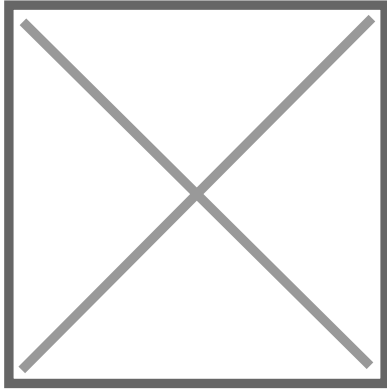




The Danish Virtuous Circle, Pt 1: When Being a Student Cannot Get Any Better

Description

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My campus, KUA, on a sunny winter day

Almost everything I thought I'd experience when moving to Denmark has proven to be wrong. Danes are not closed, they're just not looking for friends; the weather in Copenhagen is not as bad as they say it is; in the winter, the Danes hide, and in the summer, they'll be as tanned as Spaniards from being all day every day in the Sun. But yes, life is expensive, and yes, â•hyggeâ• moments are a real winter thing.

Besides taking my mind beyond those clichés we all have about the Danes, I have learned much more than I thought I would â• my experience has taught me that every country, every place is unique, but I had no idea Denmark would have so much for me to learn from.

Especially from a professional point of view. Let me elaborate on that.

The Famous SU Grant

When you first get to Denmark as a full-time “international” student meaning you’re not doing any kind of exchange program but rather just moving to the country for the whole duration of your bachelor/master’s degree you quickly learn how things work for local students. Just for being lucky enough to hold a Danish passport, the government gives you some kind of student salary (“Statens Uddannelsesstøtte”, commonly referred to as “SU”, which means something like “State support for education”), which is about 500-600 DKK/month. How great is this? Anyone who studies and has a hard making ends meet, and who might have to work before starting any educational program, or while doing so, can already make up how much time that would allow for more studying or sleeping.

And although many of us students out there working for the same amount of money every month might feel like we wouldn’t need to work anymore if granted with such a heavenly gift, this is not what goes through a Dane’s mind. No, no. That’s partly because if you live in anywhere in the city in Denmark and want to be independent, 600 DKK won’t take you far – you might just be able to pay for your rent and eat pasta and rice every month.

So what do Danes do? They work, yes, and that’s the most interesting part.

CV Stamps: Diploma and Professional Experiences

In Denmark, it is straight-forwardly inconceivable for you to graduate without having at least supermarket or restaurant/café professional experiences. In fact, in many supermarkets, you’ll find 16-year-olds standing behind cash machines and bakery counters – at least in Copenhagen. Coming from France, a country where it is very hard for you to find a job before you turn 18 (if not impossible), it was very surprising to me.

But that’s for the better. It means that later on, students get other jobs. They might just want to experience something else, if given the opportunity to.

And that’s the best thing: they **are** indeed given the **opportunity** to **properly** work. And what I mean by *properly* is not that you get to stop working in supermarkets to go on to working in cafés, then restaurants, then offices, all the way up to the “best” jobs found throughout society. No; it means that you have the choice to have the job you want.

It means that if you want to work in a company that offers you to practice what you’ve learned at university, **you can**.

The gigantic glass windows at the Faculty of English allow a lot of light to come in – the best way to encourage students to study even on grey days.

Between the Uni Library and the Office: the Outcomes

And if you do get to work in a company that has what youâ??re looking for to offer, you are not seen as the small person, the one who does not yet hold a diploma. You are a student with skills that the company can use. You are learning and open to do so. You are given responsibilities. You get to take initiatives and you are listened to. You get congratulated on when you produce good work. You get told when you make mistakes. You get to learn about life in a company. You get to learn those things you cannot learn at university â?? just simply because life in the professional world does not work the same way as in the academic world.

And that makes you feel rich. Not only money wise, especially compared to life in other countries as a student, but also mentally, psychologically, professionally. Your experiences get intertwined and if you are a humanities student like me, you realise the world is full of opportunities. Because you study languages or sociology does not mean your only option is to become a teacher.

It means you can be whoever you want to be, according to your aspirations, interests and strong skills.

You are not trapped, your life is in no way doomed to boredom if you have chosen a career path the world does not seem to need, that the world reduces to the lost and dreamy.

After living for one year in Denmark with both academic and professional experiences, not only do I feel ready to jump into the full-time professional world, but I also feel excited. I feel I have been given real keys for getting out there and being part of the working society â?? and I will happily do so, probably the way my fellow student Danes will, too.

Thinking I have one year left with more professional and academic learning at the same time simply just *excites* me. I feel extremely grateful and I think Danes do, too. Is this one of the explanations to why they are considered the happiest people in the world?

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