

Comment: Don't Segregate Me! Part 2



Photo: Alex Berger

Copenhagen harbour. Integrating international and Danish students is a lot more than what the planned student city has to offer

In part two of a featured comment on how an international student city will further cement existing integration problems, Alex Berger looks at the solutions

by Alex Berger

(Read part one of this comment [here](#))

What's the answer then? Prioritization and integration. The ISCC needs to be a fully incorporated student city, not just an international student city. At least 30 per cent of the students living in the dorms and on the facility need to be Danes. More importantly though, the entire structure needs to revolve around how, at a very basic level, students can be better integrated.

International students need to have prioritized access, but not exclusive access. Full-degree and PhD students need to have first priority, with year-long exchange students next in line, followed by short term/semester students with roughly the same priority and access as Danish students. It is important for organizers to remember that students on short term exchange are often provided with a group of peers all arriving at roughly the same time and have significantly more resources, support, and access to existing infrastructure than long term and full-degree students.

Concepts like International or Danish dorm floors should be avoided as this would reinforce cultural segregation. It's important to keep in mind that cultural exchange occurs by simply sharing each other's company. Attempting to force it only builds barriers. However, things like restaurants, shops, or themed-facilities created for general use are great and fun ways to explore culture in a more subtle fashion.

Organizers must keep in mind that rental rates for any project of this nature need to be competitive. I know students paying more than DKK 5,000 for a dorm room which is absolutely ridiculous and extremely detrimental in its own way ... especially when compared to the DKK 1,500-2,500 being paid by many Danish students in Kollegiums around the city.

Beyond Just Housing

While a huge aspect of the ISCC concept revolves around housing, and that is what this post has focused on, another key issue that Danish universities need to review in-depth is the way they segregate classes and social events. I realize that funding is an issue and that in some ways English-based university courses are provided as an added value service BUT the reality is that if more engagement and immersion is the goal, you have to allow Danish and International students to interact.

I've repeatedly seen courses at UCPH where despite an expressed desire and eagerness to take courses in English, Danish students have been told they need to/are only allowed to take lectures and courses in Danish. In a recent media course I took, the group lecture was provided in English with three seminar courses offered. Of these, two were in Danish (though taught by faculty fluent in English) and the third was taught in English. Danish students were forced to take the group lecture in English and then prohibited from taking the English seminar which was essentially limited to international

students.

Academic and administrative organizational issues of this nature mean that throughout our academic career, international students are fundamentally segregated from Danish students and deprived of many of the most opportune and vibrant socialization and networking opportunities

A Great Idea

As the article notes, there are 18,000 students in Copenhagen this year and they have a goal of growing that figure to 30,000 by 2025. If Copenhagen is serious about the ISCC (which I hope it is!), it is important that key steps are taken that not only provide infrastructure that sounds viable on paper, but which actually fulfills students' needs. This is especially significant if Denmark wants to retain some of that expertise moving forward and if the country is serious about realizing many of the benefits that a vibrant and well-integrated student population can provide.

Have thoughts or experiences of your own that would help the discussion? Please share them in with a comment below!

Read the first part of my comment and analysis of the situation [here](#)

Read more of Alex's views on his blog [virtual wayfarer](#).

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Culture 1/12-13 10:29

One blind date every day

24 days to Christmas - 24 blind dates between University Post readers. It is time to get a crush on someone. A Christmas Crush

Culture 30/11-13 12:21

Seven cheap things to do in Copenhagen

Life in Copenhagen is anything and everything, but it is not budget-friendly. Here is stuff you can do on a humble student income. They are all for the price of a cup of coffee, or free

Politics 29/11-13 16:11

Big boost to uni elections - higher turnout

Participation has risen by nearly five whole percentage points to 19.6 per cent of students for the key Board seat. Last year only 14.8 per cent voted in the university elections

Culture 29/11-13 14:56

Ethnology student releases music album

He is a student at the University of Copenhagen, and he is about 'long lost love and new loves to come'

gallery 27/11-13 14:36

Demo at Vor Frue Plads - see the pictures here

Politics 27/11-13 13:39

Prorector Bjørnholm at demo: I understand the students' concern

Conciliatory mood from one of the University's top managers. But in the long run students will still have to graduate faster

Politics 27/11-13 12:44

Central campus packed with protesters

Thousands of students amassed in front of University of Copenhagen. Speeches held

Politics 27/11-13 10:52

Rector will be there, offering students cake, dialogue

Deans and Rector will be at Central Campus, offering cake, fruit and beverages to demonstrating students

Politics 27/11-13 10:20

Humanities: No blockade, but now marching

Earlier today students and staff milled back and forwards, in and out of the buildings without hindrance. But now Humanities demonstrators are moving towards Central Campus

Politics 27/11-13 9:02

Rector: Wants to negotiate

University's head offers concessions, and calls students to the bargaining table. Demonstrations, blockades will go ahead, say students