

Universitetspladsen

**RUglobal** 

Information and debate from Roskilde University

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**Investments should be earmarked for the study environment**

**Globalizing at home**



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**Time for reconciliation**

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# Globalizing at home

Globalization was in full effect as International Day sought to erase the borders within

By: **Philip Michael Shange**

While the Danish speaking students were busy in the Big Auditorium pondering dreams of exchange study, international RUC'ers sat in the hallway awaiting their arrival.

In perhaps a twist of irony, the Danish RUC'ers were *here* asking about life *abroad*, while international RUC'ers were *abroad*, talking of life *here*.

"We want our students to travel abroad but at the same time create globalization at home," head of International Office Mette Reebirk says.

November 3 2010 was International Day – which meant the International Office had set up international desks with global RUC'ers anxious to share their experiences.

"Matching the Danish students with the international students has a different effect, I believe. You can ask students different ques-

tions than you can ask a coordinator who has only visited the foreign campus. It's also an opportunity to network," Mette Reebirk says.

Behind one desk was German student Sarah Kleideiter, sharing what brought her to Roskilde University.

"As I study in a very big city at home in Berlin, I wanted to get the feeling of a smaller place during my stay in Denmark. Therefore I rented a room in Roskilde and just love to live there, close to water, parks and the cozy city centre. The fast connection to Copenhagen is also great so when I want to feel the crowd and the big town, I can always go there," she says.

## Different flags, different tables

While the presentation is taking place in the Big Auditorium, the current crop of international students sit in the hallway.

Different tables are set up, all with flags signifying the representation of each student. One table is occupied by two Chinese students

with a red flag. Another has the red and yellow colors of the Spanish flag.

Next to the Turkish table sits Berliner Sarah Kleideiter with the black, red and yellow colors of the country she will again call home in just a few months.

But for now, Sarah is getting used to the life at RU.

"Studying at Roskilde is nice for me, as the German courses are small and the atmosphere between teachers and students is very cozy. I also like the kitchens everywhere where you can meet and eat something during the breaks," she says.

## Different effect

As the room fills, students quickly gather around the tables. Sarah and the rest share their experiences with their domestic

*Continues*



# The Editor's Desk



Welcome to a new issue of RUGlobal.

Some may notice and some may not – but this is the first time we're doing The Editor's Desk on these pages. And there's a very simple reason for that. We want to do a little more on these pages in the future.

RU is an international community. That's nothing new. And, yes, RUGlobal reflects that. But it has also been said that RUGlobal needed just a little *more*.

More personalization. More personality. Even more *persons*. After all RUGlobal is the official news source of the international students here at RU. Therefore news needs to be reported – not just translated.

In the following issues, I'll be looking for stories that target our international audience here at RU. Which means some of you may see me wander around campus for no apparent reason – but it also means you will have more personal stuff to read.

Unfortunately, many of our RUGlobal stories for this issue were either cancelled or delayed so the fruits of my wander may not be seen for another issue or two. Be that as it may, we still have plenty of good stories for you this time around.

The story "Voluntary work is popular" shows that what you've been told about Generation Y may not be so true after all.

Also, we bring an intriguing in-depth interview with one of the original RUC'ers, Erling Olsen, who was recently appointed honorary doctor at RU. We also have a feature from International Day so there's plenty to read in this issue. And there's more to come in the future.

Enjoy!

*Philip Michael Shange*

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## Publishing information

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7	20/12	20/12	10/1

- at 12 noon on the assigned date

Continued

counterparts, as they explain the ins and outs of being abroad.

"I really sensed a different energy from the students, a different drive. An event with this only helps students become more interested in going abroad," Mette Reebirk says.

#### No easy task

Still, being an exchange student in Denmark is no cakewalk.

"It's difficult. It's not easy getting close to Danes. It's difficult to grasp the RU study form. I think many may feel lonely. But once they

become acclimated, it opens up for a whole new realization," Mette Reebirk says. "Because they learn how to learn."

Nevertheless, those experiences can help the students tremendously in the future.

