

Dan's IREC Journal with Photos

Berlin, Germany

January 3-17, 2012

January 3, 2012, Tuesday – Journal

Last year to get to the International Real Estate Challenge, we flew directly to Frankfurt and then took a train to Berlin. It took about 36 hours. So when we arrived at the Meininger Hotel/Hostel¹, we were exhausted, and I slept through the first day of meetings! This year we had a new plan.

We left Dulles International Airport on January 3, 2012 at 11:00 pm EST and then flew overnight to London. We arrived in London on January 4, 2012 at about 6:00 am EST and checked into the Sofitel Hotel² around 11:30 am London time. Our plan was to sleep for two hours, get up, walk around, have dinner, go to bed, and get up for our flight at 10:00 am London time. Good plan.

¹ Meininger Hotel,

² Sofitel Hotel London Heathrow Airport, Terminal 5

January 4, 2012 Wednesday - Journal

We had our 37th Wedding Anniversary dinner at the Vivre, L'Esperience des Saveu, which was a first-floor restaurant in the Sofitel. Our expectations were low, very low. However we had a great dinner that was truly worthy of our anniversary celebration. Donna started with a non-descript Australian red wine, and I enjoyed a very neat draft of Grolsch Blond lager. For dinner, Donna had an over-sized house salad and the Indian butter Chicken Curry that was quite good actually.

I had the "seasonal set menu" that began with "fine trout fish mouse" served with a beetroot and dill pancake covered with a chicory and lemon sauce. The main course was, "turkey Ballontine," turkey wrapped with bayonne ham and served with chateau potatoes and "", choux farce terrine pigs in the blanket. Desert was a Christmas pudding with traditional custard flamed rum. All of this was accompanied with a nice white wine, gavi (2010, Riva Leone, Italy). To be sure, I really enjoyed this meal, and to top it off, the restaurant brought us a special anniversary dessert.

By 10:00 pm London time (5:00 pm Eastern time), Donna was already asleep. I hoped that I could get up in the "morning" (7:00 am London, 2:00 am Eastern) to catch our flight to Berlin. Only one problem: I was still wide awake!

January 4, 2012 Wednesday -- Photos



January 5, 2012 Thursday -- Journal

We made it Berlin and checked in to the Holiday Inn Express³. Our room was similar to our room last year but one door down. As Donna and I like to say at the Holiday Inn "the best surprise is no surprise."

Thursday night Donna and I hosted a "welcome to Berlin" dinner for the JHU students participating in the International Real Estate Challenge⁴. All nine students joined at the Athens Taverna that is just across the street from the Meininger Hotel. Everyone was happy and healthy and ready for the next 12 days of intense "Challenges."

I ordered a #175 and Donna had the #91. The good news is that the beer was cold, and the giant dessert sundaes looked awesome.

³ Berlin Holiday Inn, Stresemannstrasse 49

⁴ The Johns Hopkins students participating in the International Real Estate Challenge included: Yu Lan, Bofei Zheng, Rubin Chen, Sanam Humayun, Shekhar Sharma, Hillary Pham, Brandon Jenkins, Michael Tompkins, and Orry Michael

January 5, 2012 Thursday -- Photos



January 6, 2012 Friday -- Journal

The Challenge faculty met at 1:30 pm⁵, and all of the students (about 50) joined the meeting at 3:00 pm. The students had already been assigned to seven "City Teams." Although team members had already "met" each other on Facebook (I'm not sure how this was done, but they did) this was their first time meeting face to face. Just like at Lake Wobegone, "the women were strong, the men were good-looking, and all of the students were above average."

The City Teams went to dinner to get further acquainted. Donna and I walked to the Altes Zollhaus, an old half-timbered restaurant on the Landwehr Kanal. Upon arriving at the restaurant we couldn't find the way in. Luckily a passerby told us that we needed to ring the door bell. When the waitress' first words were, "Would you like to start with some sparkling wine?" I knew we were at the right place. For "warm starters" Donna had the glazed duck liver with Brussels sprouts and wild cranberries, and I had the fried sea bass on an olive-fennel-fondue. We didn't share.

Donna's main course was a fillet of veal in a puffy pastry with young carrots, and my main course was confit musk duck leg with red cabbage and a Thuringer potato dumpling. Halfway through our main courses, we traded plates. Both dishes were absolutely delicious! A nice bottle of a blended red wine was a perfect match, and convinced us to take a taxi back to the hotel.

