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I decided to study abroad in Copenhagen first and foremost because I fell in love with the city when I visited it for the first time back in 2009 (at the time I was in Germany working as an au pair). The sunny but cold and crisp weather, the colorful apartments, the graffiti on the sidewalks, the hoards of bicycles, the water and the parks—I loved everything about Copenhagen, and, spoiler alert: I still love the city after 6 months!

I selected the University of Copenhagen not only for its location, but for its sociology department. As a soc undergrad, I expected to study a subject familiar to me in an unfamiliar environment, learning actively within the classroom and passively without. The structure of the university alone would be interesting to me from a sociological perspective, as it differs quite a bit from our own.

Before departing I did research online regarding classes offered, the ECTS credit system, apartment options and so on. I asked a Danish friend who was on exchange *from* the University of Copenhagen for advice. Her tips: buy a bike, shop at NETTO, don't live in the dorms, get a cheap prepaid phone, take warm and waterproof clothing, go to the Friday bars. The one thing I could have done better to prepare was to bring travelers checks to deposit all at once in a Danish bank. I ended up withdrawing cash from an ATM all semester, about \$300 at a time with roughly a \$2.50 transfer charge from Bank of America.

Arriving in Copenhagen, I was met by my student mentor (which I could request from the sociology department at KU) at the airport who helped me with my luggage and escorted me back to my apartment. I strongly recommend getting a mentor if you have the option. As for orientation and activities offered at the beginning of the semester, I am afraid I cannot comment on them because I arrived a few days late. No doubt they would have been helpful. There are many things at the university that are not immediately obvious, such as how to get a prepaid library card and print off of your own notebook computer.

I was extremely lucky with housing because a former ScanDesign student offered to let me share an apartment with her. It was in Christianshavn, a highly sought-after neighborhood, and I had my own room and a bathroom, living room, and kitchen to share. I paid about \$650 a month including utilities, which doesn't differ much from Seattle anyway. The dorms can be nice, but prices are inflated for exchange students, often \$800-900/month. Also, you never know where you'll be placed, so the university may place you at an apartment 45 minutes away from school. I

strongly recommend asking around (asking Danes and former ScanDesign students) if they can introduce an apartment.

My one complaint from my whole experience would be, ironically enough, the academics. While the helpfulness of teachers and course quality is probably dependent on the teacher, the course, and the department, all of my sociology courses were less than I expected. I ended up dropping two out of three courses. My course readings were interesting, but because few of my classmates had actually done them, student discussions revolved around familiar topics like: Facebook, facebook, and facebook. Lectures were informative but dry, accompanied only by very simple powerpoints. I can hardly express my disappointment when I took a Mediasociology class and the teacher did not introduce a single example of *media* (i.e. pictures, graphs, video clips, audio clips, newspaper clippings, etc.) in his lectures. One should also be warned that unlike at UW where you are given very clear descriptions of what is expected from a paper or exam, down to the font type and margin size, in Denmark you will receive almost no instructions, for better or for worse.

Class registration and exam registration in particular was complicated and confusing. There were often problems with the English version of the KU website. Administration was helpful when reached, but often times they were short of staff or out on lunch breaks. It was not unusual to be referred to another office, then be referred back again. As a student you must manage three or four different passwords for applying, registering, accessing e-mail, using the computers in the library, and printing, which was frustrating to say the least.

Contrastingly, the courses I took “for pleasure” from the International Department—the Danish language courses and the Danish Cinema course—were all really great. The teachers in these courses were enthusiastic and accessible, always willing to help. The cinema course with Anne Jespersen I highly recommend. It is also easier to make friends in these courses because your peers are all exchange students.

