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**Building Social Bridges**  
by entrepreneurial thinking



# Role models

## Denmark



## Lucy

“You should do what makes you happy”

### The way to Denmark

Lucy came to Denmark with her husband and their cat 5 years ago, when her husband got a job at LEGO in Billund. Before that, they lived in the UK, in Wales, where they both graduated from their education in 2009. One of the reasons they moved to Denmark was that in the UK they had challenges finding work. They both did a lot of volunteer work and made projects that they liked very much, but they were not always able to get paid. Where they lived there was high local unemployment and competition and they could only find jobs in shops and factories where they could not use their education.

Lucy’s husband found a job at LEGO, so she did not feel as pressured to earn an income as she used to, and could start looking for her dream job. Lucy was very excited to come to Denmark and get a fresh start in a place where no one knew her, she had a feeling that she could be whoever she wanted to be. Lucy has been creative since she was little. She comes from a very creative family, both her parents are educated in creative subjects. Her mother is educated in ceramics, her father in visual arts, and her sister is a children's book illustrator. Her parents had to work as teachers to earn enough money, but her father always told her that "you should do what makes you happy", even if she could not make money from it. For Lucy creating is what makes her happy and that became her starting point for her work in Denmark.



Lucy already knew some people who lived in Vejle before they moved there. Lucy and her husband asked them for good advice on how to get started in Vejle and good places to live. This enabled her to start early looking for a workplace where she could meet other creative people and find good opportunities to network, be motivated and inspired. As Lucy says, ‘when you have a workplace, you also have to work’. Someone recommended [Fabrikanterne](#), which is a workshop community of individual designers and artists, in the field of interior design, lifestyle and design, selling in a common store. Two weeks after relocating to Denmark Lucy had her own workshop at Fabrikanterne. It was also here that Lucy met Marit, who has been an important person for Lucy, she has helped Lucy to find her way in Denmark. Fabrikanterne was a good place for Lucy because it meant she was not stuck at home. There she could meet people and be motivated to get

started on her own projects. Fabrikanterne have a store where everyone who has a workshop can sell things they make. Lucy could use her experience and skills from the UK to create products to sell in the store. Before, she had mostly done art projects and exhibitions, but now she was motivated to sell her things. It was in Fabrikanterne that she really started to create networks and contacts for her work.

Today, Lucy has her own company, [LA Read](#), where she makes projects, exhibitions, workshops and products that she sells. She is also part of the NGO, called [Culture Shift](#), who make workshops for children and adults. In her personal life, Lucy and her husband got married and had a child, Buster.

## Facts about Lucy

**Name:** Lucy Reed

**Gender:** Female

**Age:** 33

**Nationality:** United Kingdom

**Education:** Bachelor of Arts, and Master in Contemporary Dialogues from the UK, specializing in textiles.

**Profession:** Artist and designer.

**Interests:** Lucy loves to create things, cooking and watching movies. She also spends a lot of time outside by the beach or in the woods. Her latest and greatest interest is her son Buster.

**Languages:** English and a little Danish.

**Find video interview with Lucy on the project website:**  
<https://buildingsocialbridges.eu/>

## Getting through the difficult beginning

Not everything has been entirely positive from the start for Lucy and her experience is that it is important to be realistic when you come to Denmark and begin with small goals. You can then gradually build on that and let it grow. For Lucy the motivation has been to find a way to do the things she loves, which has been her creative and artistic projects. She began by setting gradual goals that were obtainable. First, she found a workspace in Fabrikanterne, and used this as her motivation to find a way to make money from what she was doing there. To start, her goal was to earn enough to be able to pay for the rent of the workspace.

