

**COPENHAGEN
EDITION**

**Sweden's
feminists
expose a
scandinavi-
an cultural
divide**

**Examining
the data
behind Den
Korte Avis
– is it a
newspaper?**

**Ignorant
politicians
stigmatise
asylum
seekers.
Again**



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Queer against the machine

Mads Ananda Lodahl on the straight world order and how it's making us miserable

THE MURMUR

IN THE WEEK before we went to print, a video started circulating that showed a woman walking through the streets of New York. Over a ten-hour period, she received around 100 comments and interactions from men ranging from mere hellos, to, in one case, a man stalking alongside her for five minutes in silence.

Many people feel that feminism has succeeded and that gender equality has been achieved. In Denmark, it is illegal to discriminate based on gender.

There is even an independent tribunal dedicated to ruling on these issues, for example whether women can be charged more than men to get their hair cut (they can't).

We can thank almost a century of feminism for securing women the rights they now enjoy, but there is still much that needs to be done. Casual sexism is a burden women must face that men don't. So to is the prospect of earning 18 percent less than men, or being the one in two women who faces partner violence at some point in their lives.

The Murmur isn't quite sure how the imbalance can be corrected, but

does believe that the first stage is recognising the issue.

Thanks to initiatives such as the Everyday Sexism Project (see page 14) women are now opening up about their experiences of gender discrimination and casual sexism. In the interview, one of the co-founders said her ambition was to make sexism as socially unacceptable as racism.

But that requires that people recognise the power of their words and behaviour and how they are used to marginalise others.

Mads Ananda Lodahl, a queer activist, isn't just fighting patriarchy; he's trying to educate people and show that it even exists in the first place. We need to reflect on our assumptions on gender and sexuality, and open a space for letting people be what they want to be, without them having to constantly feel on trial.

It's worth mentioning that this is our sixth consecutive issue and that we are really proud and happy to have reached this milestone. Thanks to you, all our readers, we guarantee that the next six issues will be as interesting as the last.

THE MURMUR

"When I'm dating someone and we're walking down the street, there's not a second when I'm not reminded that I'm a faggot"

MADS ANANDA LODAHL

page 20

CONTRIBUTORS



Elias Thorsson Elias is pursuing his masters degree at the University of Copenhagen, studying American politics. He is the assistant editor at The Murmur.



Lesley Price An Australian freelance journalist hailing from Sydney, Lesley recently completed a masters degree focusing on Arctic media at The University of Copenhagen.



Helga Theilgaard The photographs of prostitutes on pages 18 and 19 were taken by Helga, an experienced photo journalist who was trained by the Royal Court photographer, Rig-mor Mydtskov.



Fryd Frydendahl After appearing in the August issue of The Murmur as an interview subject, Fryd returns to photograph Mads Ananda Lodahl, our cover story this month.



Nereya Otieno A writer and creator with a background in cognitive science, musicology and communication, Nereya likes to discuss all three while eating sandwiches. She wrote this month's research column.

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MONTH IN REVIEW

FORCING OUT FOREIGN STUDENTS
New admission rules for Danish universities could see the number of places allocated to international students drop significantly. The new rules will give Danish students priority when applying for masters programmes, which will force universities to accept fewer students from abroad.



Offensive art challenges right to free speech
The works of Swedish artist Dan Park continue to cause major tensions in Denmark, most recently forcing an exhibition to relocate due to threats of violence. Park's controversial works have been criticised for being racist and highly offensive.
Earlier in the year Park was sentenced to six months imprisonment in Sweden on charges of "agitation against an ethnic group". Artist Kristian von Hornsleth, who owns Hornsleth & Friends Gallery, had to cancel an exhibition of Park's works after his gallery was vandalised and he received several death threats. Von Hornsleth is the second gallerist in recent months to rescind on exhibiting Park's works in Denmark following protests.
Despite protests from local residents his works are currently being exhibited in the Copenhagen neighbourhood Østerbro, where they are displayed under police protection.

ENGLISH FOR TERRIBLE
'Danish for progress' was the slogan Aarhus chose to put itself on the international map as Copenhagen's tech savvy and forward-thinking sister city.
Three years later, Aarhus council has finally admitted that the strategy was failure as no one had started using the phrase.
They have decided to continue using the second slogan from the 2012 branding strategy, 'With Aarhus'. All is not lost.