⁵ The faculty members included:

Tim Bennett, Kingston University, London, UK;
Declan McKeown, Dublin Institute of Technology, Ireland;
Eric Schutte, Hanzehogeschool, Groningen, The Netherlands;
Andre Ciaramella, Politecnico di Milano, Italy;
Andrej Adamuscin, Slovak University of Technology, Slovakia;
Mikka Putto, Helsinki University of Technology, Finland;
Anna Stankowska, Poland Warsaw School of Economics, Poland or Krakow University, Poland; and
Daniel Kohlhepp, Johns Hopkins Carey Business School.

January 7, 2012 Saturday – Journal

Day Two of the Challenge featured a poster-mixer and a Berlin-wide scavenger hunt (named the Berlin Challenge). JHU had two poster teams, "Green Leases"⁶ and "The Measurement of Productivity in the Work Place."

⁷ Half of one poster team would answer questions and discuss the poster while the other half would look at the other teams' posters and chat with their presenting half. After 45 minutes, the half-teams switched places. After 90 minutes, all the students were smiling and appeared to be old friends.

During the poster-mixer, Tim, Declan, Erik, Andrea, and I met with Kristen Bammel who was the Education and Development Manager for the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) for Europe, Middle East, and Africa. RICS had donated a cash prize for the winners of the IREC and was also interested in helping IREC find outside (or third-party) funding for future Challenges. For me, this was a great opportunity to learn about the history of the Challenge and to appreciate the very real issues going forward.

It was a cold, rainy day but the students were enthusiastic as they headed out to discover Berlin on their scavenger hunt. I wished them luck.

Donna and I ate dinner at a Milagro's, a Berlin family restaurant/bar that we remembered from last year. It was much like Julio's (the old Jared Bar) in my hometown of DuBois, Pennsylvania. Milagro's was small yet comfortable and full of old friends, families with children, and a dog or two. We got the English version of the menu, but all of the specials were in German. Our waiter offered to translate the Specials for us, and after 15 minutes, we were both perspiring (his English was comparable to my German). Donna got the pork medallions, "Schweinemedailons im Speckmantel an Dejon," and I had the goose, "Gansekeule knasprigg mit Apfelrothkohl an Braton." Donna ordered her wine by the color (just like at Julios) but was surprised to get nice Cabernet Sauvignon. I enjoyed drafts of Pilsner Urquell and Warsteiner Pilsner. It was a cold, rainy walk back to our hotel, but for the first time in four days, we slept through the night.

⁶ The Green lease poster team included: Yu Lan, Bofei, Hillary Pham, and dMike Thompson

⁷ The Measurement of Productivity included: Rubin Chen, Sanam Humanyum, Branden Jenkins, Orry Michael, Shekhar Sharma

January 8, 2012 Sunday - Journal

After our class meetings this morning, Donna and I walked to the Humbolt Box on Museum Island which was a new, privately funded landmark in Berlin. It really was a marketing center for the Humbolt Forum which is the "most significant cultural construction project in the world." On our walk to the Humbolt Box we passed numerous outdoor "curry wurst" stands which sold Berlin hot dogs on the sidewalks. We wanted to try them, but again "it was a cold and rainy day." When we arrived at the "temporary", five-story, poured-in-place concrete structure, we were gratified to find that there was a cafe on the top floor. What a great surprise that the cafe was really an elegant restaurant that sold not only curry wurst, but also fine beer and Berliner meatballs as well. Our return walk to our hotel was in the rain, but we were happy with our authentic Berliner lunch.

Tonight was too ugly to go too far, so we walked up the street to Cafe Streseman (formerly Schottenkaml since 1936). Donna had the Zuricher Geschnetzelkes (slice pork and mushrooms with brown gravy) and I had "Knuckle of Pork." Donna said, "Make a note of this. It is really good!" My "knuckle" was quite good too.

January 8, 2012 Sunday - Photos



January 9, 2012 Monday -- Journal

It's amazing how dreary the weather was in Berlin. Monday, Donna and I walked to the Potsdamer Platz for lunch at a little place we had found last year, Lutter and Wegner⁸, a restaurant and wine merchant since 1811 (do you believe this?). The restaurant was one large room with loaded wine racks piled high to the 15-foot ceilings on every wall. There were 14 very nice tables, and the atmosphere felt very special. Donna ordered a Lutter and Wegner Sekt (sparkling wine) to start, and I had their dry reisling. For lunch Donna ordered a wiener schnitzel of veal with a warm potatoe salad, and I ordered the creamed goulash of veal with a homemade "Swabian (spaetzle) noodles." The wine was excellent and our memories of last year were positive so our expectations soared as lunch was served. However, the meals were pedestrian at best and unimaginative. The wiener schnitzel was cooked in old oil (yuk), my goulash was not worth reporting on, and the waiter seemed a bit rude. We walked back toward hotel in the cold rain and I went on to class for the students presentations of there "strategic briefs."

