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Person to Person in Norway

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Amber Hay

Norway

March 13, 2013

Field Notes from Abroad: Person to Person in Norway

Conducting this interview was a neat experience. Trine is someone I interact with on a daily basis, but it was really interesting to sit down with her and have a real conversation about more serious and academic topics. It is extremely hard to get to know Norwegians, but she is one I know well. In general, her life in Norway isn't that different compared to life in America. She has studied abroad in the U.S., Indonesia, and Australia so she really has a good background to make comparisons.

One of the main differences in culture is the concept of "friluftsliv". It is a Norwegian word that means "outdoor life". This is a concept that most Norwegians grow up with. They spend a lot of their childhood outdoors and most learn to love them. Trine spent much time in nature when she was younger, though now she doesn't enjoy it so much, but for most Norwegians, it becomes a lifestyle. The school culture is also very different. Classes are more seen as optional and usually the class is only graded on a final exam or term paper. So typically, much of the year is more relaxed while the last two months of school is intense. I feel this is a huge difference compared to my experiences with schooling. We have tons of assignments and classes feel like they are almost always intense with many deadlines and grades to keep track of. Trine also says that Norwegians tend to be more shy (except at parties) where as Americans are more outgoing but seem shallower. I thought that

was an interesting observation and maybe partially true. But I think it's easier to get to know someone initially if they are more willing to open up. Daily routines are about the same between Norwegians and Americans.

I thought it was surprising that Trine values travelling and learning to be the most important, I don't see travelling that way as much. I tend to view travelling as a luxury, not a necessity, but it makes sense that way. When you travel, you have the opportunity to experience more diversity and culture and that leads to more appreciation. I was surprised, but very pleased by this. Trine also surprised me by her perception of what the world thinks about Norway. She thinks it is relatively unimportant country, which is selfish because they won't join the European Union and keep the wealth and oil resources to themselves. However, she is proud of the fact that Norway is very focused on gender equality and equality for all people. Though I learned some interesting things, I don't think my opinion of Norway has been changed because of the interview.

Interview: Trine Blomber Ulseth (Student Assistant fro Intentional Office)