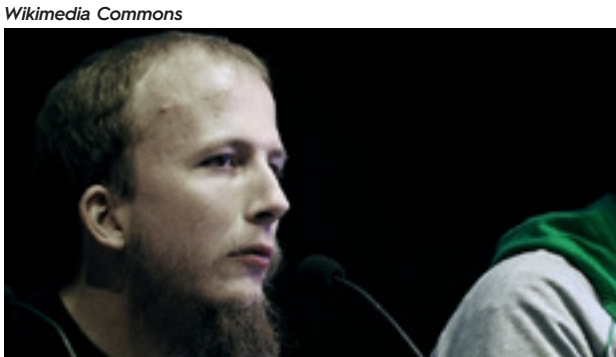
QUITTING THE DIRTY CARBON HABIT
Coal may be phased out and even banned as a fuel by 2025 if climate and energy minister Rasmus Helveg Petersen has his way. The dirty fuel was already going to be phased out by 2030, but Petersen wants to bring the deadline forward.
The association of energy companies, Dansk Energi, is highly skeptical of the idea, however, as coal currently accounts for around 20 percent of Denmark's total energy production. While critics claim rapidly phasing out coal would cause a massive hike in energy prices, Petersen claims that an early phase-out would not only alleviate pressure on the environment but also send a strong message to other nations.

CopenGAYgen
Copenhagen is the most gay friendly city in world according to travel book publisher Lonely Planet. Two main reasons for the accolade are attributed to the wide selection of gay-friendly boutiques and the fact that Denmark was the first nation in the world to allow registered same-sex partnerships.



BESTIALITY BANNED
Having sex with animals will be finally outlawed in Denmark, following international pressure and concerns over animal welfare.
Food and agriculture minister Dan Jørgensen, is planning to amend the Animal Welfare Act next year as he says the current animal protection legislation is too difficult to enforce. Denmark's potential reputation as the Amsterdam of animal sex was a factor in his decision- Denmark is the last Nordic country to ban bestiality.

Lesley Price and Elias Thorsson



ANAKATA FOUND GUILTY
Notorious hacker Gottfrid Warg, AKA Anakata, received a three and a half year prison sentence, and was deported from Denmark for hacking into the IT operator CSC, which provides system solutions for the government. His accomplice, an unnamed 21 year old Dane, was sentenced to six months imprisonment for his involvement but was immediately released. Warg has protested his innocence throughout the trial, alleging that his computer was being remotely controlled by an unknown individual.

MASS SURVEILLANCE OF CARS DEMANDED
Police want to use a new surveillance technology to better track down criminals. The proposal would mean 600,000 cars would be registered every day using license plate scanners attached to the roofs of patrol vehicles in all police districts, as well as at border crossings and on selected roads and bridges.



TEENS TAUGHT TO HAVE BABIES

Denmark's future is threatened by the lowest birth rate in three decades. More babies are needed to maintain the population, leading to a new and proactive approach to sex education from Sex and Society, Denmark's largest provider of sex education materials for schools. They have decided to change the sex education curriculum to focus on encouraging ways to have babies in a safe and responsible way. The organisation argues the strategy is needed, as too many couples are turning to fertility treatment in order to start their families.



Flickr: Peasap

LOW TRUST IN PUBLIC BODIES
Trust in public institutions is at an all time low according to Reputation Institute. A range of public services were given a failing grade following a survey of 9,000 Danes. Public organisations that faced the worst criticism included the tax agency, the tax ministry, the employment ministry, along with state-owned transport companies DSB and Banedanmark. The lowest trust was awarded to the immigration service.



Photo: Greenpeace

REWILDING DENMARK
The Danish countryside will be returned to its wild past following a 195 million kroner government investment to improve the nation's natural habitats. 'Naturplan Danmark' is a long-term strategic plan to transform 25,000 hectares of farmland into nature reserves. The government hopes the plan will make more people visit natural areas, and potentially attract 10 million more nature visits by 2020.
Recent studies have shown that certain areas of the Danish wilderness are under significant pressure and that one in five species are now considered rare. In addition to the nature plan, the government recently allocated 875 million kroner to the conservation fund Den Danske Naturfond, an independent fund that protects over 700 hectares of natural habitat in Denmark.

Russian bombers trained around Bornholm
The military's intelligence agency FE has revealed that the Russian airforce practiced attacks against Denmark last June. The exercise took place near the island of Bornholm, where Denmark's political elite had gathered for the annual political meeting Folkemødet.
Russia is currently executing the largest military training exercise in the Baltic Sea since the early nineties.
"We think that we are seeing a change in the situation in the Baltic Sea, but what that means in the long run we can't say," director for FE, Thomas Ahrenkiel told Jyllands-Posten.



