

Report of Exploratory Student Stay 2015 at Freie Universität Berlin

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Participation in the First Energy Management Incubator of the University Alliance for Sustainability

The Purpose

In November 2015, I had the opportunity to participate in the Management Incubator (MI) workshop of the University Alliance for Sustainability (UAS) as an exploratory student stay at Freie Universität Berlin (FUB). The summer prior to the workshop, I had been involved in setting up connections between FUB and the University of British Columbia (UBC), my home institution. As my current research is closely related to the energy management of academic buildings, Andreas Wanke, the head of the UAS program, invited me to participate in the MI workshop to present my research findings in the context of campus energy management. This became a great opportunity to share some of the findings from my Master's thesis with an interdisciplinary audience and gain feedback and insights from international partner universities. Beyond the workshop, the exploratory student stay allowed me to connect with and learn from FUB's Department for Sustainability and Energy. The student stay was generously supported by a travel grant from the UAS program.

Benefits & Learning

The MI workshop was organized by the UAS team Andreas Wanke and Katrin Risch for participants from the campus management units of all five partner universities: FUB, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Peking University, St. Petersburg State University, and UBC. As the first management workshop of UAS, partner institutions could share for the first time strategies and approaches to sustainability campus management. The workshop engaged participants through presentations on management strategies of each participating institution, focus sessions, as well as expert talks and site visits. As part of a focus session on energy monitoring, I presented my findings from my research in the context of UBC's current energy management strategies to improve the energy performance of campus buildings. These focus sessions leveraged in-depth discussions with project partners on application and potential adaptation of energy management strategies at different partner universities. Expert talks were particularly valuable to explore potential fields of application of research findings and further research opportunities.

Collaborations & Interactions

The workshop became also a unique opportunity to develop collaborations among the five partner universities. Working sessions and informal get-togethers fostered an active exchange of experiences and management strategies on applied sustainability approaches across disciplines. Members of the UAS and FUB management team organized an exceptionally hospitable workshop that offered opportunities to interact with various stakeholders of FUB. As workshop participants meet with FUB's Vice President Brigitta Schütt, industry partners such as Inpolis, as well as with representatives of the sustainability initiative and student services. Beyond the workshop, I connected with staff from the

Department for Sustainability and Energy at FUB to get practical new insights in sustainable energy management of buildings.

Successes and Challenges

Beyond the my research explorations, the workshop and visit of FUB provided a detailed understanding of FUB's energy management strategies, institutional and technical development approaches. Site visits of energy efficiently modernized buildings and innovative sustainability projects of industry partners, provided insights into exemplary energy management and development practices. A particularly interesting workshop component was the exploration of FUB's sustainable management of student canteens on campus. The case study of a high-efficient cafeteria facility showed that a university can provide healthy food options to the campus community, while focusing on an environmentally sustainable food supply.

The workshop also allowed to develop an in-depth understanding of the successes and challenges of the sustainability initiatives of each university. While focus session provided insights into management, the workshop revealed the challenge to apply sustainability programs to different universities settings. As institutional structures and resources varied for each institution, a mutual learning approach was not always possible. This highlighted the need for more focused work sessions that allow management partners to explore common topics on sustainability in greater detail. Emerging ideas were used to develop a set of recommendations for the second MI workshop in Spring 2016.

Potential for Growth

Overall, the participation in the first MI workshop of the UAS program enabled me to present my research findings to an interdisciplinary audience and in an international context. It also helped me to develop a deeper understanding of energy management strategies of a range of international partner universities. The workshop became the platform to connect with staff from all five partnering institutions, as well as faculty and industry partners from FUB. As an international student from Germany, the MI workshop at FUB allowed me to explore potential opportunities to function as an ambassador for UBC and to explore further research options at FUB and other partner universities.