

HON/LGU 366 - *Earth, Wind and Fire: Climate Change and Sustainable Resources*

On our online blog, I posed the following question:

Give a short description of the highlight(s) of the trip to Denmark and Sweden. What aspect of the trip do you think will be most beneficial to you? to La Salle?

I think the most immediate benefit to La Salle will be the presence of an engaging, passionate, and articulate group of students who can educate our community about global warming and its consequences and promote discussion about potential solutions to this problem.

I ended up rostering for this course, primarily because I didn't know much in the way of sustainability and global climate change, except for the basic concepts of global warming. Coming back from the trip and being present for class discussions, really showed me a new way of life that is not so difficult to approach. I was amazed to see how the Danes and the Swedes live lives very similar to our own, and except for the degree of their social programs and their tax rates - are very much similar to the people we encounter in America. What was most beneficial to me was in fact seeing that a green way of life in a country that valued being green was so economical and easy to do, if only because it is a trait that is instilled from a young age. At the same time, I felt empowered in a way that encourages me to not give up the fight for sustainability. Meeting students at Chalmers and the random woman on the street in Copenhagen who was a representative from COP15, makes me feel as though I am part of a global community of people who see sustainability as something necessary and possible. We are not unreasonable in our ideas or feelings - just passionate, aware and concerned. And while most of the science behind much of the technology we heard about flew far over my head, I can say that what I do understand is that this technology is leaps and bounds ahead of what we now have and will make the way for an amazing, amazing future. What we experienced, then, was the beginning and continual development for something better. While the science behind it does not come easy for me to understand, the power of what is being developed does.

I think we now have a tremendous opportunity to present what we learned and saw to others at La Salle. We have the ability to lay the footprints for changes in our school's response to climate change and local energy. Much like the Danes and Swedes are taught from a young age, we must begin to teach. It begins with education.

"The highlights that I feel were most beneficial to the La Salle community would definitely be the tour of the green roofs and the meeting with the Chalmers Students for Sustainability. The green roofs were a way to see how we can successfully apply our new knowledge while C.S.S. acted as an inspiration to take a stronger stand for sustainability here at school. Personal highlights for me would be visiting the art museum in Gothenburg and the castle built by prisoners. I liked the art museum because it shows the depth of European history that the United States cannot compare to because it is such a young country. As for the prison, I've taken entire classes on the justice system, and it's always interesting to me to see how this system has evolved as the tour guide said, "in just 150 years". Probably the most beneficial part of the trip for me was just interacting and experiencing a different culture, like talking to the Chalmers students. I feel like we learn a lot more about ourselves when we are able to meet and talk to people that have a different view of life."

Going on this trip was something I've been looking forward to for the last 2 years, and it did not disappoint. I think the most beneficial aspects were the academic ones. I can't imagine going on a travel study and not doing things that really intertwined with the class. I think the green roofs, the Chalmers' presentation, the Haldor Topsoe presentation and most importantly the wind farm presentation all served as excellent examples of how the Swedes and the Danes are way ahead of us on the sustainability front. For me the most exciting thing was the wind farm. It was, in the best words, awesome and a huge highlight for me.

The biggest highlight of the trip, for me, was experiencing the sometimes drastic differences between our American culture and the Scandinavians' culture. Many Americans feel as though it would be impossible for us to change our lifestyles to reduce our dependency on oil and our cars. Yet, the Danish and the Swedes are able and happy to use their bikes or mass transit to get around. Their transportation system is so much more advanced than ours, as well. Essentially, they made being "green" easy, something we Americans have yet to accomplish. In addition to the different culture, I enjoyed the discussion at the Middelgrunden Cooperative and at Chalmers CMV. At Middelgrunden, I thought it was very interesting to see Europe's and, specifically, Denmark's own struggles with becoming more sustainable. Prior to the trip, I feel like much of the class held Denmark up on a pedestal (for good reason), but the Danes have had a very choppy past when it comes to wind energy. In fact, they still fail to meet their own goals for energy sustainability, although their goals are much, much more ambitious than America's at the moment. Chalmers provided a wonderful venue for a discussion with other students from across Europe who care about the environment as much as our class does. It was very interesting to see their perspective and their potential solutions for the problem.