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NEWSMAKER

RECLAIMING THE FLAG

The new political party Nationalpartiet wants to challenge the anti-immigration agenda and rhetoric

FAR-RIGHT Nationalpartiet Danmark (NPD) was a short-lived party founded in 1990 with a strong anti-immigration agenda. This October, a new political party has emerged with a very similar name – Nationalpartiet. Its logo is the Danish flag, which is also the first image that visitors to their website see.

But this is a new kind of nationalism. Nationalpartiet Danmark was started by three Pakistani brothers who want to challenge the pervasive hostility towards immigrants and immigration and to promote values of inclusion and respect.

"There is a discourse in society in which immigrants are made into negative objects," party chair-

Peter Stanners



Nationalpartiet

The three brothers of Pakistani descent were subjected to racist online abuse after announcing their new political party.

man Kashif Ahmad told Politiken newspaper.

"The rhetoric has become so extreme that we now need to defend the Danish values that our parents were met with when they arrived in Denmark – a country where we were born and brought up, and which we consider our home country."

The party was subjected to an online hate campaign immediately after its launch. Kaj Vilhelmsen, leader of the original NPD, wrote

on Twitter: "[NPD] stood for: out with the Pakis! Pakistanis have no right to use the name Nationalpartiet."

Ahmad responded that the attacks they faced only demonstrated that the hardened tone towards immigrants and immigration by politicians and the media had only served to make people scared.

"We are interested in community and solidarity and bringing an end to this negative language

which has been used for far too many years," Ahmed said.

The party's central political platform is focussed on easing immigration requirements and increasing religious freedoms. They also want to increase the quality of schooling and improve staffing in the health sector.

The party needs to secure 20,000 signatures in order to run in next year's highly anticipated general election. **M**

RESEARCH

A NEW, MORE STABLE BATTERY?

In collaboration with Utrecht and Radboud Universities – both in the Netherlands – the Technical University of Denmark (DTU) has discovered a new material that may change the way we make batteries. Batteries generate electricity when ions move between two electrodes on either side of the battery.

Moving in one direction gives a positive charge, the other a negative. The material between these two electrodes is typically a fluid called lithium borohydride. Unfortunately, this fluid loses efficiency over time, is extremely flammable, and is known to leak – ever pick up a battery only to have your hand

met with an unexpected and unwelcome substance? Well, thanks to DTU, hopefully those days are behind us.

DTU Energy Conversion researchers have found that by taking extremely small samples of lithium borohydride and isolating them to nanocrystalline silica, the conductivity of electricity – that is, the movement of ions – increases up to 1000 times. Since this compound is solid instead of liquid, there is no longer the risk of leaking and less chance of the battery losing efficiency. DTU is confident that as research continues and the recipe for the compound is refined, efficiency and conductivity will only increase.

POTENTIAL CURE FOR PAINFUL DISEASE

Aarhus University has joined with numerous other universities around the globe to bring attention to endometriosis, a disease that affects 176 million people worldwide, 100,000 of them Danes.

The disease has never received much attention, despite its prevalence and price tag, costing Denmark about 6 billion kroner per year in treatment costs.

Endometriosis is a chronic disease that only affects women. It is caused when uterine tissue grows outside of the uterus, resulting in bleeding into the abdominal cavity during menstruation.

This bleeding causes inflamma-

tion, scar tissue, and pain during menstruation, ovulation and sexual intercourse. It also leads to infertility in one third of the women affected. There is currently no cure for the disease.

Aarhus University is now working on finding a cure by joining the Endometriosis Phenome and Biobanking Harmonisation Project. One of the biggest obstacles to finding a cure – or even understanding the disease – is that there is no comprehensive bank of tissue lining to study.

