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As a graduate student studying Landscape Architecture and Urban Design I frequently look to Copenhagen for examples of new projects, progressive urban planning, low-impact transportation models and aesthetically pleasing functional designs. I also studied in Copenhagen at the Danish Institute for Study Abroad while studying Architecture as an undergraduate and it completely changed the way I looked at design and the way that people can live in a city. Since DIS was a private school with mostly American students, I was eager to have the chance to study abroad in Denmark again, with Danish students and under the Danish curriculum, and jumped at the chance to apply for the ScanDesign Fellowship. It was difficult to decide between the University of Copenhagen's Landscape Architecture program and the one at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts Architecture School (RASA)/Kunstakademiets Arkitektskole (KA) because the programs were so different, and it was very hard to choose given that it was almost impossible to get a real understanding of what the classes were like at each school since they change very often, few former students have gone through a landscape architecture curriculum from UW, and the structure of the schools were so different. I ended up choosing the Architecture School (KA). This decision was made partly on reputation and partly because I was very interested in the school's approach, and the location in Holmen was very good and I was excited to be able to spend time in Christianshavn. The Department I joined, Department 1, was nothing like I expected it to be, which was a good and a bad thing. First of all, the departments are not on a gradient with 1 being city planning and 11 being furniture (which was my understanding when choosing the department to join) but there were significant differences in each department and many of the exchange students I spoke to from other departments had a totally different understanding of what they would be doing than they actually did in their studios. This is partly an issue of communication, which I think will get better as the Academy gets used to having exchange students (which is very new, especially for some departments/ concentrations), and also due to a very different way of teaching architectural design in Denmark than in other parts of the world.

The main advice I would give prospective students is to bring extremely warm clothes to Copenhagen! I was completely frozen all winter and although it was an anomaly (this year was the snowiest since 1996), it is also a city that you should be spending as much time as possible outside. Bringing me to my other piece of advice, get a bicycle! There is really no other way to travel around Copenhagen, whether it is during a daily commute, sightseeing, or going out with friends. The bus takes a very long time and although seems warmer, the wait time plus additional walking negates any time that you will spend in the warm bus.

The Architecture School had a short orientation with all of the international students studying in various departments. This helped us orient ourselves on

campus, as well as meet the people that I spent the most time with. I think it is pretty typical, especially for students only spending a half year doing an exchange, to mostly have international friends (and not as many Danish friends). This is my experience but also seemed universal, and it took almost to the end of my time in Denmark to spend enough time with the Danish students that we became close.

The academic structure in the Architecture School is very different from my experience at University of Washington or my undergraduate school, University of Virginia. Instead of having 4-6 classes per quarter (another difference is that RASA is on the semester system), there is one main studio course that you are always working on a project in (our project had 4 phases but all were working toward the same goal on the same site). In addition to this main project there were workshops, which usually took all day and were completed over the duration of a week. For example, we had a guest professor and did field work and had lectures and presentations all day, then had a mini-studio project that we worked on at night for presenting the next day. Another workshop took us to various sites for photography and composition course, so we learned about composition but also saw and explored sites that our professors had selected to relate as case studies to our larger project. There was also a forestry course, a tree identification course, a GIS course, and a few other workshops, all lasting about one week and taking up all of the time in the day to complete.

The main project I worked on was at a medium-large scale for a landscape architecture project and was located in a suburb of Copenhagen that is increasingly connected to the center city by public transportation. We designed a small community on the site, which is currently a green field used for some agriculture and pastureland. It was very difficult for me coming from the UW – where I am constantly overwhelmed by about 5 totally different subjects and courses, and am expected to complete lots of work in a short amount of time, usually at the expense of gaining any real depth to the project – to the Royal Academy, where the project goes into great depth and there are not a lot of assignments to hand in (so little feedback is given by professors). I thought it would be a welcome change from the crazy pace of the typical American architecture or landscape architecture program, which it was in many ways, but I also found it was really hard to adapt to that working style and it wasn't until toward the end of the semester that I really found a good way of working almost completely independently.

