



**UAEM** | Universidad Autónoma  
del Estado de México

# Exchange semester Report

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Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences

Urban Agglomerations M.Sc.

Winter semester 2017

Toluca de Lerdo, December 2017

As part of the master program Urban Agglomerations of the Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences, I have been in Mexico in the Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México as host in my exchange semester. The University is located in Toluca de Lerdo City. The city is more an industrial town with no many sightseen. However only 60 km away from Mexico City which is not only the biggest city in the country is also the main city for museums, sightseen and many more.

My Organization phase was very easy due to the assistance in both universities; there is a good communication with Roy Estrada Olivella, the coordinator of the master program in Mexico and the Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences. The master program is “Maestría en Estudios Sustentables Regionales y Metropolitanos” (Master in Sustainable Regional and Metropolitan Studies) and is designed under a strong social approach in order to develop sustainable project in urban spaces.



Figure 1. Main door of the Universidad Autonoma del Estado de Mexico. By author.

In reference to the visa process, I had no need to do one. Mexico has different requirements depending of the country of origin; there are even nationalities that do not need a visa for stays of less than 6 months. Other requirement was a health insurance of a cost around 60 euros per month and is very easy to buy in health insurance companies, even though web sites. The plane ticket to Mexico City is a bit expensive (Toluca has no airport), but is cheaper arrive to Cancun airport in Mexico and from there take a domestic flight to Mexico city with the national airlines like *Volaris*, *Interjet* o *Viva Aerobus*. In the country there are also many bus transport companies for all the country among others *Primera Plus*, *ETN* and *Caminante*.

The most important thing in the academic field for me was the approach, the program is mainly focused in develop the urban areas for the inhabitants. This approach also produces a lack in technical topics; there are no many courses with mathematical or technical content.

The courses are fully in Spanish, and sometimes the topics are mainly philosophical which make it very difficult to understand if you don't know the language very well. The professors and the fellow students are very supportive, but still everything is in Spanish.

From all the professors I had a bad experience with Professor Jose Isabel in the course "Responsabilidad social" he is clearly not qualified for the topic and his classes are not according the program, content or objectives. The grading system in his class was never clear and the homework and book discussions was not good due to he had no knowledge of the text we supposed to read. On the other hand, Dr. Wendy Ovando is an excellent teacher with high understanding of the topics and complex analysis tools. She does not accept English papers.

I really like the campus; it has all the necessary to be around many hours like coffee shops and many restaurants inside the campus. The transport system around it is not that good, is made by buses and taxis with no schedule or bus stops. The city is not the safest, so around 9 pm everything is closed.

The people is one of the most amazing factors of Mexico, they are open and welcoming. There are no religious or political barriers, they accept and include everyone even with a language barrier. The Mexican people will always try to make the best out of the experience and as they are really proud of their heritage, there is always something to see and someone to go with.



Figure 2. Dinner with friends. By author.

Mexico is a cheap country compared with Germany, however depends of the life standard you want to live. For accommodation just right in from of the campus I paid 75 euros per month in a two bed share room in a house. The highest accommodation cost I knew was around 150 euros with many services in very nice areas. The food is very cheap; there are many fruits and vegetables available in the streets. There are many butchers in the city. Everything can be found to an affordable price. The weekly cost for my food (including coffee and snacks) was about 50 euros per week.



Figure 3. Mexican market. By Author.

The transportation is also very cheap, every ride in public transport cost about 10 pesos (around 40 cents of euro) and a taxi ride of 40 min is about 50 pesos (around 2.3 euro).

In general the courses are very good but extremely demanding, there is much homework every day, reading and writing is an everyday task. There are also papers during the semester due to the middle term examinations. The program itself is not easy and it needs a lot of study hours. I would love to know beforehand the special festivals around the country, there are so many for different things that is important to choose and do some planning.



Figure 4. Mexican tradition of death representation. By author.

In the overall overview was an amazing experience full of good friend, good food and music! I recommend the University and the country as a host for the exchange semester due to the academic experience and the cultural offer. The experience itself is not expensive (around 2000 euros per the semester) and the options for traveling are endless. The weather is mostly sunny with some days of rain. Without a doubt, an amazing experience.