The project aims to create a standard for collection and analysis of tissue samples in order to create a database to work from in the search for a cure. **M**

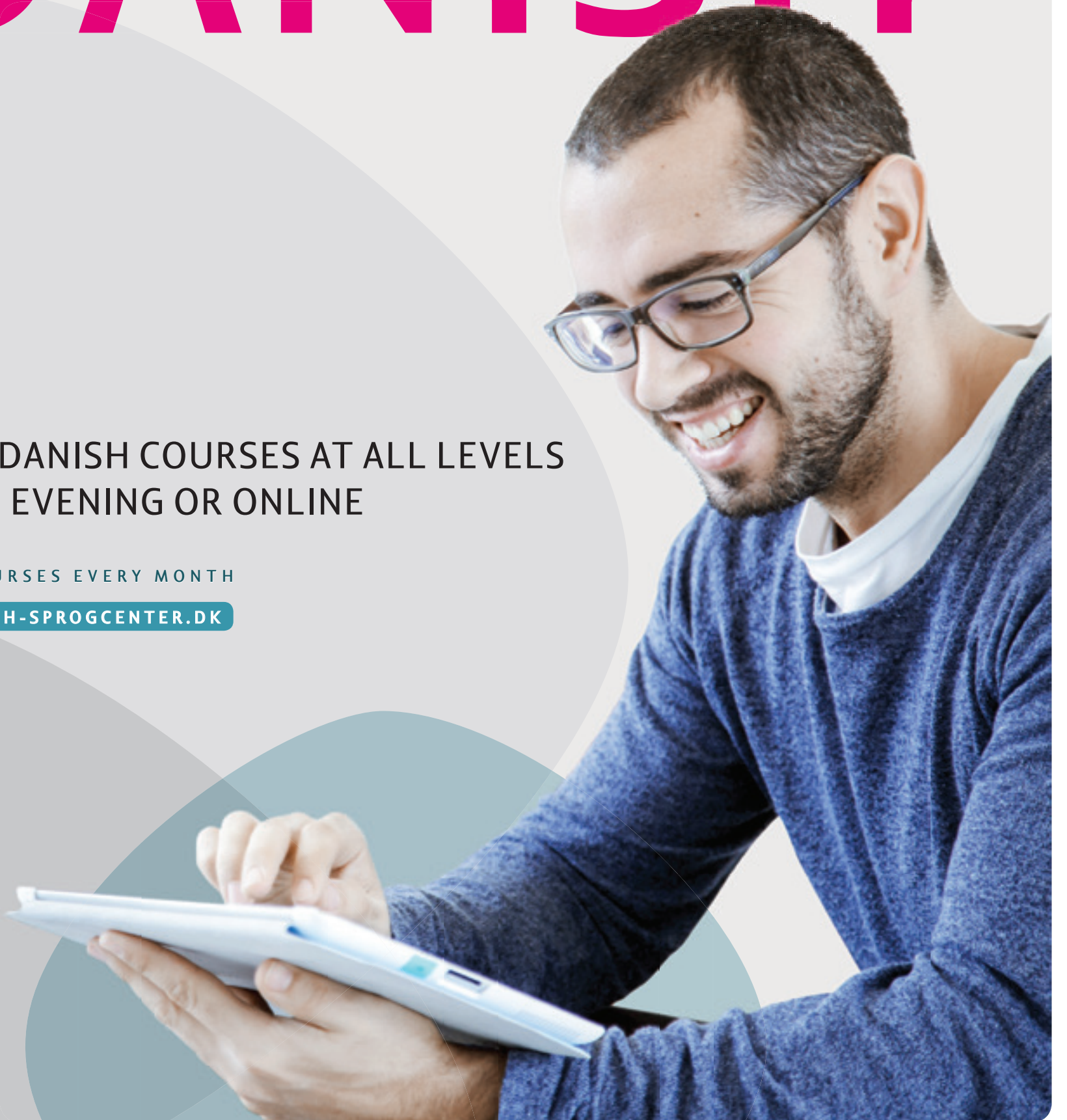
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Denmark's first astronaut counts down

INTERVIEW Future astronaut Andreas Mogensen hopes that introducing children to space travel will encourage them to study science and maths. He also argues that manned spaceflight's greatest contribution to humanity is fostering international collaboration in an uncertain world

DRESSED in inventive, sparkly space suits, the children sit in a darkened auditorium. Their speaker is Andreas Mogensen, who graduated from their school 19 years earlier. But he's no ordinary Copenhagen International School (CIS) alumnus – he is also Denmark's first astronaut.

"How do you shower in space?" asks one ten-year-old.

"Well that's not possible, so it can get quite smelly," he answers, causing a roar of laughter from the assembled third graders.

A LUCKY MAN

Mogensen wasn't selected for next year's mission to the International Space Station (ISS) because he is dashing and charming, though it doesn't hurt the European Space Agency's (ESA) public relations campaign. He's a busy man in the midst of a media tour that is drawing attention to both the mission and an educational programme – which is why he's here today.