That night Donna and I hosted the faculty to dinner at the 12 Apostles restaurant to celebrate the 46th birthday of our friend and faculty from the Netherlands, Eric. The restaurant was several "underground" stops from our hotel. It was located beneath the elevated railway so, the virtually empty, restaurant shivered and shook as the overhead trains rolled by about every ten minutes. Donna, our friend and faculty member from Finland, Mikka, and I agreed to share the house specialty, the "cartwheel" size pizza with everything on it. It was huge, filling, and memorable only for its size.

The rain had let up so our group decided to walk back to our hotel. We started south down Friedrich Strass (a very upscale shopping district) then turned west onto Unter Den Linden (the grand boulevard of Berlin) up to the Brandendenburg Gate (where President Reagan said, "Tear down this Wall!"). From the Gate we headed south on Ebert and passed the chilling Holocaust Monument, the U.S Embassy, and the British Embassy as we entered the famous Potsdamer Platz. At this point the rain picked up so we picked up our pace down Stresemann Strasse to our hotel where we bid our friends good-night.

⁸ Lutter and Wegner, Altes Potsdamer Strasse, www.l-w-berlin.de

January 9, 2012 Monday -- Photos



January 10, 2012 Tuesday – Journal

We started early: up at 6:30 am to make our flight to Vienna. We had a four-day break as the student city-teams went to Amsterdam, Warsaw, London, Munich, Milan, Vienna, or Bratislava. Our plan was to fly to Vienna today and then to drive Bratislava tomorrow. We left Berlin in the rain, and arrived in Vienna to overcast and very windy weather as we checked into the hotel.⁹

Our first order of business in Vienna was to walk to the City Center (Old Town) and look for a place for lunch. We found the "best Viennese cafe" in town only to be informed that the non-smoking area was closed. It's amazing how annoying smoke can be for dedicated eaters.

A block away, next to the Frick Bookstore, we spied Weinerin, a small cafe with a no-smoking sign in the window. Donna had the veal goulash with "shapeless" butter noodles and glass of Edlmoser Mauer that was a very good red wine with the English subtitle of "cult Red 2008." I enjoyed a .5 liter draft of Ottakringer Vom Fass which was a slightly sweet, but excellent beer. I had two bowls of soup, both of which made me swoon:

- Beef broth with strips of pancake and vegetables and
- Sweet chestnut cream soup with cranberries.

Satisfied and warmed-up, we toured the Old Town around St Steven's Cathedral and Kohlmarkt Street which was a fascinating urban area with fine shops, grand old buildings, and pedestrian-only streets. However, the fierce winds made the walking very unpleasant. As darkness descended on the town around 4:00 pm. We headed back to our hotel.

Later that evening, tired but hungry, we set out for Vincent's, "the best close local restaurant in District 2" according to the young desk clerk at the hotel. We wandered around the cold and rainy streets never finding the restaurant and when approached by some locals were told that it was closed on Tuesdays. We headed back to find the other restaurant the clerk had recommended but never did find it. We finally spotted a local restaurant, Replaus and Reblausgart 'L and an Irish Pub. Donna chose the former.

I had a draft of Puntigamer Pather, a great tasting pilsner, and the Serbian-style pork chops. Donna ordered their special combination platter: beef

⁹ Hotel Imlauer Wein, Rotensterngasse 49, Vienna

goulash with a dumpling, sausage, and egg. The service was excellent, the prices were modest, and the food tasted great. It was an unexpected treat for two pooped travelers

January 10, 2012 Tuesday - Photos



January 11, 2012 Wednesday -- Journal

We met our car and driver at 7:00 am in front of our hotel and headed east to Bratislava watching the sun slowly rise. We were to meet the Bratislava-team at 9:00 am at Collier International office at the "Building European Business Center." Always early, we arrived at the office at 8:00 am. Lucky for us, a Crown Plaza Hotel was next door so enjoyed coffee and croissants in the lobby bar until 9:00. Collier's Martin Varacka and Michaela Horelicanova oriented us to the Bratislava local economy and described the office market conditions.

