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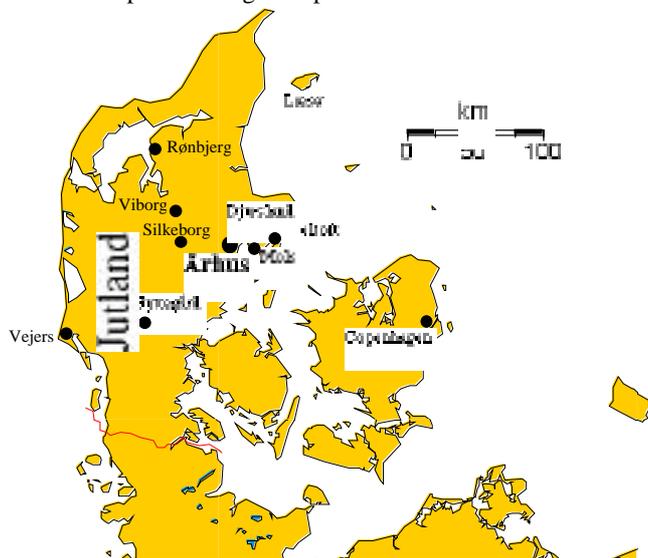
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Yet another year, yet another country. I guess that this should be entitled “*Nyheder fra Danmark*” this year. My annual newsletters are apparently getting some sort of (perhaps not entirely good) reputation now judging by some of the comments I got this year. Of course it’s not that I wouldn’t like to write to each and every one of you personally, but with annual circulation figures exceeding 50, I wouldn’t be able to include so much news if I did; I hope it’s not too boring.

So, what have I made of my first year in Denmark? Moving from Switzerland to Denmark hasn’t been a major culture shock, and overall I’ve enjoyed my time here. The two countries do have many similarities, but most differences weigh out in Denmark’s favour. Both countries are about the same size and have similar populations; the standard of living is high, food is expensive and life is generally lived in a very orderly manner. However the Danes are very keen on personal freedom, so I no longer have to worry about doing my laundry on a Sunday. The Danes are generally superficially friendly and helpful, ‘though it’s still very difficult to actually make friends with a Dane. The main disadvantage with Århus is the lack of rented accommodation for foreign post-docs like myself; The only real option available is sub-renting from people on sabbatical, which tends to be a short term solution. I’ve already had to move twice, and will probably have to do so twice more before the end of my contract.

As most people aren’t that familiar with Denmark, here’s a map which might help out a bit:



While I was in Switzerland I grew increasingly frustrated that I hadn’t learnt any Swiss German, so I determined to make a real effort to learn Danish while I’m in Denmark. To this end I’ve been attending Danish classes, initially at the International Student Centre, and latterly at “sprogcentret” (the language centre). I’ve been making very rapid progress, which isn’t difficult starting from nothing. I can now sort of follow very slow conversations and get by in shops and restaurants. Danish pronunciation has to be heard to be believed however, and I’m not sure that I’ll ever get the hang of “d”s (pronounced variously as “”, “d”, “th”, “dth” and

“l”) let alone the other 28 letters! The language course is also a good opportunity to do something outside the university, and I have made several good friends on the various courses. In fact it’s been noticeable that the number of non-Danes that have come to my various housewarming parties has considerably outnumbered the number of Danes.

At the end of my first month in Århus, I was invited to come along to help teach the Evolutionary Biology workshop in Rønbjerg (a university field station on the Limfjord). This was a good way to meet a few of the students and also to experience some of the delights of rural Denmark between the organised talks. The highlight of the week would have been a couple of hours riding ponies had I not managed to fall off mine at the gallop onto a frozen beach, which was rather painful and resulted in a severe limp for the next month.

At the end of March, I took a trip back to the UK. This, like all my trips this year, was a pretty hectic affair. I came over initially for a meeting at Keele University, which was organised as part of the activities of the EU TMR (Training and Mobility of Researchers) network on social evolution, of which I’m a sort of honorary member. I then attended the second mathematical biology meeting in Bath, and managed to catch up a little with Glenda Orledge, Guy Blanchard, Nigel and Ana Franks and other old friends. Luckily the meeting was just before Easter so that I could spend the holiday time with my parents. Less luckily it also coincided with the worst floods that we have had in Islip for 50 years (see picture below), which didn’t affect my family badly but did reduce the grazing available to Julie’s pony, Sandy, by about 80%.



In May my parents plus my brother Paul and his girlfriend Alison came to visit me in Århus for ten days. We managed to see a lot of the sites of the town, as well as taking trips out to Ebeltøft (a picturesque harbour town on the Djursland peninsula – Jutland’s nose) and by train to Silkeborg and Viborg. I introduced them to some of the delights of Danish food, such as Leverpostej and sweet pickled herring,