"What's special about space travel is that it attracts children and opens doors for them to further studies in physics and chemistry. Space has the ability to show them how cool science is when it's applied, and is not so abstract."

Denmark's first astronaut is a source of enormous pride for both his country and the international school, whose new marketing material features an astronaut and the text, "Our students go far further".

Not that Mogensen knew that he'd become an astronaut after leaving CIS to pursue a degree in aeronautical engineering at Imperial College London. He worked on oil rigs and in the wind energy sector before 2004, when he began a doctorate at the Department of Aerospace Engineering at the University of Texas at Austin, USA.

"I never in my wildest dreams expected to become an astronaut – I just knew that I wanted to work with space, and thought the best way was to become an engineer with a focus on space flight," Mogensen says in the school playground before his presentation.

"It takes a lot of luck to become an astronaut, especially in Europe.



I never in my wildest dreams expected to become an astronaut

Words + photo
Peter Stanners

I was selected in 2009, and the class before me was selected way back in 1992. It's not like the US and NASA, which has a selection every few years. In Europe you need to be lucky to be the right age and at the right place in your career."

BEYOND LOW EARTH ORBIT

Mogensen almost didn't apply. Living in southern Germany and working with the European Space Agency at the time, he had to make a long trip to find a flight doctor to do an expensive medical examination before he could even be considered. He's glad he did, because he passed the selection process in 2009 and completed basic astronaut training at the European Astronaut Centre in Cologne, Germany, the following year.

He won't be launched into space aboard a Russian Soyuz space capsule until next September, when he will co-pilot a ten-day supply mission to the ISS. During the mission, named Iriss, Mogensen will participate in scientific experiments that include testing a new so-called skinsuit designed to reduce back pain in astronauts. Zero gravity causes the spine to expand, which can be painful over long periods in space, and which could be particu-

larly problematic if, and when, astronauts eventually reach beyond earth and head to Mars.

"The International Space Station is the first step in our onward journey to space. We can use our experiences to understand how we are going to send humans out into space for longer periods of time. Currently, most astronauts stay in space for several weeks or months at a time, but in the future they may need to stay there for years before reaching their final destination."

The ISS has been continually inhabited since November 2000, and has so far cost well beyond \$150 billion. Critics have argued that the astronomical cost has not been worth the investment, yielding few scientific discoveries that could not have been made on earth.

But Mogensen argues that the ISS is a rare arena for international cooperation that brings together global superpowers who don't always see eye-to-eye back on earth. While Russia is the only country capable of taking astronauts to space and back, the US has provided much of the infrastructure that power space station – if one pulls out, the entire project collapses.

"The collaborative aspect of the ISS is really not discussed enough. It's particularly remarkable that

ANDREAS MOGENSEN

Born November 2, 1976 in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Left Copenhagen International School in 1995 before earning a Masters degree in aeronautical engineering from Imperial College London in 1999. In 2007 he earned his PhD in aerospace engineering from the University of Texas at Austin.

From 2004 he worked as both a research assistant at the Center for Space Research, as well as a teaching assistant in the Department of Aerospace Engineering, at the University of Texas.

Completed astronaut basic training, European Astronaut Centre, Cologne, in 2009.

since the end of the Cold War the US and Russia have cooperated continually together in space," Mogensen said, pointing out that Russia immediately stepped up to ferry US astronauts to space following the 2003 Space Shuttle Columbia disaster.

A PEACE PROJECT

Private companies are starting to break into space technology after decades of monopolisation by state-run organisations, while developing countries such as India have completed their first successful forays to the black depths of space. But as more countries and companies join, so too has collaboration between the different actors increased.

"If we ever go to the moon or Mars in the future, it will have to be done through international cooperation," says Mogensen.

Twice daily, everyone from managers to technicians, in agencies in Europe, Russia, Canada, the US and Japan hold teleconferences about the ISS. Mogensen sees it as an ideal world where the individual agendas are set aside for a greater purpose.

"The ISS is a massive collaborative effort – the type of collaboration that is vital for fostering the understanding necessary for peaceful co-existence," he concludes. **M**



Photo: News Oresund

Industriens Hus, headquarters for the industry lobby group Dansk Industri, who have warned that foreign talent may forego Denmark unless the country learns to be more hospitable

Getting foreigners to stick around

Copenhagen is working on its hospitality skills in order to remain attractive to lucrative, resourceful and in-demand international talent

DENMARK'S labour market is not self-sustaining, and the demand for foreign workers has never been higher. There is concern, however, that Denmark isn't doing enough to make itself an attractive country to settle in—so much so that it was made a high-priority agenda issue at the executive meeting of the Confederation of Danish Industry (DI), a business lobby group, this past September.