In a three-taxi caravan, our group went to River Park, a 1.4 million square meter "multifunction" project on the Danube River that was completed last year. Ing. Radoslav Christov, the senior manager of J&T Real Estate (the developer), gave a presentation in the marketing conference room and then led us on a tour of the eight-building development. I was very impressed. The very contemporary buildings were visually beautiful and appeared to function well with hotel, office, retail, and residential components. The interior space and female employees were also beautiful.

The group then went to West End Square to tour another class A office building that was several years old and not in the same league as River Place.

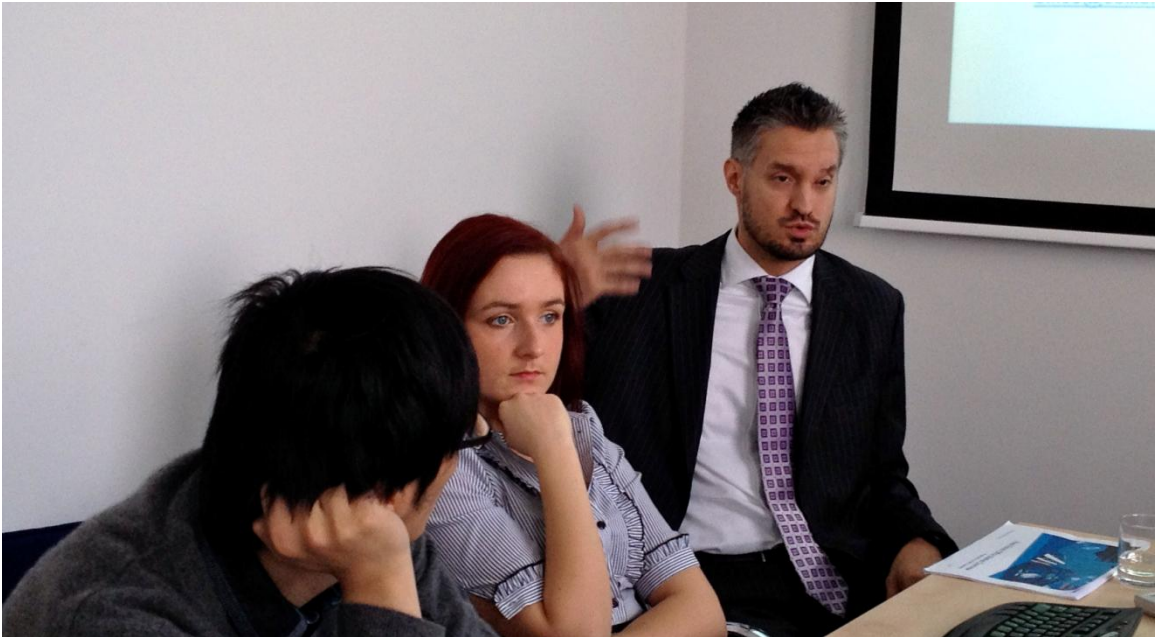
Hungry for lunch, our taxi cab caravan re-formed, and Andrej, the Bratislava tutor, and his assistant Janka took us to the I Slovak Pub. At this old, authentic, "the best" pub in town, Andrej ordered an assortment of traditional Slovakian foods for our enjoyment as well as a powerful liquor, Hruskavica. Most of the students had a Slovakian cola drink, but several others and I enjoyed a draft of Zlaty Bazant, a great beer.

The Bratislava team members were from Germany, the Netherlands, Finland, China, Italy, Poland, and Ireland, but today we were all Slovaks as we enjoyed perogies (two kinds), heluski (two kinds), potato flat cakes (two kinds), and blueberry-stuffed dumplings rolled on cocoa and sheep cheese.

After our late lunch, Andrej arranged for his friend and professional guide, Milan, to take us on a walking tour of Bratislava's Old City. It was really fascinating. I wished that we had had more time in Bratislava.

The sun had already set when we met our car and driver to head west for Vienna. We were exhausted when we reached our hotel room. We discussed several options for dinner, but quickly agree on Plan A: Dan goes to McDonald for hamburgers! In addition to the usual burger and fries, we had deep fried brie with cream cheese and raspberry sauce. A real treat, especially for McDonalds menu. We were asleep by 9:30 pm.

January 11, 2012 Wednesday -- Photos









January 12, 2012 Thursday – Journal

Our morning evaporated as we slept in late and Donna did laundry in the sink while we and tried to map out our path to a 3:00 pm appointment at the FHWein University of Applied Sciences of WKW. For the first time this trip, we enjoyed bright sunshine and blue, cloudless skies. Two large coffees and two muffins from McDonald's made our breakfast (and we can report that McDonald's coffee is better than the hotel's). We took a short walk to a sidewalk sausage stand for lunch, and then caught a cab to the University to meet the real estate institute's director of international affairs, Ernst Hofmann, who met us at the front door, perfect timing.