In the beginning, Lucy told herself that she should go out and find all the opportunities she could and she should say yes to everything. Usually she is an introverted person who likes to stay at home, but at the same time she likes to talk to other people and get to know new people. Therefore, she put on her "work hat" and got started. In Lucy's experience, other people can be a good motivator. The times where she did not feel like going to her workspace, the other people there asked where she was, and this made her want to be there. Another strategy to keep motivated has been to make appointments with others. When you do something with others or make agreements, then they are dependent on you. It is a good way to find buddies who can help get you to stick to the things you want to achieve. For example, Lucy meets up with other creative friends in Vejle where they do creative things together. Lucy has a friend who moved to Denmark in the winter and she thought found it hard to get started, so Lucy suggested that they meet every week and be creative and draw together. It has helped them both because they had fun and kept the focus on being creative together.

Lucy describes that she became an entrepreneur when she moved to Denmark. She was placed in a new situation in a new country. At home in the UK, she could see all the barriers and knew that a lot of things were difficult, such as raising money for her projects and she knew there was high competition within her field. At the time, she actually gave up a bit because she knew the competition was tough, but when she came to Denmark she could not see the barriers and it was actually an advantage to be a little ignorant,

because she did not think about what was possible or not. At the same time Vejle is a different environment and a small town where competition within Lucy's field is not so tough. For Lucy, being an entrepreneur is also about being open to opportunities. Some of what she has learned by coming to Denmark is to put on the "yes-hat" and try to use the fact that she has moved to Denmark as an opportunity to start over and rethink her career. For example, she has gained more focus on making products and earning money, rather than exhibiting art. One of the things that has helped Lucy is that she has always been good at thinking positively. She believes that if you ask the universe for something, it will come to you, maybe not now, but later. When you are positive, you attract more work and positive opportunities. It affects the way others see you and others feel more like knowing you and having you in their network.

Today, however, Lucy knows the barriers of coming to Denmark. The language is one of the big issues. Lucy herself has spent a year at the local language school, but had to stop because she had too much work to do. However, she also did not like going to the language school. The way she was taught did not suit her, and she was scolded if she did not do her homework. At that time, she worked a lot with children, and she discovered that it was a good way to learn Danish as well as being among a lot of Danish speakers. She learned a lot from that. Now that she herself is on maternity leave, she has forgotten much of the Danish language, but her plan is to rediscover it with her child who goes to a Danish preschool. When Lucy encounters challenges such as understanding how the business system works in Denmark, she asks Danes. There are many opportunities for free advice about being new in Vejle and creating a business such as [Welcome Vejle](#), in Vejle Municipality, who are good at showing her where to go for help.

### The way into the Danish society

According to Lucy, social relationships and networks are very important for finding opportunities in Denmark. It is both about getting support and help from other people, but it is also about seeing and finding opportunities that might lead to work. Social relationships and networks have meant a lot to Lucy and what she has learned and achieved in Denmark. One of the things that motivated Lucy was to try to accept all the opportunities she could: Whether it was an opportunity to meet new people, free courses, creative networks in Billund or something else, she has put on the "yes-hat" and has accepted the opportunity. As she says, you never know who you end up talking to.

Lucy also has her own role models in Denmark, which have had an impact on her and the choices she has made. Marit from Fabrikanterne and Rachel, with whom she runs the NGO Culture Shift, are some of the most important role models. They are both very practical. When they get an idea for a project, they make it happen. It may not always work, but they are both motivated and inspired by the way they work. Both have also been very encouraging and have helped Lucy make things happen. Lucy herself tries to take what she has learned from Marit and Rachel with her and is herself very encouraging to others about their own projects.

It is important to maintain relationships and networks, and stay in touch over time, because new opportunities may arise over time. The longer Lucy is here in Vejle, the wiser she becomes. She has learned that it is also about knowing who to ask about what and who is good at different things. Lucy still has the same network she has built up since she came to Denmark, but it has expanded and become more informal. She knows more people and does not need to network in the same way as before. The nature of

the relationships in her network has changed because now people have started to contact her and reach out because they want to get to know her or use her abilities for something.