"The competition for attracting highly educated foreign workers is very stiff," DI director Lars Mikkelsen-Jensen said in his keynote speech.

"All over the world, governments and companies are trying to attract specialised workers from other countries. This is why it is a real problem that Denmark is falling behind its neighbours when it comes to attracting the best and the brightest."

According to DI, Denmark's 123,000 full-time foreign workers make up 6.2 percent of the workforce, compared to 1.9 percent in the mid-1980s. As their numbers

"It is a real problem that Denmark is falling behind its neighbours when it comes to attracting the best and the brightest"

**LARS MIKKEL-
GAARD-JENSEN**

Elias Thorsson

rise, they become increasingly responsible for wealth creation in Denmark – last year they contributed around 85 billion kroner to the economy.

With an ageing European population and an expanding labour market, the demand for both skilled and unskilled workers is set to go only one way — up. The situation has not yet reached levels where the domestic economy desperately needs workers, but according to numbers from the Danish Agency for Labour Market and Recruitment, Danish companies failed to fill 9,200 jobs this spring, and that number is expected to rise in the future.

"It is very important for us to attract foreign workers," said Lise Thomsen, Head of Secretariat for Expat in Denmark. "We are starting to see more and more baby boomers retiring, and we will reach a situation in the future where we won't have enough employees in the country."

While the number of foreign workers is increasing, DI is con-

cerned that it's not as easy to hire from abroad as it should be – 38 percent of its members reported in a poll that administrative burdens hurt their ability to recruit and attract foreign labour.

"Foreign workers create a lot of value for the economy, but there has been a lot of bad rhetoric aimed at them. We need to approach this issue with a softer tone, because there are so many people who have come here and do an excellent job for the economy," Thomsen said.

SIMPLIFYING THE SYSTEM

Several initiatives have been launched to make it easier for internationals to relocate and work in Denmark. Last year, the Copenhagen City Council opened the International House, a citizens' service centre, where newcomers can access a range of state and municipal services under one roof.

And in September, Copenhagen Capacity, which helps foreign businesses invest and expand in Denmark, launched an app, Move

To DK, to help ease the relocation process. Users set up a profile and are presented with a list of items to consider before moving, based on their needs – for example, everyone will be told how to obtain a CPR number, but only those bringing children will be given information about schools and child care.

Copenhagen Capacity project assistant Inesa Lastauskaite is no stranger to the challenges of moving to another country, having immigrated to Denmark from Lithuania several years ago.

"I definitely think having something like this would have helped when I first came here," she said, adding that she couldn't imagine how much more complicated it would have been if she had brought a family with her.

"It's really important that we get better at helping people settle, and not only for their sake. It is expensive for companies to recruit people from abroad, so we need to make sure they stay as long as possible." **M**



Professor and businesswoman Stine Bosse cracked the code for climbing the male-dominated corporate ladder, and argues more needs to be done to help more women rise to her level.

Bringing women to the forefront

Scandinavia is often lauded for its pioneering efforts to combat gender inequality, but the reality is that Danish women still struggle to find top positions in the workforce. A new initiative is addressing the persisting gender imbalance in academia

YOU DON'T need to be a Nobel Prize-winner to see that something is awry in Danish academia. Women make up 60 percent of Masters degree students, but hold only one in five leading research positions. In a European context, the statistics from the Danish Council for Independent Research (DFF) are dispiriting, given that sixteen EU countries have a higher percentage of female professors than Denmark.

To turn the tide, DFF last year launched the YDUN initiative that will invest 110 million kroner in young Danish researchers. Both men and women can apply, but if male and female applicants are equally qualified, the female researcher will be prioritized.

"I think it will take one or two generations until we have a more uniform perspective"

STINE BOSSE

Lesley Price

The ambition is to launch more female academic careers, and in October, seventeen winning project leaders were selected. Among them is Professor Anja Groth, who is conducting research into new technologies regarding cellular memory. Her work will contribute to future research on stem cells, aging and various diseases including cancer.

Groth says there are a lot of talented young women performing at the top levels in science, but many may not get the funding they need.

While more women may start to break into academia's top tier, she argues that Denmark is already lagging behind, and should make it easier for candidates of both sexes to accomplish their goals.

