

**EXCHANGE REPORT****Name****Year and term for exchange**Hannes StenströmWS 2018/2019**Exchange university**Universität der Künste, Berlin**Degree programme**Master

## Atmosphere in Architecture

### Before departure

I wanted to live in Berlin for a while, very much because of my other work as a techno producer and performer/DJ. I have lived there before, but not for long. My first intention was not to study while I was there, I was just wanted to be there for a while as a break from my studies at KTH. But while I was there I loved it too much and thought it as a great opportunity to study at another university while I was there. I had some friends who did an exchange on UdK and they were quite happy about the experience. Especially I was intrigued by UdK because it's an art school, while my home university KTH is a technical school. I wanted to see how that impacted the studies. I thought it would be more focus on the experience of space rather than its technical properties.

### Upon arrival

As mentioned I've lived in Berlin before. This time I had already been living there for one year before my exchange studies started. When it was time to start there were a few introductions for all exchange students of UdK where I met people in other fields like sound art and dance. And later for the few, around 10 exchange students of the architecture program of the semester. The international students had a few gatherings and activities, some of which I did attend, some not because I was also busy with music.

### Financials

I did not apply for scholarship from KTH. I had some CSN, Erasmus, but mostly my income of my music work. Berlin is still very cheap compared to most western cities. Living is getting expensive, around 500 € for a room. Food and drinks are almost half price compared to Stockholm. Subway was included in the around 200 € fee per semester of the UdK registration. A libanes falafel is around 2-3 € and is terribly tasty! A beer in an old kneipe (bar) is usually 1.70 € compared to around 4 € which is the price tag on a gentrified bar, that is a bar filled with hipsters with cool hats and beards. In the summer you can also have a cheap beer outside a späti. My groceries I did at a Turkish store called Eurogida where fruits and vegetables are super cheap, cheaper than Lidl. But food in biomarkets can also be rather cheap if you go thru it deeply, especially if you choose the store's own brand, like Denn's. Organic Espresso coffee is cheapest and best tasting at DM.

### Accommodation

My friend was already living there and had a room free and waiting for me. I lived in my favourite neighbourhood Neukölln. It's about 35 min from UdK but absolutely worth it. It had the new gentrified price tag of 500 € and while I was moving out of there they were just about to rebuild the streets to better fit the new biking habitants of the area. The area has a lot of bars, restaurants and clubs for late nights.

## University and studies

UdK is huge! They have studies in all arts that I can think of from music, sound art, theatre, dance, media, fashion design, graphic design, classic arts, architecture and so on. My department of architecture had around 60 students in the master, so it was rather small. The way of studying in a studio was similar to KTH. What differed the most was the focus on how to develop and present ideas or concepts rather than presenting a finished and buildable project. The technical issues were not a focus. On UdK the semesters are slightly shorter than on KTH, around 3.5-4.5 months. That means that you are expected to study also in many weekends. Most studios, seminars and lectures are in German, but some are in English, I did most mine in English but there were not enough courses in English so I had to do some in German as well, but those were not easy to follow with my B1 level. UdK offered some entry level language courses, but my skills were still better than that so I did not take them.

Generally UdK is rather disorganised compared to KTH. To get to know what courses that are available you need to check on a few different places, mainly the catalogue homepage, the booklet they hand out and the homepage of each studio. But that is not enough, there will also be courses which do not exist there, for those you need to have your ears open and talk to your fellow students about what they have found. It's rather stressful in the beginning because you want to make sure you know about them all before you decide. But usually most courses won't start the first days, thou some do. The best idea is to go to the first meeting of every course you find interesting and sign up, but make the final decision a week or two later.

## Courses

The studio course (15 ects) with professor Enrique Sobejano was called Atmosphere. It was amazing! I'm very interested in the direct experience of architecture and the environment in general. It's about how we experience space and its components as subjects rather than analysing it's political significance. The focus was on creating ideas and building them quickly with tons and tons of models. Pin up was once a week. We did the work in groups which was both very nice and difficult at the same time, but in the end I'm very happy it was done in groups, it made it easier for me as non-german to take part in the studio. Included was also a trip to Marrakech where the site of the project was based. Part of the studio was also a series of lectures (2 ects).

I did a seminar in architecture semiotics (5 ects) and wrote a 10 pages paper about Peter Eisenman and Deconstruction. The seminar was in German but I did my presentation on Christian Norberg-Schulz in English, as well as the paper. Semiotics is a useful way to understand postmodernist architecture and I will absolutely use what I learnt from this course, especially from my paper on Deconstruction which is a very useful tool for analytical purposes.

There was one more technical course (5 ects) about shell structures. It was useful to learn Grasshopper and fun group activities.

I did one course from another department called Space, Environment and Context: Sonic Immersion (3 ects). I'm very interested in how sounds affect the atmosphere of our built environment and how to use them in an architectural context. This course somehow merged my two interests in music/sound art/noise with architecture.

I'm very happy about my selection of courses. I managed to learn what I hoped to learn and get a better vocabulary around what I'm interested in.

I intend to transfer these courses to a 30 ects semester of architecture at KTH.

## City and country

Berlin is very international, I hang out with people from all over the world. Germans and Swedes are<sup>2(3)</sup> rather similar, except they smile even less. Berlin is Berlin, and I already knew it. It's a very free city where you can do pretty much whatever you want, except jaywalking and paying with credit card. It's

the world capital of arts in the 21st century. The most problematic with this is that people you make friends with won't stay for long, you are friends for some months, then they or yourself moves back home.

### **Leisure and social activities**

Since my life is also very focus on music, especially techno music I was working on that and meeting people from that scene. As you know the club scene there is huge and I spent many hours playing in them. The bars around Neukölln, where I went mostly are super. My neighbour, the bar Twin Peaks was started a few years ago by my Swedish friend so obviously I was there quite often. The spätis (kiosks) usually also have seatings outside where you can have a super cheap beer, which is nice in the summer.

Berlin has not been a city for gastronomic experiences. But it is changing with the gentrification and hipsters craving for more than weissbier and bratwurst or ayran and döner kebab. The best place for natural wine and food is a restaurant called Jaja in Neukölln, it's amazing and rather cheap if you compare it to international price tags, their selection of wines from old punks who got tired of the city and moved to a hill side somewhere in France is just too good to be true! You can also buy the bottles and take home, their selection is better than all other shops and prices are super. If you still would want a weissbier with classic Brandenburger cuisine, which I wanted sometimes, especially when my dad was visiting, we always went to Villa Rixdorf on Richardsplatz in Neukölln. They have a big garden and is super nice in the summer. Prices are very cheap. This neighbourhood is also very old and beautiful in its small scale because it existed as a village before Berlin grew and made it part of the city.

There are many festivals, like Atonal and CTM that I usually go to. Loads of museums and galleries with the best from around the world which I went to sometimes. I did not pay attention to if the school had any activities.

### **Other recommendations and observations**

Germany is not a country for big cheeses like the Swedish hushållsost, grev , pr stost, etc. If you still want good cheeses you have to pay slightly more, I usually went for the Swiss or Dutch ones, they are cheapest at Lidl.