I think the aspect of this trip that will be most beneficial to our university is the momentum our class now has, having seen what can be done and what has been done by students elsewhere in the world. Specifically, if our class forms a new sustainability group on campus, and we become affiliated with the international student organization, it could greatly raise campus awareness of the environment and perhaps effect positive change at La Salle or in our neighborhood.

This was my first travel study experience, so I wasn't quite sure what to expect. I thought the trip was a great balance between experiencing the culture and sight-seeing, along with experiencing things relevant to class. I really enjoyed the Middelgrunden wind farm, not only the presentation, but the opportunity to actually step foot on one. As much as I appreciated learning of the people, companies, and technology that are utilizing alternative forms of energy, such as the Middelgrunden wind farm or Haldor Topsoe, I think visiting the Augustenborg green roofs "hit home the most" for me. During my time at La Salle, I have felt a strong pull to varying aspects of community – from everything between the La Sallian community to community service. Getting to see first hand how the small community of Augustenborg was able to turn not only its residences, but its reputation around was very inspiring to see. I guess before this visit, I had the perspective that this movement needed to become initiated on a grand scale, through the support of government. Obviously, we had discussed smaller ways of going green that can be done individually, but it was this visit that allowed me to see the results of such efforts. Whether it was through the green roofs or solar panels or canal system for storm water or motion sensor lights or special toilets in their school – this community put a face to the green revolution that is so needed in other areas of the world.

For me, I think we can take all our experiences from the trip, especially at the Augustenborg green roof community, and bring our knowledge back to La Salle. Their community was successful because of the initiative they took. I think it can serve as a great inspiration for us and La Salle to do the same.

Reflecting on this trip now, I can't believe we were only there for nine days. We managed to do so many things that are beyond the majority of people's wildest dreams. I mean, we stood on a windmill in the middle of the Baltic Sea. I don't even think some students know where that is. This course has been so beneficial in that it has opened the eyes of, in my case at least, a pretty sheltered American student to places that are leaps and bounds ahead of the US in the areas of sustainability and renewable energy. I think the most important thing that I've taken away from this trip is the sense of urgency the Danes and Swedes seem to have when it comes to climate change. That's something that you can read countless books about, but to actually be in the presence of it - that's what has an effect. Their commitment and success in the area of sustainability is both a call to action and a reassurance that if we start now we - with some major effort - can make a change for the better.

I also thought the trip was beneficial! The Middelgrunden wind farm was an awesome experience. The positive interaction of human and environment in a way that I thought was also aesthetically moved me in unexpected ways. I thought as well that this was an amazing group of students who individually and collectively represented what is good about LaSalle and about America.

The art was good too :)!

The most valuable parts were the sustainability aspects: wind farm, Chalmers, green roofs, and Haldor Topsoe. They were the events I was most excited about and really ignited by imagination about what we could do here. Like I said in class, I'm almost regretting graduating because I would love to start an environmental/sustainability project here in Philadelphia for the Students for Sustainability group. Also, I think that and the other groups at Chalmers would be something LaSalle should get involved in. If we could start a group on campus I feel like it could be a great outlet for students to let their creative and problem solving skills to the test. Not only would it look great on a resume, but would be great for the community and LaSalle as well. While it may not be as easy to get funding over here in the U.S., I'm sure there are groups and companies that would like to fund a college project to help them look green.

The trip to Denmark and Sweden was a success. I really enjoyed the tour of the fortress in Sweden, but on a more scholarly note, it was a pleasure to view the labs at Haldor Topsoe. This was a great opportunity for me to get an idea of the utilities there and some other useful information regarding the research. As far as the community at La Salle it was a fortunate experience to go abroad and learn about what is really being done about climate change and it will be of great advantage to present the facts.