"I recently read that top companies like Google and Apple are competing to get the best female programmers by offering a range of family-friendly initiatives. We need to have the same approach with research," she said.

"I think we need to implement various strategies, perhaps including softer approaches in career development, specific strategies in funding, and making sure positions in academia are allocated in open competition."

IT'S A MAN'S WORLD

Like academia, the corporate sector in Denmark lags behind the rest of the Nordic countries in respect to paternity leave and women in leadership positions. Ac-

cording to the Nordic Labour Journal, only about seven percent of Danish management positions in listed companies are held by women.

This trend is seen throughout Europe and, in 2012, the European Commission issued a directive to ensure that by 2020, 40 percent of European non-executive board-member positions will be held by the under-represented gender – women in every case. The directive copied a move made by Norway in 2008, but which Danish politicians have resisted.

Stine Bosse, an adjunct professor at Copenhagen Business School and renowned business woman and board member, says the glass ceiling is cracking, but

there are evidently still a number of issues to address before it is shattered once and for all.

"It's getting better, but there are still very few women that make it to the top," she said. "In my opinion, it does not necessarily have to be fifty-fifty, but we do need to see something like 30 or 40 percent females in these higher positions."

She argues that policies to prioritise women are needed, remembering her early days climbing the corporate ladder, when business was definitively a man's game.

"If you didn't know how to decode male language, you would have difficulty. You essentially had to allow yourself to understand a more male way of thinking."

She explains that some of these 'male' attitudes linger, contributing to the current pattern of men hiring men.

"When you recruit someone for a top position, it's likely that you might look for somebody close to yourself and your own competencies," she explains. "More women need to be brought into the board room, and the decision should always be based on their qualifications."

A significant issue identified by both Bosse and Groth is paternity leave and the discrepancies between regulations and genders.

"We need to make sure that it is also easy for men to take time off to be with their family. It should be observed and respected that they may also take another position and choose family life," explained Bosse.

Groth has seen many women in neighbouring EU nations successfully pursue careers at the forefront of research, but Denmark is

still limited by a more conformist perspective.

"In Denmark, we are focused on security and the ability to control and know exactly how our future looks. There is a tendency for society to make rules about how to pursue a career or live a family life, and it can be difficult for people to deviate from the norm," she explains.

THE LONG ROAD AHEAD

Professor Bente Rosenbeck, an expert on gender studies at the University of Copenhagen, describes the situation in Denmark as a long and "very difficult battle." Rosenbeck has been studying women's roles in Scandinavia and has sat on gender equality committees for over 35 years.

"Things have been done, but the problem in Denmark is that we're not attacking the structures that

"We're not attacking the structures that make it difficult for women to be hired in academia"

**PROFESSOR
BENTE ROSEN-
BECK**

make it difficult for women to be hired in academia," she said.

Research conducted by the University of Copenhagen has found that the gender imbalance in academia increases as the roles become more senior.

"The system is biased," Rosenbeck explains. "The problem is that everyone in Denmark thinks we have equality, so there is less action on these issues."

Bosse agrees that it will take more action, but says strategies will need to be developed over time.

"I think each generation will have to think about this. An even gender distribution in the workplace is within reach, but I think it will take one or two generations until we have a more uniform perspective."

"There is a long way to go, but we just have to keep on talking about it. **M**

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By the numbers: A critical look at Den Korte Avis

Den Korte Avis has lately come under fire for a lack of professionalism and for not writing news, despite getting money from the government to do so. Are these allegations true? The Murmur investigates

SINCE ITS LAUNCH in 2012, Den Korte Avis (DKA) has amassed a substantial readership and a strong presence on social media. Its eye-catching headlines and succinct writing have proved a hit among readers, but the newspaper has also been accused of lacking journalistic professionalism and ethics.

The latest controversy concerns a story the news site ran about a multicultural football team in Aarhus called AKF. They had recently been promoted to the fourth division, and had sent out a press release drawing attention to the team as an example of successful integration.

DKA received the press release and expressed interest in writing a story, but the team decided to turn it down after a team meeting. DKA proceeded to publish an article that can best be described as a speculative exposé, connecting the club to the Islamic State, radicalisation and discrimination against women. The story had no original sources and no comments from AKF other than the original correspondence regarding the article inquiry – correspondence that was published without the club's consent.

