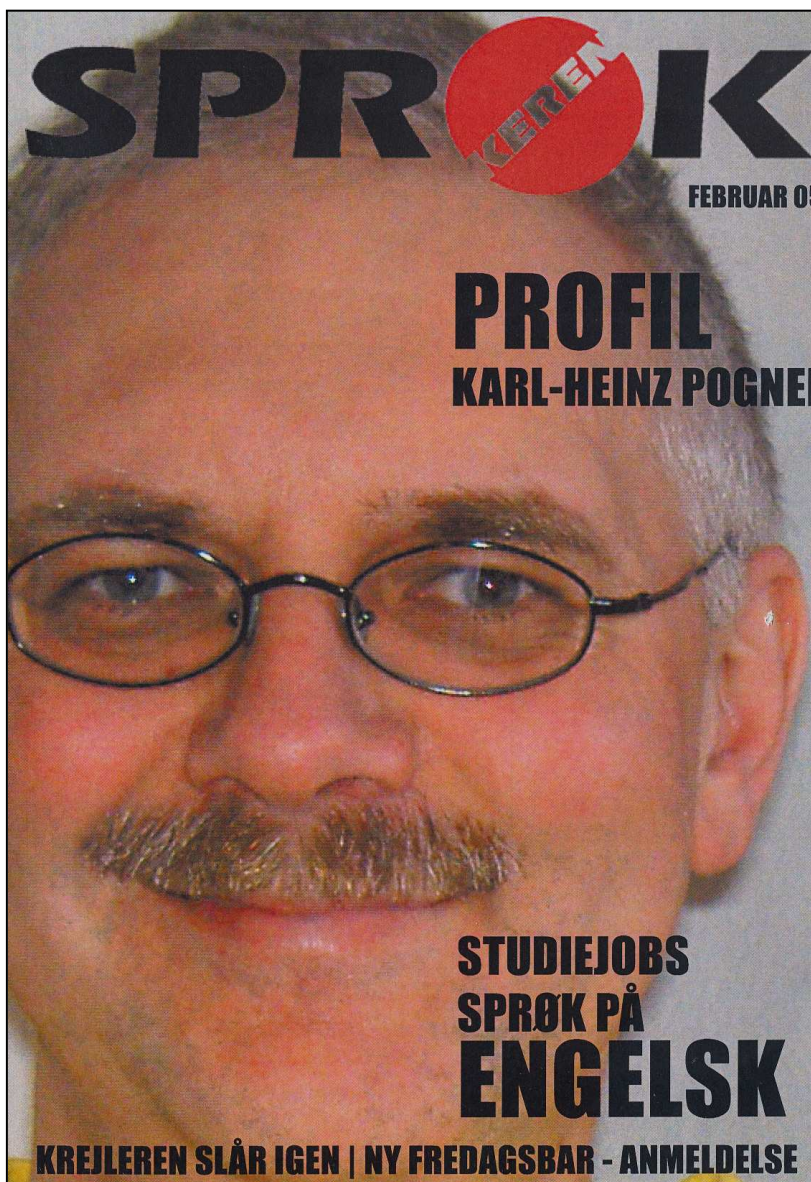


Source: SPRØKkeren, February 2005

Profile of the month:

Karl-Heinz Pogner

A German at CBS with great commitment, an overwhelming passion for the SPRØK lifestyle and a desire for German beer has told us the story of his life on his way from Trier to CBS Copenhagen ...



KARL-HEINZ POGNER: A DANIFIED ABORIGINE

Ulla: Where do you come from?

KHP: I was born in Trier, a cosy town in the Southwest of Germany, the oldest town in Germany, with a history that goes back more than 2000 years to the Roman Empire. After graduating from high school, I lived in Wiesbaden but studied and graduated in Mainz and worked as a student assistant at the University of Mainz, as a waiter in a Greek restaurant in Wiesbaden, as a free lancer at the museum of Rüsselsheim and as a freelance journalist and –editor of some local political-cultural magazines in Mainz/Wiesbaden and Frankfurt am Main. As you can see, I commuted a lot by train in the Rhein-Main area.

Ulla: What made you come to Denmark?

KHP: That actually was a job ad in the German weekly “Die Zeit” for a two year position as foreign lecturer at Odense University. The university was looking for an “aboriginal” German with an academic background. Obviously I lived up to their expectations. Later when I found out that 115 had applied for the position and when I was offered the job, it was almost impossible to say no.

