



# The Anglo-Danish Society

Scholarship Reports November 2017



St. Catherine's College, Oxford

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## Dear Members

In the spring Birger Jensen visited St Catherine's College in Oxford to meet up with one of our scholarship recipients, Pia Pernille Søgaard. She is in her last year of a DPhil in molecular biomedicine and agreed to give us a little more insight on life as a scholar.

Their conversation appears in the following pages. In this booklet you will also have an opportunity to catch up on a number of scholars' progress; some of you will have met them at past receptions in the Ambassador's residence. Two of them have given talks to the membership about their respective fields of research, Lone Hørlyck speaking at last year's Easter Lunch at Danish YWCA, and Kaare Poulsgaard after that year's AGM at the Embassy.

We are supporting a great variety of postgraduate research subjects, and I trust that the reports illustrate the value and importance of giving grants to these outstanding, enthusiastic young academics based in either Denmark or the UK.

Your comments or questions are always welcome.

*Margit Staehr*  
*scholars@anglo-danishsociety.org.uk*

## Proud to be Danish at St Catherine's the Oxford College designed by Arne Jacobsen.



Sitting comfortably in Arne Jacobsen's leather and chrome armchairs in the College's Junior Common Room **Pia**

**Pernille Søgaard** kindly took time out from her laboratory for a chat with Birger Jensen of our scholarship committee. In her final year at Oxford it was time to reflect on her time as a DPhil student and how her life might now be evolving.

*BJ: We selected you for one of our scholarships as an outstanding researcher in biomedicine. It would be interesting for us to hear what drew you to this.*

PPS: I had my eyes opened to the fascination of research in my childhood as my mother was a researcher. I loved science, particularly biology, and had inspiring teachers in biology and chemistry at Vestre Borgerdyd Gymnasium. Next step was to choose molecular biomedicine at university; this was a brand new course with "elite status" which meant that it was particularly well-funded and able to attract the best teachers and students. I had already realised that I did not want to become a doctor but wanted to focus on research rather than patients.

*BJ: While you were an undergraduate at Copenhagen University you were selected for a semester course at Manchester University where you then went as an Erasmus scholar. How did you make this choice?*

PPS: The faculty in Copenhagen has bilateral exchange agreements with a number of other universities --- amongst which Manchester. I could also have gone to Dublin. But for my first foray as a student abroad the UK seemed "closer to home" geographically and culturally. The size of Manchester University also meant that it offered specialised courses not available at home. The system in Denmark encourages you to go abroad for part of your studies and makes it easy. For example you can automatically get financial support to cover your tuition fees abroad in the form of the money that would otherwise have been spent on your education in Denmark. The Erasmus programme is an exchange programme which additionally provides some funding for the student. So I went and had rewarding months there in a very international academic environment.

*BJ: You mention "international". When we review applications for our scholarships we are struck by how the academic world in this century has lost its separate national identities and staffing. Could you be anywhere or is this University still a "hallowed" British institution?*

PPS: Well, it is true that the approach to scientific research does not differ significantly. I had a British supervisor for my Masters thesis in Copenhagen, and it was through connections to him that I came here to Oxford.

## Pia Pernille Søgaard - DPhil Molecular Biomedicine University of Oxford

When I work here in the Kennedy Institute and see the people around me, I could in many respects still be standing in my lab in Denmark. And if I were in Italy, France or Germany that would probably be much the same. But the College system at Oxford still protects some of what makes the experience special. One example is the fact that within college life you are automatically in contact with people whose subject and interests have nothing to do with your own. I found myself at dinner the other day with someone who was researching costumes used in period productions of Shakespeare. A nice break from molecules and invasive cells!

*BJ: How else have you engaged with college life at Oxford?*

PPS: As by now an old-timer I have taken on responsibility for organising a welcome programme for new postgraduate students as they arrive at the College. It helps them to settle in fast and I get to make interesting contacts. Over 70% of the postgraduate students at Oxford come from abroad so there is need for help initially.