I enjoyed every aspect of this trip, but I would have to say that visiting and talking with the Chalmers students was the most beneficial to me personally and for LaSalle. After doing my research for my presentation and realizing that almost ever school over there has a group or class for sustainability I was

in awe. They talk and think about this problem everyday and that is what is really needed over here. When I would talk with people on the street and tell them why we were there they were excited for us. When I talk about the trip here at home some people have no idea what sustainability is or how extensive the global warming problem is.

I absolutely loved this trip - it far surpassed any of my expectations! The wind farm was absolutely incredible and something I will not soon be forgetting. But as far as being the most beneficial, the day we spent at Chalmers would take the cake. Having lunch with some of the students was great. We established some immediate connections with people of our own generation and heard their thoughts about sustainability and the general lifestyle of a Scandinavian. For me, these personal encounters had the greatest impact. I was in awe of how ingrained in society conservation was. They didn't think twice about recycling or efficiency or half-flushing toilets! My mind was churning the entire time, dreaming of the lifestyle changes I would be trying to make as soon as I got home (I'm getting better at turning my lights off!). And I think that as a group we came away with some valuable information from the presentations given. The student group, for example, will be something we can hopefully get started here on our campus, establish some international connections, and have tangible goals for the university. La Salle could really benefit from a student group that has proven success abroad and hopefully we can make some positive changes not only physically but in the overall attitude of the student population here!

I agree with everyone here. The trip was great in all its aspects and more than worth it, but to be honest, it left me feeling more cynical/pessimistic than usual about America. Seeing the innovations of Scandinavia put the U.S. to shame. For such a vast country that claims to be the world leader, why is it such a slacker? There is an awful lot of hope riding on Obama's presidency, and he better live up to it, otherwise the U.S. will cease to be a technological leader.

I also see now that the road to sustainability requires input from everyone - the government, the community, and the individual. While it is certainly wonderful that Denmark and Sweden are where they are, we must remember that they, in a sense, didn't have much choice in the way of sustainability. It was either go green or fail as a country. Denmark and Sweden do not have the wide margin of procrastination that America has in the way of energy. When cheap, abundant energy such as coal, oil, and natural gas are available in vast abundance, why bother innovating? - that's the feeling I get back home.

We already saw a taste of things to come when oil prices skyrocketed last summer – hybrid vehicles and renewable energy became all the rage, but now that prices have dropped to the complete other end of the spectrum, hybrid sales have declined and America is back where it started, comfortably procrastinating.

Please pardon my excessive cynicism and pessimism, it comes naturally as a part of my character.

The most prevalent highlights of our trip to Denmark and Sweden for me were definitely a mix of walking on the wind turbine, going to Goteborg University, and visiting Haldor Topsoe and their laboratory. I met some of the most incredible people at all three of these places who really changed my perspective on certain things. The fact that I finally encountered a society and culture who is already fully engaged in the war against climate change and the practicality that exists within their infrastructure along with the lack of personal sacrifices or inconveniences was incredibly inspiring for me. I could not help but constantly

compare things we often see here in Philadelphia to how they do it in Denmark and Sweden. I feel a social and personal responsibility to implement the things I've seen there in my own home and city more now than ever.

I think the most beneficial aspect of this trip was seeing how these countries operated compared to the United States. Seeing these countries showed me that it is possible to live in an environmentally sustainable way. Of course there are several differences between our countries such as size, infrastructure, energy grid, and mentality, which makes it difficult to implement this sustainable way of living. It can be done though, and I think that answering this question is going to be the fun part. Who doesn't like being presented with a challenge?? How can we, the United States, become more like environmentally sustainable like Denmark and Sweden. I think that the La Salle community and others will benefit from this idea of living sustainably, and being presented with this information will allow them as consumers to make positive decisions.