After a tour of the educational facility and a brief meeting with Dean Otto Bammer, Ernst asked us if we would like a tour of the City Center and then get a coffee and cake. We jumped at the idea, and in 20 minutes we were again in St Steven Square and then walking down Kohlmarkt Street. Ernst, a tax counselor, gave us a great tour and explained the tax subsidies that the Austrian government provided for renovating historic buildings (which was almost the same as the US). As we walked and talked, Ernst led us through the Palace grounds toward the City Hall and then pointed to the Landtmann Cafe. "It's a good place for coffee and cake, I think."

We all ordered Vienna Melange Coffee which was a blend of coffee and milk served with foamed cream on top. Ernst said that he was watching his weight, but encouraged us to order the "Cakes." Donna had the Milchrahmstrudel and I had the Apfelstrudel mit Vanillesosse. We both swooned as we gobbled down our streusel cakes. These were totally decadent!

When Ernst asked us where we were going to have dinner, we said that we were too stuffed to consider the thought. "If you like traditional Viennese dishes, you must go to Figlmuellers¹⁰. They have the very best wiener schnitzel," he declared and gave us the address from his iPhone. Ernst had to leave for another appointment, but directed us to the restaurant saying " It is crowded and difficult to get in so you may want to stop by and make reservations for later tonight." Ernst said his good byes as we sat there and vowed never to eat such large desserts again.

¹⁰ Figlmüller, Wollzeile 5, Vienna, www.figlmueLLer.at

Finally we started our walk. When we got to Figlmueller's and stopped in to make reservations for later tonight, the maitre'd said, "We are not taking reservations but we can take you now." We didn't want to miss the opportunity so, even though still full from dessert, we agreed to go in. Donna had the Figlmueller schnitzel (pork) and I had the chicken schnitzel. We became seriously and uncomfortably full! (Did I mention that we also enjoyed potato soup and potato salad as well?)

The evening walk through the City Center was magical. The Christmas lights were still up, and each street appeared to have chandeliers, giant red balls, and icicles hanging down the middle. This is why we travel!

January 12, 2012 Thursday -- Photos



January 13, 2012 Friday – Journal

Friday the 13th ended without a Murphy's Law event. We planned our last walk, last lunch in Vienna, and a late afternoon flight to Berlin. Everything worked out fine. We walked to the Center City again, and this time we actually went inside Stephansdom (St Stephen's Cathedral). I lit a candle for all of my old friends who attended St. Catherine's catechism classes with me many years ago. This cathedral, which dates back to the 12th century, was rebuilt since its destruction in WW II. The exterior is currently being refurbished, and the interior looked ... well ... like the inside of an old gothic cathedral.

We then walked down my favorite street in Vienna called Kohlmarkt. There is no doubt in my mind that Kohlmarkt was named after my relatives, all of those old Kohl-heppers (cabbage farmers) selling their vegetables in this marketplace. At Kohlmarkt 15 is the Cafe Demel¹¹ that is the “best cafe in Vienna for cake-lovers.” We got a nice window table and went to inspect the buffet of cakes and pastries, which brought back our memories of last night!

Donna ordered coffee and potato soup while I had coffee and Vienna sausage. Donna's soup was the best ever. My Vienna sausages came in two 12-inch links accompanied with mustard and shaved horseradish and a delicious roll. When the waitress said, "Sweets?" we looked at each other, and asked for the check.

While eating our lunch, the weather continued to deteriorate. When we left the cafe, the cold rain started in earnest, and three blocks later we were pelted by hail. By the time we got our bags and cab at the hotel, the hail had changed to snow, and when we boarded our plane on the outside stairway, we were in a virtual white-out! After being de-iced, the plane took off, and the flight was uneventful.