*BJ: Are the other students aware of the fact that a Dane was responsible for the physical aspects of the College?*

PPS: Yes I think they are. There may be a blur in some of their minds between the Scandinavian countries, but they feel that there is something different about this place whereas for me I feel that it is all familiar! One of the aspects that makes St Catherine's unique is the fact that Arne Jacobsen designed everything from buildings, landscaping and furniture right down to the cutlery used in the dining hall.

Correction: the cutlery used at the high table. So when a sofa needs replacing it has to be the genuine article.



*BJ: Is the Danish connection why you chose to be a member here?*

PPS: Not at all. In fact in my ignorance of the colleges at Oxford I never offered a preference. I was simply allocated here by the University authorities. In fact this college is biased towards science students, but there do also seem to be or have been a disproportionate number of Danes here.

*BJ: Perhaps that is Oxford's sub-conscious nod of gratitude to Denmark for what is now an architectural icon.*

PPS: I wonder. More likely it is a coincidence.

*BJ: I hesitate to bring up "Brexit" but I have to ask how you and the community around you perceive its potential impact?*

PPS: It is a topic of real concern. Given the way science now works, with a fluid and rapid exchange of ideas between scientists in different countries, any new restrictions on the movement of people will be very negative for research in this country. And there are of course also fears

about what will happen to research funding and collaborations. We hear that Oxford University is thinking of setting up a satellite in France. For an institution as conservative as Oxford this suggests that they see a real threat to EU funding.

*BJ: Your earlier report to the Anglo-Danish Society talked mainly about your work at the Kennedy Institute of Rheumatology. The work you are doing on understanding invasive cells could have significant potential impact on future treatments not just for rheumatoid arthritis but also cancer. How does this affect you personally? Do you feel that you are on a crusade to help humanity or is it for you a particularly challenging crossword puzzle to be solved?*



Pernille & Dr Itoh Yoshi, supervisor.  
Cup for best presentation.

PPS: I like the analogy of the crossword which probably comes closest to my daily experience of lab work focused as it is on fundamental biology. The fact that the problems I am working on are very basic means that any practical application is going to be remote. The reality is that it takes on average 12 years to go from an initial scientific breakthrough to having

the resultant treatment on the market. And of course there are many, many occasions where that does not happen. But having said that, there are those moments when I stand back and reflect on what I am doing, and then I am grateful to be working on something that has the potential to be of real benefit to people who are suffering. And there is more than enough excitement in the basic science and peer group response to keep me motivated.

*BJ: You have just alluded to the complex process by which drugs reach the marketplace. "Big Pharma" is often portrayed as the villain inflating the price of drugs to increase their profits. Do you share this view?*

PPS: No. I think that that attitude as a general description of what happens is wrong. For example at the Kennedy Institute there was a breakthrough understanding of the molecule which causes the inflammation and then destruction of cartilage which is what happens in rheumatoid arthritis. However, it was only through working together with a major US biotech company that the lengthy development process could not only be funded but also managed. It is not just money involved but also manpower and knowledge of the regulations in place to ensure that new drugs brought to the marketplace are safe. These resources are simply not available on the scale required to academia.

Academia and industry have developed a market-driven model for working together which reflects the broader values of our economic system though it understandably is in conflict with society's emotional response to money and worse still

**James Ian Black**  
**Adv. Postgraduate Diploma**

funding for academic research comes from industry, which thus indirectly decides on the direction of research to be taken by academia. So perhaps the question should be whether that model is the best one, not whether drug companies are to blame. All of which of course links to the bigger debate which still has to be had properly in Denmark as well as the UK on how to manage the spiralling cost of healthcare.