The two year became eight years at Odense University, and after I had got my Ph.D. at Odense University, I commuted between Odense and Sønderborg as well as Flensburg, where I had the position of an Associate Professor in German and Foreign Language Pedagogy. Later on – when bridge and tunnel over the Storebælt were built - I started to commute to my new job as Associate Professor at CBS in Copenhagen, where I have now [2005] worked for 7 years. Today we (my wife and I) live in Valby, which makes life much easier – and has made the distance between home and work shorter and more “bicyclable”.

Ulla: Do you still feel connected to Germany?

KHP: I think, that I am - after almost [2005] 17 years in Denmark – a “danified” foreigner. But, now and then, I visit my mother and my sister and her family in Trier. But my personal friends live in Denmark and consist of very kind and nice “new” and “old Danes”. My academic and professional network is very international, but includes of course also a bunch of German and Danish colleagues.

Now and then, I lack a decent German beer – mostly a Bitburger Pils or a beer from a German micro-brewery; but fortunately one can buy German beer in Copenhagen and eventually many good Danish micro- and nano-breweries have entered the market – actually, there is a nano-brewery in Frederiksberg.

Ulla: Did you experience prejudices towards you by Danes, and if this is the case – how and which?

KHP: I would like to answer this question by telling a story:

It happened, when I commuted from Odense to my new job at CBS in Copenhagen. One day I had to take a cab. The conversation with the taxi driver was a kind of shooting the breeze, e.g. talking about certain buildings, places and streets in Copenhagen. In order not to give the impression to know nothing about anything, I tried to explain my ignorance about Copenhagen’s geography by the fact that I was not from Copenhagen. “That is easy to notice”, said the driver. I then explained that I came “from the sticks” – from Odense. “This can easily be heard ... - that you are from the island of Funen”, the driver said ...

Ulla: Your funniest experience when meeting a new culture?

KHP: My funniest experience when meeting the Danish culture took place right at the beginning of my new life in Denmark. Once more I want to tell a story (or two stories).

The first story: I can clearly remember a scene at Troense hotel during a big traditional Danish lunch (a cold and warm buffet). In order to avoid putting my foot in my mouth and since being a sensitive intercultural communicator, I asked some of the locals, if there existed some rules, we should be aware of, concerning the sequence of the dishes and so on. The answer was: “We are a very tolerant people, therefore one does as one likes.” I did hardly dare to believe that; as a decent anthropologist I observed the locals’ behaviour – and thought that I was able to recognize a pattern: fish (snaps), warm dishes, cheese. OK; I started with pickled herring and decided to let the herring be accompanied by ... white bread. You can properly imagine how my local source (cf. above) looked at me because of this faux-pas. Today I know: salmon goes with white bread, but herring with brown bread!

The other story is connected with the Danish language. In the very beginning I settled in Odense, which is a good place to start as a New-Dane: on Funen they do not know anything about the soft “d”, and the inhabitants of Middle- and North Funen (midt- and nordfynboer) do not use the glottal stop [|]. Nevertheless, it was a little bit difficult for me to learn Danish – because almost everybody

would like to talk with me in German or English. Hence, the Danish I learned at the beginning came from the wireless set or from meetings at work. My first sentence from the wireless was “This was a good old song”, unfortunately I could never use this sentence at official meetings like Study Board meetings etc. But I did learn another very essential Danish sentence: “This is an extraordinary proposal [pause].....BUT: !This sentence I have used many times since.

