Typical frustrations about the Danes

- Why can you not tell who is in charge?
- Why do you talk so much in order to take a decision?
- Why do you need that many breaks?
- Why are the Danes so relaxed and informal?
- Why do the Danes seem so cold and rude?
- Why do people not help me?
- Why does everybody leave at 4 pm.?
- Why is it so hard to become friends with the Danes?
Aim of today: To create trust

- Understand the Danish way of behaviour and communication
- Know what motivates the Danes
- Assess them against their own standards

Create credibility and trust

Human behaviour:

- Inherited
- Learned
- Individual
- National culture
- Collective by group
- Common to all mankind
Cultural bias

What is like our own culture is normal and "good"

What is different from our own culture is abnormal and "bad"

Cultural filter

Said about a Dane:

By a Swede:
- The Latinos of Scandinavia
- Relaxed
- Straight forward
- Good negotiators
- Self-centred

By an American:
- Reserved
- Difficult to figure out
- Always changing their minds
- Scared of conflicts
- Socialism
STUDENT GUIDE 2010/2011
Study Methods:

Teaching at Aarhus University is generally structured around lectures, tutorials (teaching in small groups) and practical exercises. Active participation is expected from students.

Students regularly organise guest lectures and often form study groups among themselves to discuss class topics and to help each other. There is considerable interaction between students and professors, and students often make group presentations in class.
The cultural iceberg

Symbols
Heroes
Rituals

Behavior
Attitudes
Values

Danish cultural values
The major cultural values of the Danes are:
1. Egalitarian
2. Individualistic
3. Modesty and Quality of Life
4. Practical and informal
1. Denmark: Equalitarian

- High acceptance of equality in society
- Decision making: Consultation and open disagreement
- Power does not give privileges

Impact on Danish learning environment

- Easy access to professors
- Ideal professor is a “coach”
- Open and informal relations
- Two-way communication
- Information flows fluid
- Intellectual disagreements are okay
2. Denmark: Individualistic

- Direct / outspoken form of communication
- Task-oriented. Start the job - don't wait for relationships first
- No “special” treatment given or expected
- Freedom with responsibility

Edward T. Hall - Silent language
Presentation style is swift & concise

The Danes love to debate

Remember:
• The Danes are straight forward – very frank
• If you disagree – speak up
• Address the issue – not the person
• We are debating not arguing – no personal feelings involved
Social interaction

- Do not expect a Dane to introduce you
- Ask questions / ask for help
- Firm handshake & eye contact
- Great upon arrival and when leaving

A word is a word

A Dane will honour his word and expects the same of you.

Be careful about estimates
- I will be back in 5 minutes
- I will have it done in two days...
Personal space

Impact on Danish learning environment

- Communication style is direct
- Active participation in discussions, critical thinking
- Responsible for own planning and learning
- No hard feelings even if you disagree openly
- Distant relationships (work/study life vs. private life)
- Written reports: avoid copying
- Be prepared – be on time
3. Consensus and Modesty

- Avoid to show off
- Competition among peers not accepted
- Danes are ambitious – but for personal fulfilment
- Decision making
- Debates and consensus
- Remember time for “hygge”

“Hygge” – is so very Danish

- Creating intimacy, relaxation, hospitality, warmth, friendliness, geniality, harmony and contentment (>cosiness )
- Giving priority to small pleasures – can describe both people, situations and locations
Impact on Danish learning environment

- Interactive and dialogue based teaching
- People understate and underestimate their performances
- Danes admire friendliness, professionalism and modesty
- Don’t expect open praise even if you perform well
- Participation in group work & reaching real consensus is more important than a fast decision by the most capable

4. Denmark: Practical & informal

- Comfortable in “grey-zone” situations
- Anti-bureaucratic and emotional horror of rules/laws - but we follow the rules we make!
- Do not show frustrations
- Being practical & using common sense is more valued than titles and experts
Danish broadmindedness

is best summed up in a popular book for children:

“You should not bother others. You should be nice and kind. Otherwise you can do as you please.”

Police chief Bastian, “People and Robbers of Cardemon Town”

Impact on Danish learning environment

• Professors might not have the ”right” answer! Don’t doubt his/hers competence
• A simple and practical solution preferred to a complex/academic one
• If the learning situation looks ”unstructured” don’t get frustrated
• Risk taking is favoured (taking initiative)
• Questions are encouraged
• Relaxed / informal environment
  • use “du” (you) and first name
Further reading...

- CultureShock Denmark, *Marshall Cavendish Editions*
- Xenophobe’s guide to the Danes
- The Worktrotter Guide to Denmark, [www.worktrotter.dk](http://www.worktrotter.dk)