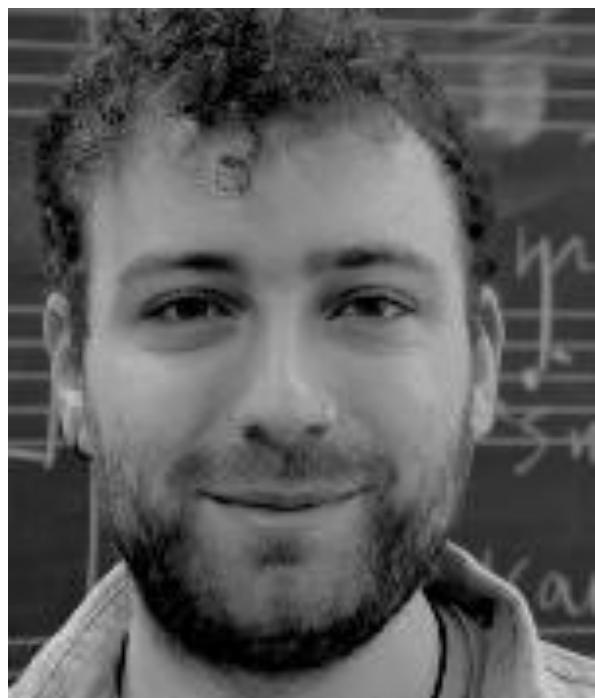
*Bj: How do you now see your future when you finish here in Oxford? Academia or Industry? In the UK or in Denmark?*

PPS: The only given is that I want to stay in biomedical research. Whether it is within academia or industry is not for me a critical issue. One of the roles of academia is to point industry in the direction of fields for research that can lead to the development of useful drugs so there is a lot of interesting work going on in both spheres. Denmark has a thriving internationally recognised pharmaceutical industry, Novo Nordisk being the prime example. Speaking of them they have plans to open a research facility here in Oxford in 2017. So there are plenty of challenges available be it in academia or industry both in Denmark and the UK.

*Bj: A final question. Do you get bored explaining what “hygge” means?*

PPS: Yes, a bit. But one of the interesting aspects of being away from Denmark is that it leads me to think more about what it means to be a Dane.

oOo



I have been living in Denmark and studying at the Royal Danish Academy of Music since August 2013, when I started my master's degree in composition.

After finishing my master's in the summer of 2015, I applied and was accepted onto the highly competitive Advanced Postgraduate Diploma, and have been pursuing this since with the generous help of the Anglo-Danish Society.

My goal in taking the Postgraduate Diploma was to continue along the path I started down in my master's degree.

The Academy in Copenhagen has a very open-minded atmosphere where all forms of artistic expression are encouraged and allowed to develop.

To this end, I have found that my current artistic output has been divided into two spheres: traditionally notated contemporary music on one hand, and

# Solistklassen - Composition

## The Royal Danish Academy of Music, Copenhagen

performance-based improvisation on the other. In my traditionally-notated work, I have been using the Danish composer Per Nørgård's '*infinity series*' as a tool to generate material and organise my sounds.

I have developed a highly personal method of using this series on all levels - structural, timbral, temporal, etc. The works I have written using this method have taken on a personal sound and approach that I would not have been able to develop otherwise, and they have been successfully presented in several areas.

My first major orchestral work, *Ground Moves*, was premiered this March by the Danish National Symphony Orchestra.

