

## Exchange Report

Matylda Pietrzyk  
maty0039@stud.kea.dk

Architecture

Universitat Ramon Llull - La Salle Campus Barcelona

Olga García Navarro  
olga.garcia@salle.url.edu

09/2020-01/2021

# Introduction

I chose to go for an exchange at my 5th semester of Architectural Technology and Construction Management at KEA, mostly because it was the last moment for me to go for an exchange during my bachelor. Also, I got an information about new possible destination in Barcelona. I wanted to supplement my education received at KEA with some classic architecture course in order to get some perspective on the industry and compare my skills with architecture students abroad.



On the campus

## Experiences at the host university

Exchange students can choose classes from every year. I wanted to get courses that were different from those offered at KEA. Level of BIM and Process and Management is incomparable. I do not recommend attending those classes and Measurements, especially students from higher semesters as it would be waste of time.

I personally attended HISTORY OF ARCHITECTURE from 1st semester. Very easy to follow subject, a lot of basics of architecture and sketching for the price of 6 ECTS points (worth it). This and Introduction to urban planning focus on analysing Barcelona, urban growth of the city and public spaces.



Analysis for History of Architecture

Very convenient option for students wanting to learn Spanish is to attend language classes offered at the uni.

I personally attended Process and Management course. Nothing new here compared to KEA's Process and Planning.

COMPOSITION classes are conducted by the same teacher as History of Architecture – Ana. Composition is mostly analysis of communication tools for architects. Photography, collages, plans, text. Throughout the course students are supposed to create folders with analysis of Case study houses, and at the end build physical models/ maquettes. This is the only course I attended, where students were working in groups.



Model for Composition



Eames House booklet for Composition

After 2 weeks I decided to change Introduction to Urban planning (3rd year subject) to TOWN PLANNING (5th year subject). It was a very good experience, mostly because of the professor. Sadly, it was his last semester teaching here as he is moving to Senegal. Classes focused on analysing the village and coming up with proposal of new residential area. Here also, focus on analysis, urbanistic rules and public spaces.



Town planning project



Trip to Jafré for Town Planning

Very engaging was PROJECT from 4th year. It has 4 units. I attended Unit Barcelona. All course focuses on coming up and materialising a concept based on brief. Very conceptual, comparable to Design Consultancy from 3rd semester at KEA but more complex, demanding and time consuming.

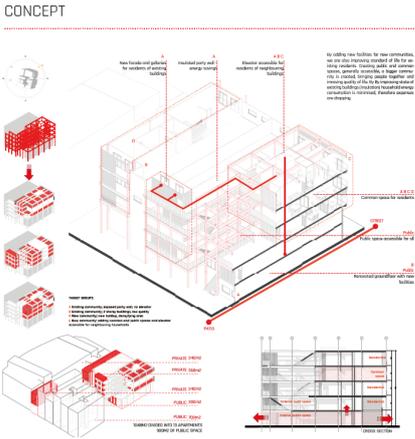
Approach to teaching is very different from what we are used to at KEA. It is a private university; it consumes a lot of time and here are weekly tasks / homework to do for some subjects. For History and composition there is a lot of written analysis to do. Planning and Management consists of theory and practice part when students must perform some scheduling or optimisation. In this case, I never got any feedback, just the grades. Town planning and Project were basically corrections every week. Students bring what they have been working all week and get feedback and so on.

Project was most demanding and frustrating course, but also most rewarding in terms of the outcome. It was difficult but I learned a lot. It was difficult to get used to way of giving feedback. There is a lot of critique, and professors are not used to discussion with students. It does not change a fact that they are very skilled professionals with a lot of knowledge. It is important to ask questions and be prepared for a lot of work. It would be very difficult to have even a part time job and study at the same time. Sometimes classes are from 9 till 14 – one subject 5 hours in a row. Or distributed from 8:30 till 21 in the evening with 3-hour break in the middle. Not mentioning amount of time students spend at home preparing projects for corrections.

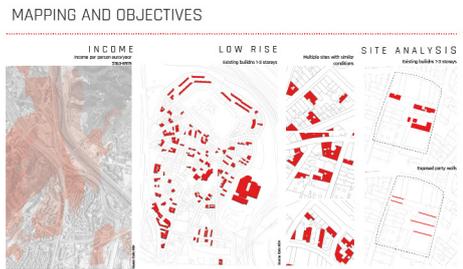


Exploring Rec Comtal and analysing site for the project

Overall, I was happy to experience architecture from more conceptual side. I had chance of working with people doing their masters and as much as I could learn from them about conceptual thinking, I also could help them with Revit, technicalities, Process and Planning. It is important to realise that we have a bit different set of skills and use it to our favours.



