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*This evaluation is for the new summer Scan|Design program, which is shorter term than the foundation's other opportunities. Accordingly, this account differs from the other evaluations found on the Scan|Design website.*

### **Before**

Scandinavia has always fascinated me. Music is a big part of my life, and I think my fascination with that region started years ago when I discovered Icelandic artists such as Björk and Sigur Rós, Sweden's The Knife, and Denmark's The Raveonettes, among others. Since then I've made separate trips to Iceland, Sweden, and Denmark to experience these cultures firsthand. When I heard that a fellowship existed that specifically catered to design and Scandinavia, the fit seemed perfectly aligned with my interests. I actually first heard about the fellowship during the UW Study Abroad fair in 2011, but I passed because it would have been logistically difficult given the structure of my master's program to take off for a semester. But I re-engaged with Scan|Design in the fall of 2012 when I heard that a summer opportunity existed, which fit in with my plans much better.

For other people preparing to spend a summer in Denmark, I recommend having a thoroughly researched yet still flexible plan for housing, since one's living situation has a major effect on the overall experience. Determine a budget range, research various neighborhoods, and establish a Danish contact or two. But do not freak out if you're about to step into the plane to Denmark without a flat lined up. Once you arrive, it is obviously much easier to visit flats and coordinate a sublet or rental than when you're still in the United States. Just be prepared to spend at least the first few days or week in a temporary situation, such as a hostel, hotel, or someone's couch. One great advantage of being in Denmark in the summer is that it's holiday time for Danes, so it's the best time of year to find someone subletting their flat while they're out of town. Personally, I spent more time than I wanted to in hostels but eventually found a flat for a bit.

### **Arrival**

Copenhagen was not completely new to me, but it had been a few years since my first visit. Still, I retained some knowledge of the geography and culture. I made a point to give myself an open schedule

for the first three days to allow me to rest and get my bearings. A copy of the Denmark *Lonely Planet* travel guide was helpful during this early stage. I also got my mobile phone up and running within the first few days. Tip 1: If you don't already have an old unlocked phone lying around the house, buy one on Amazon before you leave. Finding one in Denmark at a good price will be difficult. Once you have the phone, walk into a 7-11 and ask to buy a SIM card. It will probably come with a little prepaid credit, and once that's used up you can top-up your credit by buying vouchers at any supermarket or kiosk. Tip 2: Figure out a transportation plan. Copenhagen is wonderfully compact and walkable, but bicycling is famously the transportation mode of choice both in Copenhagen and in other towns. You can rent one for a short or long period, or you can buy one, which I did. A more expensive option is public transportation. Due to its expense, I used public transportation as the last resort. But that expense means you have one of the best public transportation infrastructures in the world: clean, safe, fast, and frequent.

My trip as a whole was very do-it-yourself, so I can't vouch for any offices or institutions that helped my arrival process. I did lots and lots of internet research before and during my time in Denmark.

### **Life in Denmark**

Copenhagen's housing infrastructure isn't significantly different from Seattle's. Most people live in flats with one or more other people. Amenities are similar: kitchen and dining area, living room, bedrooms, modern appliances (microwaves, TVs, wifi, etc.). In some buildings, tenants might have shared laundry and/or bathroom facilities. Tip 1: Flats tend to be smaller in Copenhagen than Seattle, so don't bring a lot of belongings and expect everything to have a proper place.

I could talk a lot about how to actually find housing, but for now I'll just briefly say that I found mine via a Facebook group that a Dane invited me to join. Initially, I stayed in hostels for a couple of weeks. Finding housing happened mostly through trial and error.

Keeping a handle on finances is critical in Denmark, as it is one of the world's most expensive countries! A hostel bed will cost at least \$25/night, or more likely around \$30. It is probably difficult to spend much less than that, even in a sublet, unless the location is far out from the center. Tip 2: But beware of going too far out, as transportation costs might then become an issue. Tip 3: For food costs, consider doubling whatever you spend weekly on groceries in Seattle. Admittedly, this is a bit high, but it's better to be safe than sorry. I was actually pleasantly surprised that if I shopped around and was careful, my grocery

costs were not as high as I thought they would be. All bets are off, however, when eating at restaurants. A coffee will cost about \$5, lunch at least \$10, a beer \$6, etc. Overall, my best advice is to prepare a budget in advance and do not assume a “best case” scenario. I didn’t try to fool myself into thinking I could do this on the cheap. In the end, I actually spent less than I budgeted, which relieved me.

Immersing myself in Danish culture was easy. It helps that nearly everyone speaks excellent English. Most Danes are less gregarious than Americans, but if they are engaged with a question or comment, they are friendly and helpful. Danish culture is famously progressive, with strong emphases on equality, trust, and responsibility. Rates of poverty and crime are low. Some surveys have reported that Denmark is among the happiest countries in the world, and I certainly observed firsthand a strong feeling of contentment among the citizens. In addition to my academic work, I packed in a lot fun on the side: music festivals, beaches, camping, museums and galleries, nightlife, hiking, and more.

### **Fellowship administration**

To be completely candid, I did not receive much hands-on assistance in coordinating my stay in Denmark from the foundation. I made a few helpful contacts at various Scan|Design events in Seattle prior to my departure. And I used the foundation website to find email addresses of Danes to contact to explore housing opportunities. By and large, my experience was DIY. I’ve traveled a lot internationally, though, so to some extent I’m used to this.

One suggestion for improvement is to expedite the initial acceptance decision, at least for summer fellows. I was told of the good news at the very end of February, which cuts quite close to when students need to be making decisions about their summer plans. Other fellows starting in the fall or winter have quite a bit of lead time for planning, but I perceived a time crunch in trying to get everything squared away before I left in June.

### **Overall**

My time in Denmark was remarkable--an experience that I otherwise would not have had without the Scan|Design support. I extended my knowledge of a subject within my field by talking directly with some of the top minds in the world. No amount of reading literature or watching videos from afar can equal that. Because the existence of the subject I studied is directly tied to Danish culture, my ability to situate this research within Denmark and talk one-on-one with academics made this a unique and richly

rewarding experience. Although in some ways I would have welcomed more “on the ground” support from the foundation, I also deeply appreciate the freedom I was given to choose and carry out this project in the way I wanted to. Thank you for this unforgettable experience that I know will affect my life and career for years to come!

For any prospective or pre-departure fellows, please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions about administration, logistics, or Denmark generally. Getting firsthand advice can be enormously valuable, as I've learned.