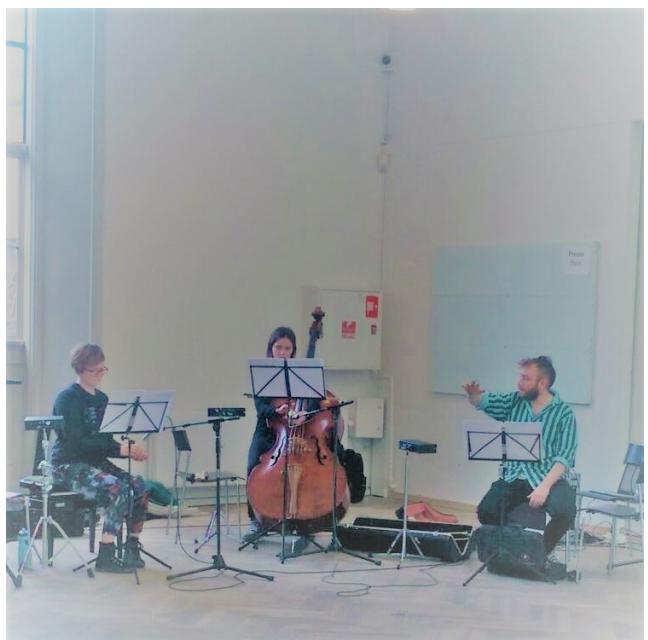
A wind quintet, *At Night, Walking Shoes Full of Blood on the Door*, (written as the test piece for the Carl Nielsen Chamber Music Competition) was played 6 times in one day back in October (2016), and was also played at the Young Nordic Music festival in Aarhus in mid-August.

It has also been selected for performance in America by the Chimera New Music Ensemble. *Al-Anbiq*, for bass clarinet, accordion, and piano, has been recorded by ensemble Limen, performed at Pulsar festival, and will receive a performance by ensemble X.Y in London this October.

The performance-based improvisation work has been no less rewarding.

I have typically cast myself as the performer in these works, as it means I can be more direct. My first work in this area, *Your clone continues to run for his life*, was premiered last year at the Pulsar festival, and I was since invited to perform the work in Reykjavik.

Recently I have been exploring this area more and more, working closely with other performers and using folk song material to create a distinctive and highly personal aesthetic.



Without the support of my teachers and peers at the Academy, I would not have been encouraged to explore both these paths - it is a testament to the rich artistic life in Copenhagen that I am able to express myself in both ways.

The support from The Anglo-Danish Society has been immeasurably valuable in helping me realise my potential as an artist.

## Lilith Hasbeck - Master of Arts in Service Design

Royal College of Art, London



I moved to London from Copenhagen, leaving job, home, friends and family behind to study an MA in Service Design at the Royal College of Art – or, colloquially, just the RCA – which for the second year running has been named as the world's top design school.

To help finance these two years, I was the lucky recipient of a scholarship from The Anglo-Danish Society, for which I am sincerely grateful.

One of my favourite sayings in Danish is that we have many words for the things we love ('*kært barn har mange navne*'). Service design is no exception.

But regardless of whether my fellow practitioners and I call it design thinking, human-centred design, co-design, user-centred design, or service design, the core of our discipline remains the same: Innovating with the customer, user, citizen, or human being at the very centre.

One of the things I love about service design is the variety of the projects you get to immerse yourself in. Through my two years of studying at the RCA, I have been working both for and with Camden Council, the NHS National Problem Gambling Clinic, the Department of Health, and last but not least Royal Trinity Hospice. With Camden Council, I looked at how we can help tackle food waste, and increase recycling habits. With the NHS National Problem Gambling Clinic, I looked at how to engage young people in problem gambling treatment.

After the first year of studies, I worked over the summer at Livework (a service design agency) on a project with Department of Health aimed at improving the experience of having a baby.

For the past seven months, I have been working with Royal Trinity Hospice on designing an online platform that helps people to plan for and talk about end-of-life. (Should you wish to have a closer look at these projects, you can visit my portfolio, [www.hasbeck.com](http://www.hasbeck.com).) On top of that, I wrote my dissertation on the topic of 'citizen-centredness'; it was an exploration of the meaning of 'citizen-centred' and its ties with citizenship, language, 'publicness' and service design, and it was awarded a distinction.

It has been two interesting, fast-paced, and intense years of studying. Our first collaboration with Royal Trinity Hospice was featured in the Independent, and for our final MA project – also with Royal Trinity Hospice – we (I worked together with another student and good friend of

## Nicolas Hubbard - PhD in Physics Universities of York and Aarhus



mine, Kay Dale) won a Helen Hamlyn Award for people-centred design. We even shook hands with, and presented our project to, His Royal Highness, Prince Philip.