We arrived at the Holiday Inn Express at Stresemann Strasse 49, checked in to the same room as last year 651 next door to the room from last week, and decided to finish our respective books. I finished *In the Garden of Beasts* by Erik Larson, which was about the American Ambassador to Germany in the 1930's who witnessed and warned about Hitler's rise to power only to be dismissed by the US Department of State. The story was told in Berlin so I

¹¹ Café Demel, Kohlmarkt 14, Vienna

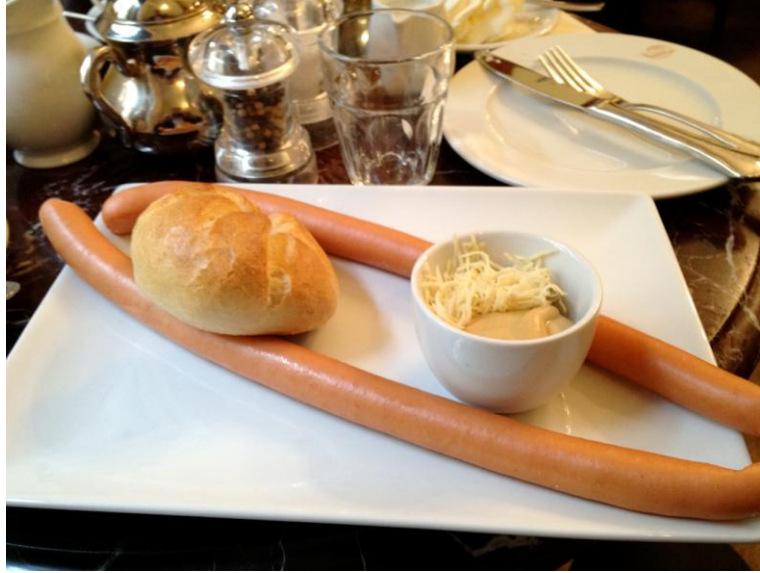
recognized many (but not all) of the locations and geographic references. Berlin's history in the 20th century feels like the story of a battered child that survives despite unbelievable beatings and abuse. Enough said.

However, I do love Berlin especially in the rainy, cold January weather.

Tired once again, we decided to eat at the restaurant across the street from the hotel, the Wirtshaus Streseemann who's motto is "honest German fare." Surprisingly, the draft beer selection was good so we enjoyed Bitburger Pils, Konig Pilsner, Kostrtzer Schwarzbier (a delicious dark beer), and Hauptstadtbier. Donna had the pork knuckle with mashed potatoes, sauerkraut, and brown beer sauce while I had the venison leg in red wine cranberry sauce with potato dumplings. The venison was a little strong, but the sauce was terrific.

January 13, 2012 Friday - Photos





January 14, 2012, Saturday - Journal

Saturday morning, I was up at 6:30 am and the only person eating at the hotel breakfast buffet. I read the latest *Economist Magazine* from cover to cover, drank too much coffee, and enjoyed a ham and cheese roll-up, a delicious bread roll with crème cheese and honey, and a bowl of cherry yogurt with chocolate muesli on top. By 8:30 I was wired and ready to check on the students: nine left the USA; nine arrived in Berlin; nine left Berlin; and now I hope that nine had returned to Berlin last night. They did!

I had an early morning session with the students, and for the first time ever, I looked up at blue skies and bright sunshine. After class I rendezvoused with Donna, and we headed out to the TV Tower at Alexanderplatz¹². The TV Tower is a 300 meter high structure with an observation deck and revolving restaurant on top. We had never seen Berlin in sunshine so this was our chance to enjoy the “best view in town” and perhaps have a meal on top. The cab driver dropped us off at Alexanderplatz, and we immediately saw the queue for the Tower. It was about 50’ long so we quickly got in line outside. Slowly but surely, we worked closer to the door. Finally inside the door we realized that the line wrapped around the base of the tower and then double-backed again to the ticket counter. Thirty minutes later we bought our tickets and were informed that we could enter the line for the elevator in thirty more minutes. When our turn came we got in line to the elevator. After another ten minutes we got into the elevator where the operator told us that the “ride” to the top would take 40 seconds!

Our luck changed when the hostess at restaurant said that we would typically needed reservations, but she did just happen to have a two-seat table available. We found Table #30 and gasped at the spectacular view. What an impressive and beautiful city sparkling before us! With our tourist map spread out on the white table cloth, we sipped our sparkling wine and identified all of the street, parks, and major buildings. Did I mention that with the rotating restaurant, the bright sunshine was always in someone’s eyes (especially mine)?

For lunch Donna had the duck leg comfit and I ordered the catfish go figure! I must admit that this was the best meal that I ever ate at the top of an observation tower.

I had to be back for student conferences at 4:00 so we left the restaurant at 3:00 and walked town one level to the elevators where we were met with a

¹² www.tv-turm.de

mass of humanity all waiting for the elevators to go down. Where did these people come from?

Thirty minutes later we reached the elevators for the 40 second trip to the bottom. We hailed a cab, and I was only 15 minutes late for the conferences.