"You show that you are flexible and can adapt to unknown situations. You can build up a network and learn new perspectives to your field of study," Sarah Kleideiter says. "Improving knowledge of a foreign language and getting experience in adapting to a totally new environment where you have to build up a new network and life from scratch - that helps later to be more flexible in unknown situation and you gain self esteem."



Which is exactly why rector Ib Poulsen want the Danish RUC'ers to pick up a thing or two from the ones who are a global. Here.

## UNiverse

# Once a RUC'er, always a RUC'er

**By: Kristel Pent, Alumne coordinator, International Office**

University is in many ways like a family. It houses and feeds its members, ideally both mentally and physically and has its own rules and traditions that don't always make sense to the outsiders. The motto of the oldest university in Europe, the University of Bologna is in fact 'alma mater studiorum', meaning "the nourishing mother of studies" and following this, all universities are the 'alma mater' of their graduates.

As life goes, the children fly from the nest in order to discover the world for themselves. Yet on occasion they still come to visit and have a cup of coffee, bringing news from the outer world and inquiring what the honorary mater has been up to lately. Both have obviously been living busy lives, so there is no lack of conversation topics.

That's the ideal relationship between a university and its alumni – they meet now and then because they are interested in how either

of them is doing. They share ideas, because they think it is relevant. And finally they think about those ideas shared and implement some of them as they realize that new insight can help them improve and grow.

RU is finally starting its own alumni program and calling its old students and graduates to return to Campus, say hello and share the knowledge and experiences they've gathered after leaving the boxy buildings. After all, isn't it the essence of being a RUC'er – a passion to change the world, to do something with your education? The society needs the input from the university as it is too busy for contemplation and the university needs the input from the society as otherwise it can easily forget that academic life is a bell jar of a kind.

The plan is to bring together the best of both worlds - arrange lectures and discussions with ex-RUC'ers who are now working with the newest and brightest ideas, changing the world, moving and shaking the old frameworks. The idea is to have information flowing in and out, mixing and creating new ideas on its way.

We hope it'll make RU a place of cutting-edge research and teaching; a place where students stay late in the campus to debate the latest societal phenomena and discuss molecular biology in the canteen queue; a place where professors perform world-class experiments and host excited guests from all over the world; a place that is excited about knowledge, studying and using this knowledge in practice; a place that one day perhaps will foster a Nobel Prize winner.



# Voluntary work is popular

The idea of making a difference to others, and at the same time gaining work experience attracts more and more young people to do voluntary work

By: **Jakob Bang Schmidt, RUGlobal**

- The children now love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority, they show disrespect for elders and love chatter in place of exercise. They no longer rise when elders enter the room. Those were the words of Socrates around 400 B.C.

More than 2000 years later, today's youth are still accused of having a bad character. However, the voluntary organisations in Denmark are experiencing the opposite; in recent years they have seen a rush of young people.

## Making a difference

According to Louise Rasmussen, information officer at Center for Frivilligt Socialt Arbejde (a centre of voluntary social work in Denmark), young people want to help others.

- I think the feeling of making a difference to others is a big motivator for young people.

She also believes that young people see voluntary work as an opportunity to test themselves

- They gain a new identity through voluntary work, meet new people and at the same time, they grow as a person.

## Career development

Louise Rasmussen also points out that young people see voluntary work as an opportunity to improve their job opportunities.

- They need experience from the working life and they can get that from voluntary work. They get the opportunity to create and organise something themselves; either politically, managerially or administratively.

## Three good reasons

Aya Lee studies Cultural Encounters and Psychology at RU. Since the autumn of 2008, she has volunteered at Invandrer- Kvindecetret (a centre for female immigrants) at Fælledvej in the Nørrebro district and at the non-profit association Rapolitics working with young people in Copenhagen. The interest in voluntary work came when she took a six months break from her studies at RU.

After two years as a volunteer at Rapolitics, Aya Lee was appointed project manager in the spring of 2010, and now she is working full-

time in a combination of paid and voluntary work before she has to go back to RU and write her thesis.

She can think of at least three good reasons for doing voluntary work:

## Do something for others

- If you have the energy to do it, I think you are obligated to dedicate some of that energy to some of the initiatives and associations doing a good and necessary job.