I have recently returned to Denmark as I am soon to start my new job at Coloplast where I'll be working as user researcher, helping to improve their products and ultimately the lives of the people using them. So for now, I am leaving London behind, but I am doing so a great many experiences richer.

I am extremely grateful for the financial support I received from The Anglo-Danish Society. Without their help – combined with a few other grants – this simply would not have been possible.

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As part of studying for a PhD in Physics as a joint degree, I spent the last year living in Denmark and working at Aarhus University, with financial support for this provided by the Anglo-Danish Society.

This year has been incredibly enlightening to me, not only for my research project but also for the general life experience of living and working in a second country for a year. I am very grateful to have had this opportunity, and The Anglo-Danish Society's contribution was very helpful in covering the extra costs of moving country and the higher cost of living in Denmark compared to the United Kingdom.

My research project is the field of "Nuclear Astrophysics", an area of physics studying the nuclear reactions which power stars.

In particular my work this past year has been focused on the reaction of sodium-23 and helium-4, which affects the production of the element aluminium-26. This aluminium isotope is radioactive and its decay to magnesium-26 involves the production of a gamma ray. These gamma

**Kaare Stokholm Poulsgaard**  
**DPhil Anthropology**

rays are detected by space-based telescopes such as COMPTEL or INTEGRAL, and allow us to understand the processes going on inside massive stars – something that is often hard to directly observe!

The first part of the research involved performing this reaction in the laboratory, specifically at Aarhus University's small particle accelerator, which allowed helium ions to be accelerated and strike a sodium target. The reaction produces protons, which are detected in silicon semiconductor detectors, allowing us to measure the cross-section, a measure of the probability of a reaction. This work has been published in the journal Physical Review Letters: 115 (2015) 052701.

Along with other measurements performed at the same time, I have then worked on combining these measurements into a single stellar reaction rate, which can then be fed into models of stars to help our understanding of how stars evolve.

The stay at Aarhus University has also helped my future research career, not only by giving me experience of working in different environments and by connections with researchers at the university, but also by allowing me to attend other experiments performed at Argonne National Laboratory, USA and CERN in Switzerland.

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I would like to thank the Anglo-Danish Society and the Ove Arup Foundation for generously supporting my studies on how digital technology is changing architectural design practice.

I am two years into my DPhil at the Institute for Science, Innovation and Society at the University of Oxford and just wrapping up my fieldwork at architectural research company GXN in Copenhagen.

Why architecture?

The methods of anthropology allow us to build insights about larger issues through the focused study of the particulars of a local context. By researching the specifics of how digital design and modelling tools are changing day-to-day design practice, I hope to develop frameworks for understanding how computers might influence the way we think and act more broadly.

Architecture is particularly opportune for this, as a new suite of computer-based design and information-modelling tools

# University of Oxford - Institute for Science, Innovation and Society

## Recipient of the Ove Arup Foundation Scholarship



### *The Ove Arup Foundation*

are upending contemporary practice and recasting how architects design and deliver complex buildings.

To study this at close quarters, I have been embedded as a design researcher at 3XN architects and GXN innovation in Copenhagen for 14 months.

Here, I have been driving cross-disciplinary research into architecture and behaviour, green technology and digital trends in order to inform current design strategy and projects. This work covers a number of projects, from automated robotic fabrication to the development of design tools on ongoing architecture proposals at 3XN.

A particularly exciting development has been working closely with the digital designers in the studio to develop a new way of framing and communicating their digital design research within the studio and to a wider audience.

The argument, in short, is that current digital building models allow architects to control ever more complex data as they design and develop buildings from initial



Talk to A-DS members May 2016

drawings to production ready geometry; this means that digital design practice changes from 'simply' modelling building geometry to modelling collaborative workflows.