Karl-Heinz, private: Gourmet and bicycle rider

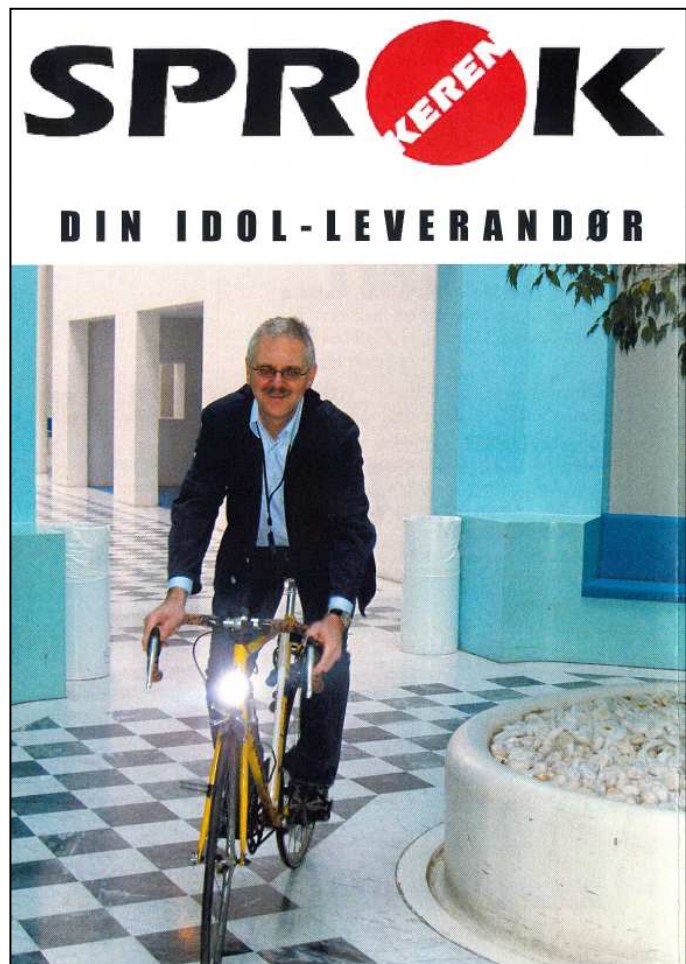
Ulla: What do you do – besides SPRØK [Study programme B. Sc. in Business, Language and Communication]; hobbies perhaps?

KHP: Being a SPRØK'er (m/f) is with you 24 hours a day. SPRØK is not only a study programme, you are taught or you teach. It is a lifestyle, which is shaped by openness, curiosity and an interest not only in business administration, but also in cultures and people. This lifestyle shapes my private life too – I think.

With my wife, who moved to Denmark together with me and with whom I have lived together for more than 20 years [2005], I do not only share a large part of my life but also share a lot of leisure and cultural interests. We are both bicycle enthusiasts. After we had biked (almost) everywhere in Denmark, we started to bike around in Italy, Spain and particularly France. In our Easter holidays we will bike in Tuscany and in the summer in France again, because we have to be in Paris at the end of July in order to see the Tour-de France's final stage on the Champs Elysée (again). By the way, those bike tours we undertake are somewhat paradoxical:

since we are very curious towards food and dining, international kitchen, French cuisine etc., we always end up by putting on weight – and this happens on a bike tour!

Furthermore I am interested very much in culture in general, no matter if we are talking about literature, art, film or music. And I love to enjoy a decent glass of beer; as mentioned in particular beer from new, little exciting breweries in Belgium, France, Germany, Jersey – an even Norway. I am not only interested in the taste and production of beer, but also in the cultural history of beer, the beer industry and economic aspects of the industry. Actually, just a couple of weeks ago, in December [2004], I gave a lecture about German beer in Århus; the German Embassy contacted me via the German Chamber of Commerce in Copenhagen And finally – as almost everybody knows by now - I have developed a special affection for T-shirts, their history and their function as communication tools.





Study programmes and people in flux

Ulla: What - in your opinion – is the most interesting aspect of working as a teacher?

KHP: I get the most exciting experiences in teaching at CBS when I can use my research in teaching and when the teaching or developing of new courses and study programmes motivates and initiates new research areas. Besides that, I love to teach new students during their first terms, because this is the biggest challenge: as a teacher to be part of the socialisation process of the students, to introduce them to and merge them into a new study programme, a new identity / new identities and to a new culture /new cultures.

In general, I consider myself primarily being a capable facilitator, who initiates some reflection and learning processes in the students.

Besides teaching and supervising/counselling, many, very exciting programme development projects take place all the time – especially at CBS. At the moment I am developing and finishing the designing process of the B.Sc. programme in Business Administration and Organizational Communication and as a newly elected academic programme director, I will also work with the design of the graduate programme, M.Sc. in Business Administration and Communication Management. Besides, I am also a member of the “reform gang” that develops the English version of SPRØK (B.Sc. and M.Sc. in Business, Language and Communication). At the same time, I would like to use this opportunity to improve the collaboration inside the new discipline “Culture, Society, and Communication” and to try to position SPRØK more distinctively in relation to the many other new and old combined study programmes at CBS. You see: SPRØK is (once more) in flux, as a part of the Business School, where after all “the only constant factor is change”.

Sadly enough, not only exciting stuff is waiting for us in the future. The future also brings an end to a long, very giving and sometimes very cheerful cooperation with Jon Kvist from the Danish National centre for Social Research. Jon has for health and other personal reasons decided to stop as a teacher. Jon and I just made it to reach our “cobber wedding”. But work goes on – with old and new teachers. Surely, we can expect exciting times in the future - for the students, for old and new colleagues – and me.

Ulla Steno