Another difference between KA and UW was the amount of homogeneity. The students at UW, especially at the graduate level, come from a wide variety of backgrounds and have very different views on design and landscape issues, as well as skill sets picked up from various schools or jobs. In addition, classes are structured in a way that, although there are many classes that all students must take at UW, one student can have a completely different education as another student, depending on what courses and concentrations they choose aside from those core courses. This is not so in Denmark. The students have mostly all had a totally similar background, and almost all go straight through from Bachelor's to Masters

without working in between (which is not common at UW). This makes for many of the students having the same or similar views on design, aesthetics, etc. This is one of my favorite things about doing the exchange at KA but also one of the aspects of their school that makes me most content with having chosen a graduate school in the states, for the bulk of my studies. It is also, I think, what makes Denmark such a powerhouse in the world of international design.

Aside from the course structure itself, KA is situated in an amazing spot (across from the new Opera House, near Christiania and Christianshavn and easily accessible to Amager and the Center), has a beautiful campus with a good library, a decent canteen (food is significantly cheaper here than going out other places for takeout, but all tastes the same), and is close to a Netto grocery store (which is good for those frequent weeks that you will be living in studio, morning to late at night). The computer lab and access to it is probably the worst I have ever seen in a university and my biggest practical advice to an incoming student is to bring a good, fairly new computer with all of the Adobe software at least. I made the mistake of assuming that the computer facilities were fine and had a very old computer, and it was a very bad experience working in the computer lab on old outdated computers while my classmates were working together on their laptops upstairs, and then when my computer completely died it was horrible, since it is very expensive in Denmark to buy a new one and I had to wait until I had a visitor that could bring me one that I ordered to the states. Also, the labs close around 6 pm (and most nights I worked until around 10 pm if possible) and the only way to access them after hours is to clear it with your professor and security days in advance and then hope that you can reach a security guard to open them. Much of the work for the classes is expected to be on the computer, but usually with Adobe software and not CAD or other advanced software.

Our instructors, Steen Hoyer and Sophie Sahlqvist, were the main lecturer and studio critic respectively, and both were present at our reviews. Steen usually lectured in Danish and when I asked him where I could find the information in the lectures and books in English replied, "Just look at the images," which was usually adequate but left large holes in my learning while at KA. Sophie was an excellent critic but at first it was hard for me to communicate my ideas and where I was coming from as a designer, due to my very different education and outlook and lack of time available to meet with our critic. Once I began to completely give into the Danish way of teaching instead of trying to make sense of it in my own way it was better, but it was a long process to get there. At the end of the studio we had a week-long trip around Denmark with most of our classmates (some went to Japan for a study trip with Department 1, an option for me but too expensive), and it was a chance to get to know everyone better – unfortunately it was at the end! I have the utmost respect for my professors despite the difficulty and am so happy that I had the chance to learn from one of the most renowned landscape architects in the world, Steen Hoyer, and his wonderful assistant professor Sophie.

Another one of the biggest obstacles for the international students in the Landscape Architecture program was that most lectures were in Danish and most of the time the Danish (and Norwegian) students gave their presentations in Danish and were critiqued in Danish. Our assignments were also in Danish and it sometimes took weeks for them to be translated for us into English (and although I painstakingly translated the written assignments myself right away, I usually was not able to get much of the information correct). This led to a total misunderstanding of the project at times and a lack of communication with the other students since we did not really know what their projects were about. As a result, the three international students were on the periphery of most conversations about the project and were usually unsure about what we were doing. Our individual critiques were in English but were infrequent. I took Danish classes at UW and tried to learn on my own, but it is a difficult language to learn and I was not able to communicate, but got to a basic level in Danish and learned a lot of technical vocabulary. Other tracks in our department (Architecture or Urban Planning) were in English and I think all other Departments that had international students were also in English (which was my understanding about Landscape Architecture too until about the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> week). In addition to the language translation difficulties, it has been very hard for me to figure out how the class structure translates to UW coursework and I am still working on it in order to receive credit.

My room in Copenhagen was wonderful and in Vesterbro, which was a perfect location for commuting to Holmen and exploring the city. It was very different than my living experience in Seattle, where I live with two roommates, since I chose to have a room in a family's flat. It was pretty solitary most of the time, but the family was great and it was nice to observe how they lived and integrate with their lives a little, mostly chatting while cooking since I shared a kitchen with them, but also have total freedom to go in and out as I pleased. I got lucky and found this arrangement before I arrived and was happy I did that, and since it was my first choice I didn't research housing much. I would recommend a similar arrangement to anyone who wanted to live close to a family but not if they did not like children or wanted a more anonymous living arrangement since I did have to interact with them a lot, which was great since I got along with them very well but it would be hard if that was not the case since they were home with the kids most of the day. Vesterbro was a great location for living the city life and I enjoyed being so central to everything in Copenhagen and close to Frederiksberg (where there are some beautiful parks).

