions.



*Figure 1 - Bus trip in the beginning of the semester*

For taking a semester abroad I didn't have any expiration. I consider myself as a person who jumps into challenges, and see what is happening. In this case it turned out to one of the best decisions I ever have chosen.

## 2. Practical experiences

### 2.1. Before moving

When you decide to study at Beuth, you're fast going to discover why KEA is a really good place to study with the administration. As you probably have read in other exchange reports, KEA's administration is really good, maybe you know some people complaining at KEA, but it's probably because they haven't tried to study another place. They make every document and all the bureaucratic paper work, including Erasmus money. It's really good, because I know every other university doesn't help you with it, and my friend from Nederland applied one day to late - no cash for him. Remember to take the German test Erasmus/KEA sends you the link, another person didn't receive the mail, and even she wrote to her home university before the last day to take the test, she never received the link, again same story.

One of the documents to fill out, are the [classes](#) you want to take. As an Erasmus you can take everything you want. I only had two days to choose, but you can always change when you arrive. Remember when you choose, it's not sure the schedule fits, I can recommend to choose so many from the same semester as you can, for two reasons. First you can be sure you get a schedule where you're not double booked, and when you start to know some Germans, you can also ask them to help you in other classes.

I can also recommend, to take so many German classes before you move, all classes are in German. Some of the old teachers doesn't even speak English. I was too lazy and probably thought my six years old gymnasium German was better than it was. Most important is get a big vocabulary, watch some German television, movies etc. Many young people can help you if you ask in English, but it's not everyone who likes to speak it.

Last thing to do, get in some of these Facebook groups, they can help you with every question you have:

- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/danskberliner/> (danske i Berlin) members: 3100+
- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/18410168925/> (danskere i Berlin) members: 2250+
- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/278815832131476/> (danske studerende) members: 300

### 2.2. Accommodation

A couple of years ago I heard Berlin had a lot of apartments all over Berlin, easy to move there and find a place. Times have changed, it's still not close to Copenhagen's problems with not enough apartments, but still you need to remember it's not easy to get an apartment.

I used [www.wg-gesucht.de](http://www.wg-gesucht.de), to find an apartment. At the beginning I wrote to four apartments, got an answer for two of them.

1. I had to pay 700 for a room with a blanket as a door, shitty bed, and nothing else in the room.
2. Cool apartment, only foreigners. One rule was you were only allowed to speak German and use English to translate single words. Only problem, if I only stayed there for a half year, I had to share a room, didn't want that.

After a month I found one more apartment I could see myself in. I was lucky to get it, it was 200 meters away from Ostbahnhof, Friedrichshagen. Had to pay 350 € for the room, shared the apartment with a German girl. After they chose me, they told me I had been chosen by 30 applicants and the contact information was only there for 2 days.

If you don't care where you live, Beuth also offers a room at a Studentenwohnheim. There are too, one located at Ostbahnhof also (350 €), and another at 500 meters away Potsdam platz (450 €).

### 2.3. Bürgeramt

By German law you have to register at Bürgeramt at least two weeks after you get your apartment. You can order a time online, which has around 3 month waiting time. Don't know what happens if you don't register and they catch you. Only thing I know, the German Rundfunkgebühr (Germany's version of license from Denmark's radio) find you, it costs around 110 euro for a semester. When you have to move away it's also important that you remember to tell the office you're leaving.

If you still think you want to sign up, the easiest thing to do, is arrive one hour before your local office opens, stand in line and get an appointment. Estimated waiting time can be between one and seven hours.

There is no waiting time when you're leaving you just have to fill the official form and put it in a box.

### 2.4. Phone number and bank

If you want to have a bank you need to sign up in the Bürgeramt. As a gift from Berlin they give you 50 € when you have a German bank account. Remember you have to go back and wait again at the Bürgeramt, they don't have an electronic system. I never got a bank, but can recommend Sparkasse if you want one. If you know a person who has a bank account take them with you, the bank sometimes offers a "welcome-gift" to you and your friends because he/she recommended the bank.

In Germany the shops, mostly only accept cash or their local credit card. I survived with my Danish visa and ATM.

To open a phone I used blau. You can buy blau in O2 stores, and buy phone cards in Spatii (kiosk) or Kaisers (supermarket). Have also heard good things about Aldi talk.

In Germany phone companies are quite expensive compared to Denmark. You still pay for every sms you send, so people used WhatsApp.