Project II



There is an information about classes that are conducted in English. Even though, all the professors are Catalan or Spanish and their English is not the best (most of the time). Multiple times classes were conducted only in Spanish/Catalan or with simultaneous translation. Composition classes were conducted in both languages simultaneously. In case of corrections in front of the class, students chose to speak their mother tongue (as even in the international line there are a lot of Spanish speaking people).

Receiving school provided us with all of the information needed in order to chose classes and surviving in Spain in general. Most of the info sent by university directly (not from the exchange office) was is Spanish.

In terms of people, most of freinds we made were also international students, mostly from outside of our university.

## Social and cultural experiences

The best advice for students on an exchange is to join Erasmus groups on WhatsApp/Facebook. There a lot of people looking for other people to hang out and meet. There are parties organised specially for Erasmus students, attended by young international people in general. People from outside of Europe, on internships etc. Also, there are groups for beach volleyball, where people meet on the beach and play and meet. There are a lot of international people in Barcelona.

Unfortunately, this semesters experience of Spanish social life was restricted by Covid situation. A lot of bars had limited capacity and clubs were closed. Later there was introduced curfew and bars and restaurants got closed completely.

Generally, there is a lot of police on the streets and there are protests quite often.

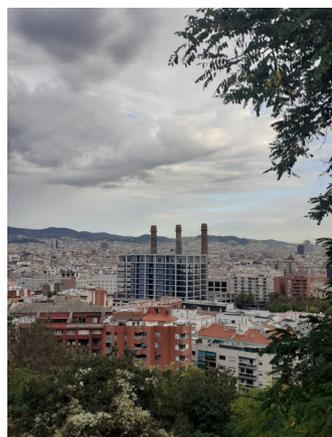
Even though, city is beautiful, especially for people interested in architecture or urbanism. Beach is very close, so are mountains. Its worth exploring some museums like MACBA or Picasso's, Going to Montjuic, or Tibidabo. Deffinitely see Gaudi's buildings and park Guell. I recomen Barceloa pavillon by Mies van der Roche and Tres chemaines. Outside of Barcelona Walden 7, espetially for architecture enthusiasts. I also reccomend getting some local tapas and cortado.

There are organised trips on Erasmus groups, also university meeting for exchange students provides with some destinations and trips.

It is easy to find company in Barcelona and even after restrictions got worse, we were able to keep in touch and meet is safe circumstances. The weather is quite pleasant even during wither so meeting outside is not an issue.



Port from Montjuic



Tres chemaines (Sagrada of working people)  
from Parc del Mirador del Poble Sec



Walden 7



Gràcia

## Practical experiences

All of the application process went smooth. Both KEA and La Salle were clear about documents to be delivered and providing all of the information needed.

I got a plain strait from Copenhagen to Barcelona; it takes around 3 hours. Then there are busses and metro lines to the city. Together with another student from KEA we rented an Airbnb for the first month in the Gothic quarter and we were able to prolong the contract for very good price of 450 euro per room. Important to realise that our situation was determined by lack of tourism due to COVID-19. Usually, Gothic quarter would be occupied by tourists and expensive.

City is well communicated. On the stations there are machines where it is possible to buy tickets. Also bike or scoter is a good option. From Gothic to La salle it was around 40 minutes by train, the same by bike, though it is located up the hill.

There are a lot of restaurants and take away options in the city.

Monthly budget of 10 000dkk would be more than sufficient, similar to Copenhagen. Due to COVID-19 I did not spent as much as I thought I will. Expenses like Eating/ drinking out were limited.



Cortado and Tapas



Rooftop in Gothic quarter



Girona, Catalan symbols



Hiking in Tibidabo

## Conclusion

My expectations about experiencing true spanish culture and having an erasmus student experience in Barcelona did not really happen. Due to multiple restrictions during our stay in Spain socialising was more difficult... but not impossible. I still can say that I had great time and met a lot of people. I will deffinitely come back to Barcelona.

In terms of university it was more time consuming than I expected, but at the same time sometimes upproach to students was a bit simillar to what we are used to in Highschool. Still, I was able to learn exactly what I wanted to, meaning how to work with concepts and basics of urban planning. I could compare to and learn from people on various stages of their education, from different countries, wchih gave me some idea about which direction I want to go in the future.

Summing up; I highly reccoment Barcelona as a city for an exchange. I think it is perfect for international students, full of museums, beaches, activities, bars and parties and people wanting to meet and do things. In terms of university, courses in La salle are more conceptual and time consuming than in KEA, it does not necesarily mean that it is more diffcilult. The difficult part is communication and expectations.