I had a few experiences with the healthcare system in Denmark and was sick a lot of time I was there, between what I think was swine flu (and the doctor just said, "It's a virus so there is nothing we can do, if you are still sick in 2 weeks come back), and winter and summer colds. I also went to the dentist and when they found a cavity they told me to wait a year and then fill it. Both times I felt like the doctors were competent and the process was really nice and fast – not like going to the doctor in the States! It was interesting when I was sick since there is basically two kinds of over the counter medicine – for "the slime" or for "the pain." Bringing lots

of American medicine, if you usually take it, is a good idea. As for safety, while on a bicycle I always felt safe, and on foot at night in Vesterbro I had some encounters that made me feel uncomfortable but I never was physically harmed.

Most of the people I met in Copenhagen were students at KA. I was usually at school, with long hours in the studio, and my fellow landscape architecture students and I bonded over late nights working, going to vegan dinners in Christiania (about 5 USD for a plate of food, which is very cheap for Copenhagen – this is about the only time I ate out in the city), picnics by the lake, windy days at Amager Strand (beach), etc. I spent a lot of time exploring the city and surroundings on my bike and by train, and also participated in a few trips with various student organizations (including those run by U Copenhagen). I joined a gym, which I would not recommend to most since there is little opportunity to meet new people (but wonderful to have access to a sauna on the coldest days). I also attended lots of art gallery and architecture exhibits and openings, and had a great time at the KA Fredag Bars (similar to the UW happy hour but much more fun) and going to see concerts at places like Vega, Rust, and Sunday open-mic in Christiania after a weekend in the studio.

When meeting new people I found there was a language barrier but also a difficulty in breaking the ice with people, in addition to the language barrier. I found the stereotype of the Danes being reserved and hard to open up to mostly true but once I got to know people I found that people were very fun and friendly. Since my personality is similar (I am shy and reserved until I get to know people) it was not hard for me to see that perspective but it was interesting seeing the contrast between my friends from southern Europe and the northern Europeans in general personality type. One of the biggest cultural differences is also seen in how children integrate into society – the first time I was in Denmark I was surprised at the freedom of children to run around and the prams outside of restaurants with babies snuggled in while their parents ate dinner or shopped, but I began to think that I definitely wanted to live in a society where it was that safe for children and did not think it was strange at all after a while. Another major difference between the Danes and the Americans was seen clearly at mealtime. Danish people take meals as a break, leaving the studio (or office) to eat lunch with friends and acquaintances. We are so used to scarfing down a meal while multi-tasking, and I was surprised at how bad I was at putting my work down to go to lunch. I also felt like a savage at times when I would look over at the perfectly cut food and tidy plate of my Danish acquaintances and realized what a messy eater I was! I definitely improved my skills at eating with people while in Denmark and I hope that that stays with me through my life. The biggest issue I felt within the community was just the demeanor of the drunken men around when going out at night – many Danes like to drink a lot when they drink and that sometimes leads to uncomfortable or potentially dangerous encounters with people on the street but usually leads to late-night dance parties in the streets outside of the bars (which are very expensive).

Without the generous ScanDesign scholarship it would not have been possible for me to participate in this exchange, which was the perfect way for me to spend the winter and spring of my second year of graduate school. I learned so much about design and aesthetics that they simply do not teach at UW and found inspiration for my future work as a designer and my long-term future goal to be a professor. Copenhagen is very expensive, even with the scholarship and loans and a very frugal lifestyle – no eating out except for once-in-a-while falafel or pizza take out, no yoga, very limited going out to bars and shows – it was difficult and I cut out nearly all unnecessary expenses. However difficult it is to live on a limited budget in the city it was an incredible experience and I was able to spend so much time exploring parks and museums and galleries, getting to know my classmates and working hard on the project, and just living in one of the best cities in the world, and it was definitely made possible entirely by the generous scholarship.