The highlights of the trip for me were definitely the wind turbines and the green roofs. Learning about these renewable energy devices in class and then witnessing them first hand really brings the whole issue home for me (even though we were miles away from home!) I think the most important thing that I'm bringing back to La Salle and America is what we saw in Malmo: an area which had fallen to pieces and was then built back up to be a completely green society. The fact that the community was able to rebuild what used to be the slums into a community which ran completely and successfully off of renewable energy is something that I believe Americans can do as well. It wasn't just the fact that all of the storm run off water was channeled correctly to not only be recycled and aesthetically pleasing, or that all of the roofs were green; it was the fact that this was an already establish/failed area of the city which was completely revamped to be something greater than it was before. If Americans can not only build a green community like this, but build it without clearing a forest or buying off farm land to do so, I think we'd be heading in the right directions.

I'm getting to this late, but perhaps it might be beneficial to have a later take after settling back into the United States/La Salle way of life. The highlights, I feel, were very much echoed in class and across this board. The windmills were not so much an educational feat as a spectacle--something truly to behold in terms of where energy production is going and the type of force required to make the energy we assume comes from our outlets. I'll remember the Chalmers forum and the green roofs of Malmo especially for how they shaped my view of Scandinavian culture, both energy-concerned and not. It's life as they know it, not the oddity we sometimes perceive, to be conscious of their energy usage. I'll also remember the fun tourist times--the various castles (but especially the one with our costumed guide), Nefertiti Jazz club in Goteborg and roaming around Stroget for some time.

As far as usefulness, I think the impression the trip left on me as a whole that this is possible and sitting on the horizon of every nation falling in line behind these leaders will be the biggest. It seemed so distant, and while it was about 8-9 hours by plane (quite distant to me), it now seems so approachable. Shut your lights, use better bulbs. Do the easy things, procure the right mindset and then tackle the greater issues with more enthusiasm.

I feel La Salle's benefit comes from being able to break into this area of course offerings and hopefully

incorporating the knowledge we've picked up into its practices. It'd be a shame if a University, a supposed beacon of education and enlightenment, would ignore some of the simple changes we have just because the folks with the big wallets don't understand. I hope that future classes will cement the concern about energy, and how it ties in with politics and economics and our daily lives, into our curriculum and campus practice.

I think that the benefits of this trip lie specifically in its uniqueness.

First, the topic of sustainability is uniquely interdisciplinary. Here is an issue that is completely intertwined among social, political, economic, scientific, and academic spheres. Education in individual subjects is absolutely essential before beginning to understand any connections. And yes, this course was given a helpful and useful scientific tilt that forced us to support any of our claims with data and facts. But the issues we discussed and then experienced firsthand were issues that tap into every aspect of life, making the topic a shining example of interdisciplinary education at its best.

Secondly, the topic of environmental sustainability is particularly timely in today's world. In addition to increased interest among media sources, private companies, and political circles, more and more individuals are becoming aware of the reality of climate change. Now just because people are aware does not mean that they are taking appropriate action. It also does not mean that people have the facts, or that they have all the facts. But, it does mean that the relevance of this topic increases tenfold because of its application to everyday life right here and now.

As for direct benefits from the trip, I point directly to our visits to the wind farms, the green roofs, Haldor Topsoe, and Chalmers University. Each of these experiences allowed me to learn more about some of the science behind climate change - from how windmills actually generate electricity, to how green roofs appropriately retain just the right amount of water, to how renewable sources of fuel can be discovered and utilized, I significantly expanded my understanding of the science of climate change.

And for La Salle's benefits, I think that only time can tell. I believe that we have opened a major door for the university. We have shown that students are interested in courses about environmental sustainability and renewable energy. We have brought back experiences that show how individuals and organizations are making changes. Now we can invite and encourage La Salle to do the same. My hope is that the university on the whole will see our experience as an opportunity to begin some significant change. Where things go from here, we can only wait and see.