After our conferences the faculty agreed to meet to go the “best Thai restaurant” in Berlin, only a 25-minute walk away. Upon arriving, we realized that this unique place was packed and couldn’t take the seven of us. Undaunted, we walked around the streets in the crisp night air until we arrived back at the Thai restaurant. We found a table for seven in the lower level and sat down, satisfied to be there.

But here’s the deal: you get up person by person and go to the kitchen bar at the front door and order your food by the number. The cashier tallies your order, collects the money, and the kitchen staff (four cooks in a 3’ by 5’ foot area) sets your drinks and soups on a tray and sends you back to your table. It was a precarious walk carrying a tray full of spillable foods down a winding, poorly lit stair case to the lower level. As soon as I gave Donna our Singha beers and a boiling hot bowl of soup, a scoreboard lit up with our dinner numbers, 92 and 93. Now it was Donna’s turn to go up to the kitchen bar to collect our meals and negotiate the winding, poorly lit staircase back to the table. Everyone in our party went through the same drill as did everyone in the restaurant. Finally ready to eat, the food was really quite good.

Our walk back to the hotel was rather enjoyable as we visited with our friends from all different countries and compared notes about our lives in such different places and circumstances.

January 15, 2012 Sunday

On Sundays in Berlin everything is closed but museums, so our plan was to visit museums on this clear, crisp, and sunny day. Our first stop was the recently completed Topography of Terror Museum, which was only four blocks from our hotel. Set on the site of the old SS Headquarters during World War II, the city-block area was bordered on the north side by a remaining section of the Berlin Wall. The entire museum was dedicated to exposing the horrors and atrocities of the SS and Gestapo during Hitler's rise to power in Nazi Germany and WWII. The *Garden of Beasts* book was all about these activities in this specific neighborhood so I felt a real connection to the story of the museum. However, the museum story was horrible, depressing, and dark beyond words. After a couple hours, Donna and I were whipped. We needed to change our attitude to salvage this beautiful afternoon.

You may have heard of curry wurst, but I'm sure that no one has been to the Curry Wurst Museum¹³! It's new; it's interesting; it's well done; and it's frivolous, and over priced! We enjoyed good laughs and strange facts as we learned the "history" of this Berlin fast-food staple. Our moods changed for the better, but we had a hankering for curry wurst as we left the museum

Only a block away was Check Point Charlie, the symbol of the Cold War and the scene of numerous Soviet Union and USA showdowns and stand offs. We got our passports stamped at a special relic of the old "Check Point Charlie" and spotted a curry wurst stand across the street. Eating our curry wurst and drinking a Beck's beer at the sidewalk establishment in twenty degree weather, we mused that this infamous intersection was now only a four-way stop in modern Berlin. I don't know what this means, but I had an appointment with the students in 45 minutes.

Each city -team was preparing a final presentation for Monday that would determine the winner of the International Real Estate Challenge. I was the assigned tutor for the Munich team, but they assured me that they didn't need any help from me. Smart kids, I'd say.

Our faculty group had changed a little as several didn't come back from the break and new faculty arrived. Marzia from Italy, Michael and Ernst from Austria, Buran from Sweden, and Steven and Martine from Ireland joined Donna and me, Declan (from Ireland), Adrej (from Bratislava), and Tim (from the UK) gathered at the Greek Taverna across the street for dinner. While the menu had not changed from a week earlier (or a year earlier for that matter)

¹³ Curry Wurst Museum, Schutzenstrasse 70, Berlin, www.currywurstmuseum.com

everyone found something different to eat. I had a Mythos Greek beer, and the restaurant served complimentary Ouzo.

We started discussing our research: Marzia had finished a book on real estate development, Andrej wrote a book on office market analysis, and Michael had just finished a book on real estate investments; and then moved on to comparing the real estate programs at our various universities. We agreed that the International Real Estate Challenge was valuable experience but need updated with new material.

Our spirited conversation went on to include the global financial crisis, the European banking system, the Republican primary elections in the USA, the Greek debt situation, and the future of the European Common Market. It was all fascinating, illuminating, and stimulating.