These digital workflows evolve from project to project and come to influence how the studio organises work on large-scale projects and how architects structure and approach their day-to-day work.

Essentially this begins to answer, not just how digital technology change the way architects work and think but also how local innovation around project specific problems might scale and begin to impact the industry at large.

This work has lead to the publication of three papers; we will be presenting the latest at a large Design Modelling conference in Paris in late September 2017.

It has been an incredibly stirring year, one that has helped me greatly develop my own research and thinking while seeking to bridge research and practice, and I am very grateful to the Society for their generous support.

## Signe R. Larsen - PhD Democratic Deficit in the EU London School of Economics & Political Science



I chose to do my research at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) because , for several reasons - it is the very best university world-wide for specifically my research.

I am so fortunate as to study with two of the most renowned scholars in my field: the public law scholar, Martin Loughlin, and the EU scholar and legal theorist, Michael Wilkinson. I constantly benefit from their ideas, critique and knowledge. Furthermore, the LSE has the largest network of EU scholars—in law, politics and economics—in the world and I benefit enormously from the many lectures and debates that take place every month on research topics similar to my own.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2016, the British people voted to leave the European Union (EU) in the hope of “taking back control”.

The ‘leave’ campaign argued that the EU interfered with powers of the British Parliament that could only be restored through ‘Brexit’. The pivotal concept in the debate was the concept of ‘sovereignty’; a notoriously difficult concept of public law.

‘Sovereignty’ as a concept is intrinsically linked to the birth of the modern state and signifies, ultimately, the absolute authority of the state as a collective entity to govern itself.

The concept was framed by Jean Bodin in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and captured the ultimate, absolute and indivisible political power of the king to command his subjects.

With the modern revolutions of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, sovereignty was appropriated by the middle - and, later, the working classes and received the meaning we associate with it today: the sovereignty of ‘the people’.

The most important conceptual innovation was made by Abbé Sieyès during the French Revolution with the concept of ‘the constituent power’: the idea, that the people had the right to lay down the fundamental laws of the land that regulated the relationship between governors and governed (e.g., between parliament and citizens).

In modern mass democracies ‘popular sovereignty’ means that all state authority is derived from ‘the people’ and that ‘the people’, ultimately, has a right to govern itself as a political community.

As a matter of law, all Member States of the EU are ‘sovereign’: the EU has been constituted by a contract between the different states and peoples of Europe and the peoples therefore retain the political right to annul that contract and withdraw. Formally, therefore, the UK will not enjoy more or less ‘sovereignty’ by leaving the EU.

Does that mean that ‘Brexit’ is irrelevant to the wish of ‘taking back control’?

Though the EU does not enjoy ‘sovereignty’ - the absolute authority of a political association to govern itself politically - it is clear that it exercises public power over the states and citizens of Europe (almost) to the same degree as the Federal government of the USA. The EU governs many areas of society and life, which were previously governed by the state: the borders (Schengen), the populations (free movement) and the currency (the Eurozone).

In a day and age where European societies, economies and peoples are tremendously interlinked, it is not clear whether the UK will be able, concretely, to govern itself more independently than it could as a Member State of the EU.

For example, if the UK wants to have access to the single market, it will have to abide by European laws, including the free movement of people. The question, it seems, is what we mean when we think about political self-government and sovereignty.



In my thesis, I work on two fundamental questions that need to be raised in the context of the referendum on Brexit:

First, with what political right - if not sovereignty - does the EU govern the affairs of its Member States and citizens?

Second, if ‘sovereignty’ remains the most important concept for contemporary political life, what does self-government mean under conditions of globalization?

The Anglo-Danish Society has been an important help for my research at the LSE. I am in need of many costly academic resources - mostly rare books - that would have been difficult for me to procure without your support. I am, therefore, very grateful.