## Get a lot in return

- Voluntary work can challenge you in a different way than a normal student job, which is all about earning money. Even though voluntary work obviously is about doing something for others, I have gained so much from it. After a while I found out that you build relationships with a lot of fun and good people.

## It opens doors

- Voluntary work can be an entry to what you actually want to work with later in life and hopefully get paid for, and then you can spend all your time doing what you want, and make a living of it.

## Volunteers

In 2006, the Danish Red Cross Youth had about 1,800 inquiries from young people wanting to do voluntary work, and the number has increased to about 3,000 this year. The number of members of Save the Children Youth Denmark increased from 465 in 2006 to 2,009 members today. The Danish Refugee Council is also seeing increased interest from young people. In March 2009, the Danish Refugee Council founded the youth network DFUNK with currently 750 volunteers. Altogether evidence of a massive rush of young people who want to do voluntary work.



# Investments should be earmarked



Name: Kirstine Marie Fabricius  
 Study programme: Psychology and Communication  
 Board of Directors: Since February 2010

*Since February, what have your Board duties involved?*

- We have primarily been working on the educational reform – the new bachelor structure. Torben and I have particularly strived to ensure that students' opinions are heard in the process because the students are the ones who know how it works best."

*How have you made sure that students' opinions are heard?*

- We want to ensure that the material presented to us has been considered by the study boards, the student councils and the Academic Council.

There is a majority of external members on the Board who are not part of the daily life at RU and who are therefore out of touch with staff and student opinions. For this reason, it is important to ensure that people at RU have looked at, worked with and approved the material and the structures presented to us on the Board."

*What Board assignments carry your fingerprints?*

- We have contributed to the educational reform. It was the Student Council that promoted the compromise proposed by the opposing parties. As student representatives on the Board, we backed such compromise.

We adopted a strategy focusing on education. Education is the element to be highlighted.

And we have appointed a very skilled Pro-Rector, Hanne Leth Andersen. Her responsibility as a pro-rector is education, and she feels passionately about RU. She is "the students' female spokesperson" – she believes that education should be based on the students' terms."

*What will be the most important discussions and decisions of the Board in the next term?*

- We must prepare a strong and reasonable budget, which is always a challenge. We now have some money to play with as the budget is no longer as tight. But how should we invest the profits? Should we increase our equity or rather spend the money on improving education?"

*Well, what do you think?*

- Naturally, I don't think we should just aim for a larger equity.

I think we should make investments; one-off investments such as a general face-lift of the RU premises, an improvement of the class rooms.

Many of the basis houses simply have too little space. The overall conditions for student teaching are too poor. We could for example invest in new tables, chairs, PowerPoint projectors, etc. Investing in the student environment and conditions for teaching will yield more competent students. That is my firm belief."

*Is your actual influence as a student representative in any way affected by the fact that there are five external and four internal members on the Board?*

- I consider it a challenge; however, a good one. It means that we work towards a successful collaboration internally, but also in relation to the external board members. That is the challenge. On the other hand, it also means



that we are responsible for communicating to the outside world what is going on at RU. There are only four of us in-house (one academic staff-member, one administrative staff-member "and two students, ed.) who know what is going on at RU and how education works in practice."

*Do people listen to you?*

- They certainly do. We have the advantage of knowing what it means to be students. The external Board members can easily understand our arguments, and they just say: "We don't always know what is going on at RU. You will have to tell us that."

*As a student representative, what is it like to be face-to-face with such a dynamic and strong man as Christian S. Nissen?*

- He is a very clever man. No doubt about that.

During negotiations, he is attentive; he has also been a student politician once, and he can easily see things from our perspective – even if he were to disagree. So there are no direct "cat fights."

# for the study environment

**By:**  
**Thomas Humle,**  
**RUGlobal**

Firstly, they were on Board. Then they were over Board. And now, they are on Board again. For a short while, confusion surrounding the recently held election to RU's Board of Directors was complete. Torben Holm-Lauritzen and Kirstine Marie Fabricius have both been student representatives on RU's Board of Directors since February this year. After the election, it became clear that they had not been re-elected – or had they? It turned out that the electoral office had made a miscalculation; a second counting showed that both representatives had been re-elected. Torben and Kirstine, both members of the RU Student Council, could therefore breathe sighs of relief and still look forward to a new term of Board duties.