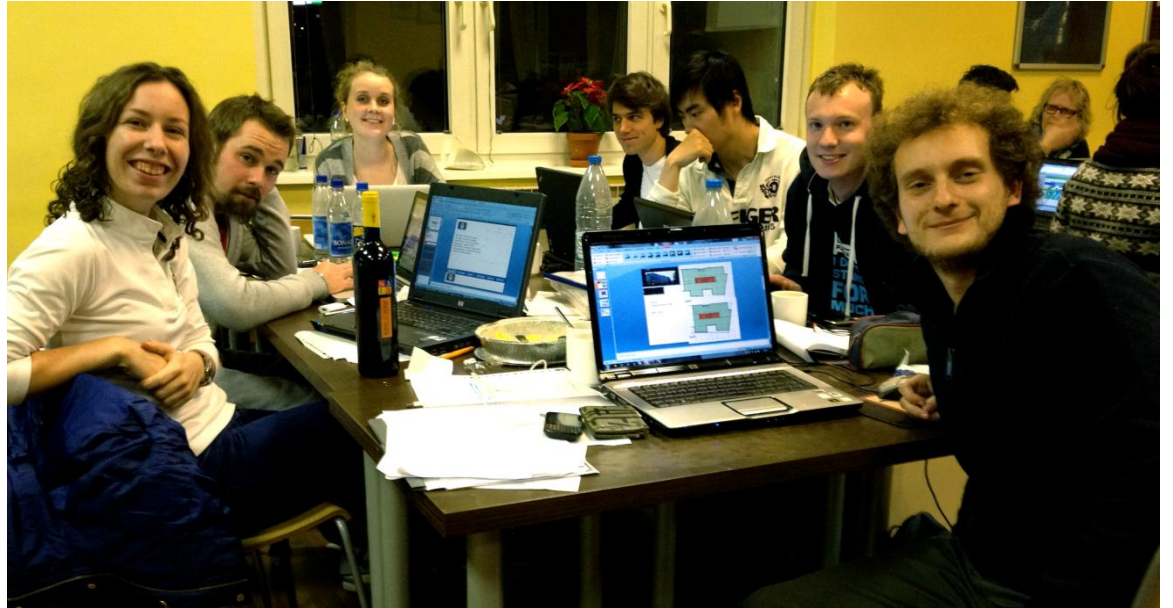
January 15, 2012, Sunday -- Photos















January 16, 2012 Monday – Journal

Snow started the last day of the International Real Estate Challenge, but the inside temperature was high as each student-team had to make a 20-minute presentation about its recommended relocation solution which was followed by a 10-minute question and answer period. Each team had 2-3 persons present and a “native” English speaker could not speak for more than 5 minutes. The questions would be directed to, and only answered by, the non-presenters. Each team seemed to have different strategy for using their members, but the power point slides were awesome for every team. The students, who were dressed in an assortment of campus-casual for the last two weeks, suddenly showed up in smart and professional business attire.

JHU had one student on five teams, and two students on two teams. I held my breath as each student either presented or answered questions while at the same time I tried to think up a semi-intelligent question to ask. The students did great. The JHU international students all spoke fluent English while several other students struggled both with English and nerves. I was like a proud father beaming at the success of his young progeny.

After the presentations, the faculty selected the top three teams for the afternoon presentations. It wasn't easy since so many teams were so even. At last we chose Vienna, Munich, and London for the afternoon presentations. The panel of questioners changed some and the student presentations were all 100% shaper than they were just a couple hours earlier. All of the students watched the final presentations and were allowed to ask a question or two for each team. The panel adjourned to deliberate and all of the students were asked to re-assemble in 15 minutes for the awards and closing remarks.

The re-assembled student body was now palpably relaxed and in high-spirits. Tim and Declan had some words of thanks and appreciation, and Erick encouraged every one to join the Linked-In site that he was going to set up for future contacts. Finally Tim announced the 2012 Challenge winner to be: LONDON!

The London Team went to the front stage to receive applause, congratulations, and a celebratory bottle of Champaign. After a team picture, they attempted to sing “Let It Be”!

Now all “best friends forever,” the group retired to the restaurant next door for pizza, beer, snap shots, and hugs and kisses all around.

After saying goodbyes, Donna and I walked up to the Stresemann Café for beefsteak, calves liver, and a bottle of Lutter and Wegner's Sekt (sparkling wine). The only thing left for us to do was to pack up and leave.

January 16, 2012 Monday -- Photos











January 17, 2012 Tuesday -- Journal

It was dark, cold, and rainy as we packed up, checked out, and boarded our flights from Berlin to London and London to Baltimore. After a long cab ride during rush-hour traffic from the Baltimore Washington International airport, we were finally “home” in Arlington, Virginia at 7:00 pm eastern time (1:00 am Berlin time). We had a memorable, educational, and fun adventure with great students, good friends, and plenty to eat. Only 12 months until we do it again!