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## Julius Bier Kirkegaard - PhD Biological Physics

University of Cambridge



I am a physicist doing biology in a mathematics department. Physicists studying biology is still not the norm, but it is by no means a new idea. More than 50 years ago one of the founding fathers of quantum mechanics, Erwin Schrödinger, wrote from the physicist's perspective on the question of "*What is Life?*", which is also the title of the famously celebrated book. Although not exclusively credited to this book, it did start a shift in which biology started seeing more exact approaches being applied in the science; similar to those in physics and chemistry.

In my PhD I focus on a fundamental question of biology. Animals, such as humans, are multicellular in nature but they evolved from unicellular organisms. Why was it that this transition from single-celled to multi-celled organisms occurred? What was the immediate advantages that accrued with a multicellular life form allowing evolution to take this path?

The closest living relative of the animals that is still unicellular is a class of organisms called the choanoflagellates. In other words: these choanoflagellates are to animals, what chimpanzees are to humans. Choanoflagellates are extremely abundant and live in oceans and lakes around

the globe. Of particular interest to the question of the origin of multicellularity is a specific species called *Salpingoeca rosetta*. As most choanoflagellates, *S. rosetta* exist as unicellular organisms, yet this species has the ability to form colonies in response to environmental cues. It is as if they know they live right at the border between the kingdom of unicellular and multicellular organisms. The colonies have a chain-like morphology or an eponymous rosette flower-like shape.

In my PhD I have focused on physical aspects of the colonial forms of *S. rosetta*, with emphasis on three aspects of their life: feeding, swimming, and navigation. The fundamental physical question for all of these is what fundamental difference it makes to be a colony compared to being a single cell.

For the question of feeding a lot can be said theoretically, i.e. without even looking through a microscope. The so-called Stokes equations describe very accurately the flow induced around swimming microorganisms, and we have been able to show that no feeding advantage is induced by the colonial form.

To study the swimming and navigation of these colonies, we have tracked them live under the microscope, and found a rich behaviour. Among other findings, we identified their ability and strategy to navigate towards oxygen-rich neighbourhoods.

I wish to thank The Anglo-Danish Society for this scholarship.

It has allowed me to live and study in the UK without worrying about the extra financial requirements associated with living abroad.

## Lone Hørlyck - PhD Cognitive Neuroscience

University College London



The Anglo-Danish Society kindly supported my PhD studies in Cognitive Neuroscience at University College London (UCL) from where I have recently submitted my PhD thesis on the influences of emotion and consolidation on memory processes.

Remembering events we have previously experienced is an ability critical to our personality and everyday function. In our research group, we study how memory for personal events is formed and how these processes are represented in the brain. In my PhD project specifically, I investigated the roles of emotion and memory consolidation in memory formation.

Memory consolidation is known to facilitate subsequent memory performance but this process appears to go awry when the material to be remembered is highly emotionally negative, which may lead to subsequent trauma reactions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

In my project, I investigated how normal processing may be restored following an emotionally negative event, and results showed that specific interventions en-

hancing consolidation via processing of the trauma in a brain structure called the hippocampus might prove beneficial.

Such secondary preventive treatments could be simple interventions such as resting following a trauma or doing simple tasks to enhance hippocampal processing as other research has suggested. Hence, the hope is that these methods might inform effective and neuroscientifically based psychological treatments for which there are few side effects.

Throughout my PhD, I have been fortunate to study under the supervision of world-leading scientists in memory research and have had access to facilities and training that would not be available in Denmark.

Embarking on my post-graduate future, I have recently been employed as an external lecturer at the University of Southern Denmark where I have begun teaching neuroscience and statistics.

I hope to continue my research collaborating with peers in both the UK and Denmark. In addition, my time at UCL has provided me with a network of researchers across the world and I hope to maintain these connections in the future.

I am very grateful for the opportunities that the scholarship from the Anglo-Danish Society has given me during my studies. Studying at UCL is time demanding and living in London is costly. The scholarship from the Anglo-Danish Society enabled me to focus fully on my studies without financial worries, and I thank you for the invaluable support.

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