While in Copenhagen I used my ATM card and just withdrew money that way. My bank (USAA) has a generous policy that only charges 1% of foreign transactions for cash and since, by the time I gathered the paperwork and received the full installment of loans and ScanDesign money it seemed a little late to pay the expensive transfer fees and fees to open a bank account this seemed like the best option. I did almost join Nordea bank, which seemed to have the least expensive fees of the banks I researched. I did not have to use checks to pay my landlord (my rent was paid in cash), so that was a decent option for me but other people may want to transfer money to a bank ASAP. It worked out in my favor I think because the kroner went down in value while I was there this time, but last time I studied in Denmark (in 2004) I had the opposite problem and lost a lot of money by not opening a bank account. As far as spending money goes, I think I spent at least 1000 USD per month just on rent and food (despite not eating out, food is very expensive), and additional expenses depend on lifestyle. Unexpected expenses included buying new boots and a coat (with the snow I couldn't walk in the boots I brought, so wellies or snow boots should be on everyone's packing list) and travel is another expense that should be made if possible (I went to Amsterdam, Berlin, and around Denmark and it was wonderful but expensive). Financial aid while in Denmark was not an issue, I had to take out some additional loans, but I am having trouble getting my aid for the fall because of the credit transfer issues.

I was very pleased at the assistance I got from the ScanDesign Foundation while in Seattle, Anni Fuller was wonderful in her help, advice, and coordination, helping me to find a place to live, and I was grateful to be able to audit Danish classes coming in in the middle of the course. While in Denmark, Marianne Stoelen was fantastic and so friendly, taking us into her home for tea, arranging activities such as cross-country skiing in Dyrehaven, and helping us out with any issues that arose. It would have been better to have found out about the scholarship sooner than I did, since it was a frantic time in the middle of a very busy quarter, but I cannot complain too much since it was an opportunity not to be missed and one I had hoped for even before choosing UW as my graduate school. The international student office did not do much to coordinate that I could see but the process was as

painless as possible with the very short time frame so I am sure that they did a great job. The host institution, KA, did not do much and I found it was best just to go with the flow and not expect too much out of their office for international students. However, they did coordinate a wonderful introduction to Copenhagen when we arrived, including a tour of Christiania by one of the founding members of the society so that was a wonderful experience.

I think that the ideal type of student for this exchange does not exist, since there is so much to be gained by studying abroad for everyone. However, I would say that students going into an exchange should be easy to adapt to unexpected situations, be used to traveling or at least new experiences and different living arrangements, and should have a level of respect for others and a maturity level that is necessary for making a good impression on the host institution, their fellow classmates, and for making a good name for ScanDesign and the University of Washington. I think that anyone going into an exchange at the Architecture School in Copenhagen is going to be surprised at the difference between the host institution and how things operate at home, and must be open to new perspectives and ways of learning that are not done here in the States. I would advise anyone going on this type of exchange to try to get out as much as possible to explore the city and all it has to offer, and to get out and travel, and to be open to trying anything new – whether it be food, nightlife, a class, a trip, etc. I would also recommend trying to have family and friends visit – my mother and my boyfriend came over to visit and it was wonderful to be able to share my favorite adopted city with them and to have some of the comforts of home. It is difficult to leave your family and friends behind while doing this exchange and it is hard to get in touch with the time difference and expense of calling via cell phone (I used Skype at home or at school for all my calls but that limits your availability significantly) and so bringing photos and keeping a blog are ways that I dealt with this while away for so long.

Overall, my academic experience was wonderful and I would not trade it for anything. However, my expectations were very different than the realities, and I had even studied abroad in Denmark before. Last time, I was in architecture school and participated in a study abroad program with many of my classmates from UVA, and it was a private school that followed a similar structure to a typical American school. This time, I expected things to be similar academically to that experience and was surprised at the way things were structured, the difficulty of self-motivation with little feedback from professors, and barely any set class schedule. These were the biggest challenges and I was surprised especially since I am a very motivated student and thought it would be easy for me to be in a studio environment like what I found (and had expected to find) at KA. The greatest benefit is also the greatest challenge - to learn in that environment opened my mind, and the philosophies of my professors were enlightening and a new perspective that I can now use for my projects at UW and in my future work as a landscape architect. I am very happy that I made the decision to apply and accept the ScanDesign scholarship and wish the best of luck for future students going to Denmark.