RUGlobal has been chatting to the two re-elected representatives about their achievements during their previous term on the Board, their objectives for the coming term of office, how much influence student representatives actually have and what RU's profits should be spent on, were it up to them.

The following members were elected to the Board of Directors:  
Kirstine Marie Fabricius, alternate  
Mia Jo Ortkjær  
Torben Holm-Lauritzen, alternate  
Nina Rasmussen

To the Academic Council, the following members were appointed:  
Lasse Blomhøj, alternate Torben Holm-Lauritzen  
Thomas Aarup Larsen, alternate Nina Rasmussen  
Mia Jo Ortkjær, alternate Kirstine Marie Fabricius  
Camilla Bylling Lang, alternate Sidsel Gro Bang-Jensen  
Therese Agerschou Heide, alternate Kasper Bjerring Petersen  
Jens Ladekarl, alternate Petra Marie Bohm

Name: Torben Holm-Lauritzen  
Study programme: Public Administration  
Board of Directors: Since February 2010

*Why do you think you were re-elected?*

- I believe people voted for the Student Council because we are committed and take an active part in designing RU's study programmes. We approach the work on the Board based on a wish to improve the programmes, but also offer specific proposals that are often adopted."

*What in particular did you work on during the last term?*

- I am very proud that we employed Pro-Rector Hanne Leth Andersen during the last term. On the Board, we have also worked intensively to promote the educational reform that will redefine all RU study programmes and the strategy, which will be key to shaping RU's development over the coming five years."

*What Board assignments carry your fingerprints?*

- I am proud of having contributed to ensuring that the Academic Council has been consulted to such a high degree during the educational reform and the strategy process. I believe it is key for a policy to be implemented that it has the necessary backing among students and staff."

*There are five external board members against four internal board members. What is the extent of your actual influence on the work of the Board?*

- Luckily, the work of the Board is not a question of doing math, but rather of providing good arguments. The internal board members are part of the daily life at RU. We know what goes on at RU – and we are better at assessing the consequences of the decisions we make. We enjoy great respect from the Board because of that, and I believe that, for that reason, we are taken very seriously. As a result, students on the Academic Council and the Board of Directors were actually the ones



that provided the wording of the educational reform that was adopted."

*I take it that the chairman, Christian S. Nissen, is a man who is used to exercising his will. What is it like as a student representative to be face-to-face with him?*

- I think RU has a competent and professional chairman. He has got his own projects that he would like to see implemented, that is true. On the other hand, he is also well aware that if you want things carried through at RU, it is important that students and staff are consulted; otherwise they simply can't be bothered."

*RU will report a decent financial profit this year. What would you like to see the money spent on?*

- RU students often experience that there are too many people in class rooms that are too small. It is necessary that we make better use of the space we have. I would also like to see the class rooms be renovated and modernised – and we also need more houses.

The transition from the basic studies to the advanced-level studies may seem like a radical change. RU will have to spend some money on improving the study environment at the advanced-level studies – I believe it would contribute to reducing the drop-out rate and making life as a student at the advanced-level studies much easier."

# Time for reconciliation

Marxist students shouted “pig” when they saw Erling Olsen in the corridors; his only response was: “Oink, oink”. This happened in 1973 – when Erling Olsen was RU’s very first rector. That same year, fighting the Marxists cost him his job as rector. Still, he says “we” when talking about RU. 37 years after his resignation as rector, Erling Olsen can now look back on that time with a smile on his lips, because he ended up being proved right. Marxism died, and RU developed into the innovative and successful university he dreamt of. On 17 September he was appointed honorary doctor of RU

**By: Thomas Humle, RUGlobal**

The living room is nicely decorated with designer furniture and floor-to-ceiling bookcases. Looking through the window, you can see the Deer Park. In the sofa opposite me is Erling Olsen; the man who was known as the Owl with the magnificent intelligence, the sharp tongue and the subtle sense of humour. He was Minister of Housing, Minister of Justice, Speaker of the Folketing and – also – the very first rector at RU.