## 2.5. Krankenkassen

To sign the semester fee (see [chapter 3.2.](#)) you need to have a public insurance, which work the same way as the Danish yellow sygeskringskort. It doesn't cost anything, the international office can help you find a place get it. It's just a paper with some person's signature. Remember to do it before the semester starts.

### 3. Beuth

#### 3.1. Intro

German semester schedule are not like Danish, its starts and ends one month after the usual Danish semester, example the winter semester starts October and ends in March.

When you're studying at Beuth, they offer you an intensive German class, which start in September. The first day you get a German test, for the reason to place you in classes with people at the same level.

It's also a good way to get a network of people, there is not only Beuth studies. The classes are every weekday for two/three weeks.

Beuth also have a welcome presentation and a guided tour at campus. The presentation is almost the same as I wrote in [Chapter 2](#), and how to sign classes. The most important they introduce, is moodle, which is there intranet, compare it to Fronter from kea.

#### 3.2. The school

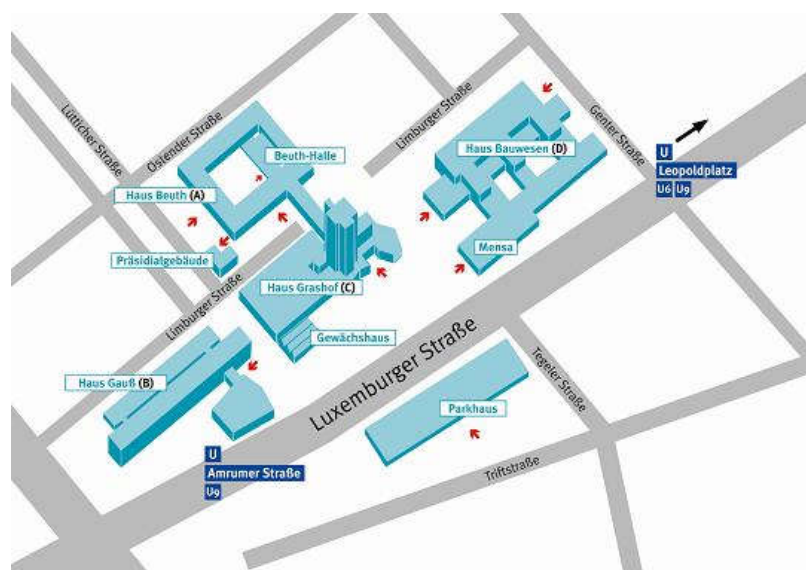
There are two trains which can take you to Beuth. Either the U9 to Amrumer Strasse or U6 to Leopoldplatz.

Beuth hochschule are divided in different buildings, and location in the city. As a bachelor student in architecture you would have all your classes in Haus Bauwesen, building D. The only other important place is in building C, Haus Grasshof, where the international office is located.

If you are hungry, you can use your Mensa card to buy food or coffee. The Mensa card you get the first day, you can't use cash in Mensa, they have machines to transfer money to your Mensa Card.

Before starting the semester you need to pay a semester fee, around 250 €. You can't sign any classes before this is paid. Remember to pay this you need the krankenkasse, Beuth are not allowed to accept the money from you without you're insured. When you have paid the semester ticket, you get a paper you can use to travel for free around Berlin in public transportation.

You amartikelnnummer, which you're going to use for your webmail and muddle login. Remember you have a webmail, I learned the easy way when the teacher canceled a class I was the only one who showed up.





### 3.3. Classes

#### 3.3.1. B9 - Entwerfen und konstruieren in skelettbauweise

Entwerfen translation to English design and development, in this case frame structure in wood. This class are divided in two subject. Each subject are a model together with hand drawings.

My first task was to design a place to watch birds from, in the nature. I misunderstood the assignment, and made an over dimensioned concrete foundation to take the forces from the beams. Therefore I didn't make a frame. My teacher said it was okay, because I was an Erasmus. If you take this class, it's important to make a frame construction to take the wind force as we also know from buildings. The second was a wood house, with same principle.

I didn't like this class, I signed it to improve my knowledge about frame construction. This was more about try to make some beautiful hand drawing and a beautiful model. I think it's a waste of time, and everyone deliver the same detail drawings to the teacher. If you want work in an architecture office in the future, and like to make real models, not 3D printed models, this is a class where you can start.

#### 3.3.2. B20 - Städtebau und Entwurf II

This is what I think was the most interesting class. In the lectures the teacher showed different ways of area planning. He showed everything for extreme area designing, and normal design like they have in Berlin.