Nonetheless, the cultural exposure of living and studying in a Scandinavian country is a valuable learning experience in itself. There is lots of green in Copenhagen, as well as bodies of water, interesting architecture, and free museums. It is a city where you don't feel crowded, or rushed. In the winter people stay in-doors sipping hot tea by candle light and in the summer everyone takes every opportunity to be outside and enjoy what the city has to offer. The streets are always clean, even after a night of city-wide partying. In general, it is a very safe city, where girls walk alone at night and mothers park their baby carriages outside cafes *with their babies inside* during the day without a second thought. The one thing you have to worry about is bicycle theft, which happens all the time. My favorite Copenhagen episode is the following: One day, a bicycle thief steals a bike from outside a café and cruises along for a few blocks. He notices something is funny and turns around to realize that there is a toddler sitting in the back seat! He quickly whips the bike around and

heads back to the café, returning the toddler, and the bike, to the owner saying, “I’m sorry, I only wanted your bike—I didn’t mean to steal your kid!!”

Other cultural differences I noticed are: you do *not* talk to strangers, people like their privacy, if someone says “let’s hang out” they mean it, everyone smokes, everyone drinks, thinking too highly of oneself is looked down upon, people more or less trust the government, in older generations there is definitely traces of racism toward non-whites, customer service is nonexistent except at expensive restaurants or hotels, you should bring your own bag to the supermarket, buses give change, sex is openly talked about, people are “rude” or “frank”—whichever way you want to look at it.

That said, I had little trouble adjusting to Danish society. It may have helped that I lived in Germany before, and also that I knew what to expect before I came. I did not find Danish people “cold” as they are sometimes described, just very straightforward about who and what they are concerned about, and not. The honesty is refreshing in many ways.

I made many Danish friends, none of which were through the university. In my case I met a lot of people through the Japanese community, which is miniscule in Copenhagen. I posted on a Japanese SNS similar to Facebook and made some Japanese friends, who in turn introduced me to their Danish friends, who then invited me to Danish parties where I met friends-of-friends, etc. Often times getting your foot in the door is the hardest part, but once you’re “part of the party” you meet one new person after the next.

The ScanDesign Foundation made it possible for me to study abroad in Copenhagen. I would not have considered it had I not had the financial assistance. I recommend \$1300-1500 a month on average, not including tuition, for living expenses and recreational costs. Unexpected expenses included the large safety deposit for my apartment (\$1000) and living expenses in general, which turned out even more expensive than I expected. Relatively speaking, it would not be an overstatement to state that my expenses were double in Copenhagen than in Seattle (trips to Sweden, Germany, and France included).

I have zero complaints for the ScanDesign Fellowship Administration. They’re great! Marianne Stoelen was kind enough to organize a weekend cruise-trip to Oslo for us ScanDesign students, which was absolutely wonderful.

The university administration at KU was also helpful, when I could get a hold of them. It is important to know exactly what you need and be succinct with the purpose of your call or visit so that they can introduce you to the right staff member. I found that e-mail was the surest way to reach them, phone calls and walk-ins having a success rate of about 50% (based purely on personal experience).

This exchange is best suited for students who are seeking cultural experience first, academic experience second. This may be different for other departments of study. In either case, the student must be independent and responsible, with self-control, as university students are not supervised or instructed by any authority (parents, professors, administrators) here. I would advise future students to challenge themselves to try new things and meet new people, as a semester in Copenhagen is an opportunity to be made the most of.

Overall, I am extremely happy with my experience. While my academic expectations proved unrealistic, my personal expectations were surpassed in every way imaginable. Funnily enough, I have more friends in Copenhagen than anywhere else in the world now. Even my failures are of value: I never did master Danish, but now I appreciate the pronounced-as-spelled preciseness of German all the more. I've watched more Danish movies than most Danes and I've learned the best toast-topping is a slice of cheese with jam on top. I appreciate Danish humor (black, sarcastic) and state-of-being (content, not aggressively competitive). The greatest benefit of studying abroad was to gain an even broader perspective of the world; the greatest challenge was not to be constrained by preconceived notions constructed out of my own cultural background.