He has turned 83, but his back is still straight, and he is impeccably dressed: his trousers are of a fabric that needs cleansing – not washing; only a pair of leather slippers gives away that we are at his home base.

While his wife throughout the past 51 years, Annette Unmack Larsen, brings us some mineral water, Erling Olsen returns my friendly gaze.

## **Rector faced with teasing**

*Why were you appointed RU’s very first rector?*

“I believe it relates to two things: One positive and one negative. The positive thing was that I had been studying “economics of education” at Chicago University in the US. There, I learned about basic studies, interdisciplinarity and problem orientation. When I came back,

I passed on my knowledge to my students at the Economics programme; some of those students were later employed with the Ministry of Education. I was also an MP from 1964 to 1966, when education policy was one of my areas of responsibility. So they knew me at the Ministry of Education”, he says in a concentrated fashion while folding a piece of paper that he then tears into little pieces. His hands are working mechanically, and he continues:

“The negative thing was that I had been an MP working for the Danish Social Democratic Party. The centre-right government had decided that the new university should be located in Roskilde, while the Danish Social Democratic Party – headed by a bitter K.B. Andersen – wanted it to be located in Aalborg. So it was part of a teasing game that the university was to have a social democratic rector when located in Roskilde”, he says bursting into his characteristic hoarse laughter that starts deep down in his throat.

For this reason, Erling Olsen considered things carefully before accepting the position. He knew that the former Minister of Education K.B. Andersen would be furious.

“The decision was definitely not a popular one. However, it was my chance to do something new and try out a few of the things I learned in the US. I aimed to reduce the long

programmes to achieve interdisciplinarity – a structure corresponding to the Anglo-Saxon basic studies. Until then, we did not have any bachelor programmes; they did not exist at Danish universities. It was a challenge too fun not to pursue.”

## **RU based in portacabins**

As expected, K.B. Andersen was peevish about Erling Olsen’s choice. In a radio transmission, he gave him a broadside and stated that the university would be closed and moved to Aalborg as soon as he would again become Minister of Education.

“The radio news wanted my comments, and I got a better idea: The university should be based in portacabins rolling forth and back between Roskilde and Aalborg between elections,” he says laughing.

Erling Olsen was responsible for the composition of the interim management that was given two years to make the new university ready for its first students to be admitted. He had useful contacts within the humanities and social sciences, but was on his own when it came to the natural sciences area.

“Minister of Education Helge Larsen recommended Bent Elbek from the Niels Bohr Institute. Elbek was the one to invent the Coral. The entire logo was invented by him.





Erling Olsen was born on 18 April 1927. MP for the Social Democrats from 1964 to 1968, 1971 to 1973 and from 1975 to 1998. Minister of Housing from 1978 to 1982. Minister of Justice from 1993 to 1994 and Speaker of the Folketing from 1994 to 1998.

During World War II he had to flee to Sweden with his family because his mother was Jewish. After the War, Erling Olsen studied Economics at the University of Copenhagen and graduated with an M.Sc. in Economics in 1953 and became Doctor of Economics in 1971.

In 1970 he was appointed RU's first rector.

Erling Olsen feels that at the age of 83 he is about to be ready for retirement. He has just stopped working for an Arctic university, but is still chairman of an international school in Norway. And he also lends a helping hand to the Danish Social Democrats as an unpaid "student assistant". However, he does not offer any comments, neither on current national politics nor on university politics. "That is their job", he says. Besides, he finds it is "getting off cheaply" to be on the outside delivering comments to the inside at no risk at all.

I think that deserves mentioning here", he says while highlighting that building RU was a joint project.

Our vision was to create a university that in terms of pedagogy and academic standards differed from the University of Copenhagen. It was important to stand out from the established universities to avoid becoming a low quality university. Teaching should focus on problem-oriented project work in teams.