At first, Lucy did not know who people were and who she should contact. Lucy and her husband are not very social, and she is actually the one who is best at making new contacts and making sure they both have a social life. Lucy has changed a lot since they came to Vejle and she has used skills she never needed at home, where she already had a network and friends. She has had to create her own network in Vejle and here, being creative has been a great advantage. You do not need a language to be creative because you can use your hands and visual media. It has been a kind of bridge for Lucy and a way to find other like-minded people. Being able to communicate and build bridges through art has been a theme in Lucy's education, in her art projects and now in her work in Culture Shift, where they create workshops that create safe creative spaces where people can meet across cultures and backgrounds, and create and learn together. They say that children have 100 languages, so it is about finding your own language to be able to reach out to other people, whether it is food, dance, art or something completely different. When you go into a new culture, there has to be a bridge, and it does not have to start with language.

## Good advice

To those who come to Denmark, Lucy will first and foremost recommend saying yes to everything. You never know when you will learn something new or meet new people who can help you. It is a good idea not to be picky at first, and also be willing to do something voluntarily without getting paid for it. Once you are more settled, it is easier to be more selective and choose what you want. It is also a good idea to meet people who are different from yourself, or get to know different types of people. If you are only with the same types of people, such as creative people, then you can be very limited because you think too similarly and the competition can become bigger when it comes to work. In Culture Shift, Lucy and her two colleagues have different backgrounds, but they complement each other really well. They actually met each other at a networking event and found that they had similar ideas, and could relate to each other in different ways. They all have different educations and life experiences that together create a good combination.

It can also be beneficial to be curious, in order to find your way and potential for what you can do in Denmark. It does not have to be your education that creates a path for you. It can also be your passion, your culture or something completely different. For example, Lucy has a friend who is great at cooking and loves it, they volunteered in a social cafe when she came to Vejle. This became her entrance to learn Danish and meet Danes. Maybe you have some knowledge or experience due to your cultural background that is valuable to others who do not themselves have that knowledge or know about that culture. There may be things you yourself think are obvious, but that others with a different background cannot see. For example, she knows a man in Vejle who makes educational videos for teachers in primary school about culture. Many Danish teachers do not know much about Muslim culture and religion, because there are many Muslim children in the schools he has created a successful company by making such videos.

Language can be a barrier. Therefore, it can be good to find other internationals who speak the same language as yourself and who can help you. In Denmark, many foreigners speak all kinds of languages, so it is easy to find someone to talk with. It is important to discover that you are not the only one who might feel isolated as a foreigner in a new country and learn that others also find it difficult. It is also important to meet people who share the same interest as yourself. In Vejle, Lucy has used VEN, Vejle Expat Network, an

association and a network for internationals in the area of Vejle Municipality. VEN is a good starting point to get to know people.

The good thing about networking is that you learn that you can both get and give help to others. In Denmark, many people get to know others through their children. For example, there is an international mothers' group on Facebook, where many international mothers, or expectant mothers, participate. There you are matched with other expectant mothers with the same term, so you can meet and talk about becoming a mother. Lucy attended a workshop for expectant mothers, she has been in touch with the others and they have supported each other ever since. The new contacts have emerged a bit like rings in the water.

In Vejle, there is also Fablab, in Spinderihallerne, which is an open workspace. Here you can use machines that can 3D print, laser cut and much more in materials such as wood, plastic and fabric, almost for free every Tuesday. There is a large environment of volunteers who are very supportive and who love to share their knowledge and abilities with new people. It is a great way to meet other people and get started doing something with others. Lucy has used it since she came to Vejle, and still uses it to work with her products. If you become part of the environment, people start to expect you to come and it becomes important to show up on Tuesdays, otherwise you have to wait a whole week before you can use the workspace again. Lucy describes that the feeling that other people miss you and expect you to show up, in a different way than at a job, has been important for her to get out and get to know other people.

## The future

The big goal for Lucy and her husband is to buy a house. It requires a little more work so they can afford it. Lucy also has plans for more projects that she is already working on. She might get the opportunity to do some freelance work for LEGO. Previously, she wanted to find a job at LEGO, but as time passes, the less she wants to work there. She likes her freedom in her own business and she has more opportunities to do what she wants and the things she believes in, when she works independently. Her goal has changed from wanting to find something more permanent and secure to wanting to be more free and independent.

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