We got two different task again. Because of the refugee situation in Germany, we had to design a place where 300 persons could live. The second task was a redesign of Alexanderplatz in the small park near the spree. Both task has to be done as a 3D model in arcad or revit, and you can choose by yourself to make a model. In this class you work in groups.

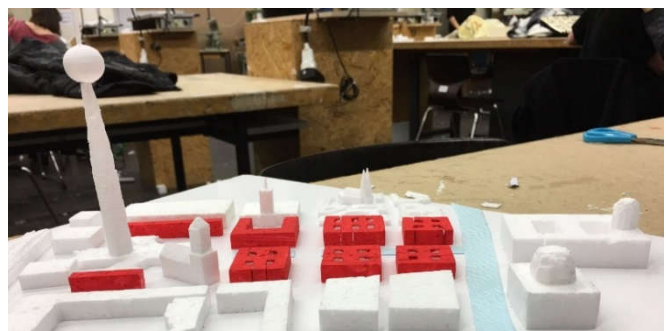
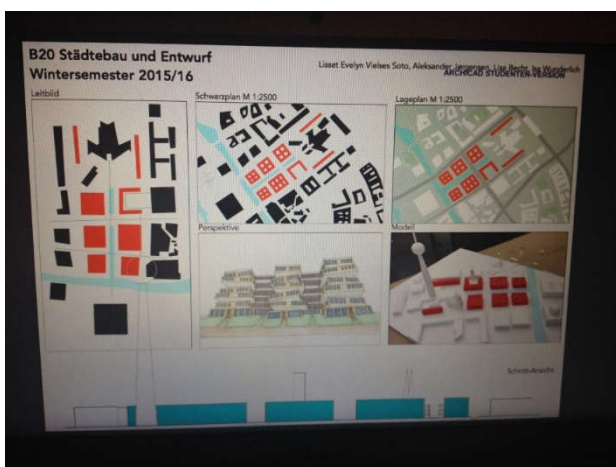


Figure 2 - Our model of Alexanderplatz - white existing building, red new constructions



### 3.3.3. B21 - Entwerfen und konstruieren im bestand

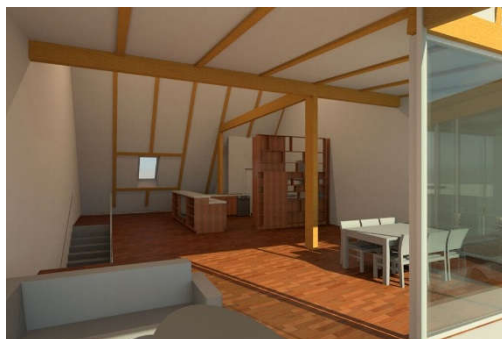
This subject is interesting, it's about a house in Charlottenburg. To begin with you have to analyze it and also think about the construction details. In the middle of the semester you're having a presentation about the old building.

After the presentation you get some feedback, and need to think about a new construction for the roof.

I really enjoyed this class, I think it's the most similar to our education as a bachelor student of architectural technology and construction management. If you consider taken this class, you should remember to go in a group with Germans, I made a mistake of being together with one from Nederland. We misunderstood some word, ex Germans have a word for renovate the roof construction, but another word for making it live able after a renovation. We also misunderstood some of the task and we couldn't make a new apartments, but need to connect them with apartment down under, therefore we had to make everything again from the beginning. The teacher is good, but you can't get a lot of help from her.



Figure 3 - Our carrying beam system



Figur 4 - Render from inside



Figure 5 - Building before new design

#### 3.3.4. B22 - Bauphysik und materiallehre

If you like a Monday morning, 8 sharp, listen 4 hours, with only a small five minutes break, a German professor talk about how you decide material and what you should think about, this is the class. The class should not be chosen for exchange students. It ended with an exam in 60 minutes, where one of the questions was; what does the German standard says about calculating heating lose through windows?

The exam is without help, so this is just basic knowledge. I tried to ask the teacher if he could translate it to English, but good the good answer from him. He doesn't speak English.

Wish everyone good luck if they chose this class in the future.

#### 3.3.5. B25 - Baumangement und baubetrieb

This is Germans architectures BIM class. In Germany they use at Beuth Hochschule archiCAD. I was allowed to use Revit, it's about making the most simple house, insert some values in the walls, floors ect. Test number one is to evaluate the information and show you can take it out.