"I took a technocratic approach to the world of education, as I simply believed that the quality was too low at the University of Copenhagen and that resources were foolishly wasted. That way, the education system could be markedly improved. The student protest approach, on the other hand, was Marxist. I thought: OK. You know, Churchill formed an alliance with Stalin, so why not?", he says laughing.

### Combating Marxists

The large number of Marxist teachers and students quickly became a burden for Erling Olsen.

"I was probably the only social democrat at RU. Social democrats were considered part of the extreme right wing", he says and establishes: "It came to blows with the Marxist representatives at RU."

At the end of 1972, a rectorship election was held at RU. Erling Olsen was forced to resign, which he did in 1973, but in the years to follow he continued working at RU as a teacher. However, he only had four students:

"The rest didn't want to have anything to do with me. On the other hand, the four students constituted a decent class size", he says laughing.

Erling Olsen would prefer not to reopen old wounds. Being a good loser is important, but being a good winner is even more important, as he says. Anyway, he can't help telling this anecdote:

"When I walked down the corridors at RU, they shouted "pig" after me. My response was simple: "Oink, oink" he laughs out loudly.

Erling Olsen felt that sound educational principles were compromised in an attempt to run RU as a "Marxist mission school", which he called it in public. The sentiment of the Folketing had turned against RU, and the new university was in actual fact at risk of closure. "Having resigned as rector, I continued my war against the Marxists. I helped place them under administration. This resulted in a lot of adjustments, and you can definitely come across people who found that very sad."

*You weren't particularly popular at RU, were you?*

"No – definitely not. However, had RU not been placed under administration, it had been closed", says Erling Olsen adding that only a few votes and a conservative defector secured RU's survival at the vote in the Folketing.

*What made Marxist politics so dominant at RU in the first year?*

"The unfortunate thing was, even if applying standard employment criteria – purely academic employment criteria – the young applicants were generally Marxist; a reflection of the time. I came to RU with a technocratic approach, while many others had a political approach. As a result, all those with an interest in Marxist currents were attracted to RU."

### RU under change

In the following years, the sentiment at RU changed as Marxist ideas gradually died out. "RU changed as a result of the pressure from the outside world that I in part was behind, but also because the number of students and teachers was constantly increasing. A natural change of sentiment occurred from within", says Erling Olsen.

*Continues*

Continued

When you joined RU as rector, you introduced new visions and educational principles. But then it got out of hand somehow in relation to the Marxists, didn't it?

"The educational principles remained intact and have spread to other educational institutions. It works the same way as in the economy: In the economy, you must aim to meet the needs people do not know they have until the product is launched. Now, the other Danish universities are beginning to have traits similar to RU, and RU no longer stands out so much. This is the time to invent something new without rejecting what is old. I enjoyed the new Pro-rector Hanne Leth Andersen's lecture on university pedagogy, and the plan for what RU wants to embark on. Lovely to see that RU does not rest on its laurels."

How do you see the future for RU?

"I believe RU is better at defining its future than I am", says Erling Olsen and continues:

"I am pleased to see that the media increasingly use researchers from RU. We also see that students are required to have Denmark's highest average grades to be admitted to our new programmes. It means that we are in the lead, which is still necessary and requires work and imagination. I wouldn't want to say that I am burnt-out – however, I am 83-years old, and I have great faith in the generation currently studying and working at RU."



### One of RU's friends

Is the RU we know today exceedingly comparable to the visions you had then?

"Yes, that is what I mean when I call myself a good winner", he says and stresses that the university world has undergone a natural development.

"I am really proud to have been in from the start. For a number of years I was accused of being a terrible person and was considered an enemy of RU. Now I am considered a friend of RU, which means that now I can close my eyes with a peace of mind", he laughs warmly and continues:


"Now I can say that I have not lived in vain. I am very pleased with that."





RU's rector and Erling Olsen at "Årsfest 2010".

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Once you have received your NemID, you can log into RU's systems by clicking here: **Login with NemID**.

Once you are logged in, go to [portalino.ruc.dk](http://portalino.ruc.dk) to change your password or to [webmail.ruc.dk](http://webmail.ruc.dk) to read your mail.

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
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RUC username:

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Sign on

NEMID  Login with NemID

Tips and tricks from Campus-it