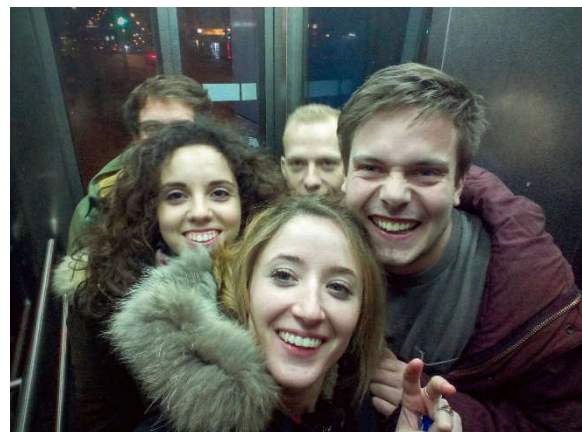
The lectures are about how to work with BIM, some rules in Germany. If you are interested in learning something about how Germany uses BIM this I good class. I had to make a ten pages report about what their version of "Bips" tells about planning and economy with BIM.

#### 3.3.6. Cultural training

This class can't be found on the webpage. This class is only for exchange students, it's a class where you and all your friends, are going to cultural stuff in Berlin. Many of the events are taking places at museums, but can also be a Christmas marked etc.

The cultural training ends with a presentation about a subject you choose together with Corinna, the international coordinator. I made a quiz about people where people guess which land a stupid law came from, Denmark or Germany.

I recommend to participate in this class, it's the best way to meet all the other exchange students. Many of the events sometimes end at a brewery with your friends, but it's up to you.



Figur 3 - Me together with a part of team-spain and Stefan from Jylland

## 4. Social and cultural experiences

### 4.1. International buddy

As an exchange student Beuth offer you and international buddy.

An international buddy is a person who can help you with things like, opening a bank and everything you should have of questions.

I was lucky to get an outgoing girl, Julie. She could show me Berlin, mostly bars, but was always good to go on an adventure. I became good friends with her, but was also the only exchange student who talked my buddy regularly. I recommend to say yes to get a buddy, you can always if you don't like the person, just don't talk with them.



Figure 4 - Julie and me

### 4.2. Outdoor activities

If you are an outdoor person, Berlin have many good places. I would recommend to try at the summertime, go to Mauer park, remember to bring beers. Every Sunday there's karaoke, an Australian guy bring audio system, this event have happened in many years.

Berlin also have many outdoor activities, as we also know from Denmark, the easiest way to find the events, is of course your network, but also <https://www.facebook.com/BerlinEvents/?fref=ts> sometimes post different happenings.

### 4.3. Sport

If you want to participate in sport, Beuth have many contacts, the first day you get a folder, where you can see everything from Latino Brazilian dance to boxing etc.

If you like to watch sport one of the best things to do is going to an Union Berlin game. The atmosphere in the stadium is amazing, Union is an old working club which play in second division. One of my favorite things to do in Berlin, was there almost every home game I could come to. If you want higher quality football there's also Hertha Berlin.

If you're not into football, Berlin also have the Eisbären in ice hockey, and handball is also big in Germany.

### 4.4. Party

As a part of Erasmus, there's many Erasmus parties in Berlin. Compared to which kind of person you are, it's fun thing to do, I didn't use it. If you think the best way to celebrate a weekend is in inner city of Copenhagen, pop music, this is defiantly I good place to go. The resident hall where you or some other Erasmus are living, also having a Wednesday party which is the same as the Erasmus parties.

I went mostly to bars or clubs in Berlin, and they are in some way, very different from Denmark. Berlin is together with Amsterdam some of the cities where you can hear some of the best electronic music, with many subgenres. The only thing to do is get up in the lines, but please don't speak Danish and if you want to speak English do in quite. The doorman is, in many way unlike the Danish, they won't let you in if you don't look like a local. Inside you can act like normal, but don't think it's good to make a lot of noise in the line. Mostly all of the bars are easy to go to, I mostly hang out at the Boxhagner-platz and Simon Darc Strasse to find bars. If you want a good bodega you need to ask the local people for a "knieper".

## 5. Conclusion

I would defiantly say this was the best semester I have tried, and haven't regret I took a half year abroad. People would maybe be right, when they say you don't learn that much, but I think what you're learning with working with international people, have to communicate in another language, is more important, compared with the things you learn one semester at KEA. You learn that you need to take care of everything, not like just receive a mail from kea which say what day you have to meet, where to be etc.

About my personal life, I now have friends, all over the world. Your learning a lot about being abroad and don't know anyone. In the start it was scary for some of the students, but you're fast getting a group of friends. I now know, it's going to be expensive, because I want to travel and visit them all again. I would recommend everyone who consider having one exchange semester to do it, and if you're not sure where to go, choose Berlin.