After reading the story on the football club, The Murmur decided to find out if this was an isolated misstep or part of a larger pattern. It's an important question, especially given DKA's popularity as a news source on Facebook, where it has over 30,000 followers. In January, it was Denmark's second-most popular social media news source, according to a study by journalism lecturer Filip Wallberg from the University of Southern Denmark.

To get a better look at DKA's journalistic approach, The Murmur decided to survey all the ar-

ticles on the newspaper's website on a random day – we chose October 22 at around 17:00. We then read each story and placed them in one of five categories (see graph on page 13).

THE TOPICS IN NUMBERS

There were 45 stories on the website when we made our survey. 21 were negative stories about Muslims or immigrants, with topics ranging from Muslim gang members in Denmark to a woman in France who was thrown out of the opera for unwittingly breaking the country's niqab ban. Ten stories were general interest, and five were critiques of left-wing politicians. Of the seven video articles, three were negative stories about Muslims or immigrants. The two remaining articles insinuated that Muslims or immigrants were responsible for criminal acts by specifying that the criminal acts took place in neighbourhoods with large immigrant populations.

In total, 26 of the 45 articles (58 percent) either directly or indirectly cast a negative light on Muslims and immigrants in Denmark.

Around 11 percent of people in Denmark are either immigrants or the descendants of immigrants, according to Statistics Denmark, while fewer than five percent of people living in Denmark are Muslims according to a University of Aarhus report.

The resulting question is whether DKA's focus on these minority groups fairly represents them.

TECHNIQUE ERRORS

The quality of journalism can be assessed on its ability to correctly present information and facts to its readers. Articles must draw conclusions using a solid evidence base,



A screenshot of Den Korte Avis showing the article "Supporters of Islamic State revealed to be planning a terrorism attack, indicating a worrying new trend."

drawn from original reporting or reputable secondary sources.

The Murmur examined the 31 written news stories on DKA's front page and identified three trends: very few original sources, speculative or subjective conclusions, and a lack of referenced sources.

The lack of reliable sourcing was a major trend. Only two articles used original sources. The remaining articles borrowed all their source material from other media organisations. Newspapers bor-

row quotes from each other regularly, but online news organisations normally insert a hyperlink back to the source article to give readers context.

In not one article did DKA hyperlink back to the source of a specific fact, claim or quote, and in most articles, sources were not even identified. Although DKA did present a list of sources at the end of seven articles, it cited only the name of the media organisations, and not which stories they referenced.

Elias Thorsson

For example, the article dated October 20, entitled "Supporters of Islamic State revealed to be planning a terrorism attack, indicating a worrying new trend," lends heavily from an article from the BBC, "Terror-related crime 'stretches police' - Scotland Yard", published on October 17, though no link is made back to the BBC story.

Instead, three sources are listed at the end of the article: the BBC, DutchNews and blazingcatfur. Blazingcatfur is a far-right blog written by an unknown author and cannot be deemed a reputable news source.

MEDIA ACCOUNTABILITY

In 2013, DKA received 63,900 kroner from the government through the media support act, which helps fund a diverse range of media in order to promote a healthy democratic debate. Despite being partly publicly-funded, Den Korte Avis is not a member of the Press Council, the independent media com-

plaint tribunal, as online media are not obligated to join. If the football team AKF wanted to report DKA and demand a retraction, they couldn't.

The Murmur is not alone in casting a critical eye over DKA. The journalism union's magazine Journalisten has written several critical articles berating their lack of proper sourcing and referencing. Back in 2012, DR's Detektor programme found that DKA had reported double the actual number of criminal Somalians in Denmark. And military news outlet Artilleriet recently condemned DKA for claiming that a seemingly random assault on two soldiers was connected to the political situation in the Middle East.

In late October, Culture Minister Marianne Jelved weighed into the debate and directly criticised DKA, before raising the possibility of obligating online media to join the Press Council.

"Media should be aware of their responsibility, and they aren't if they are not following the common ethical codex," Jelved told Journalisten. "DKA's trustworthiness is undermined when you can't expect a minimum amount of decency from them."

The question then remains whether DKA can continue to call itself a news site. On Facebook, it states that its mission is to collect "the most important information about society" and analyse it before presenting it in easy-to-read articles. "You could call it news with an explanation," it claims.

The evidence, however, suggests that it is a blog driven by an anti-immigration agenda. The Murmur respects DKA's right to free speech, but does not agree that their website constitutes a trustworthy or fair news source.

The Murmur had a short correspondence with co-founder Ralf Pittelkow, but did not receive explicit permission to publish it. **M**

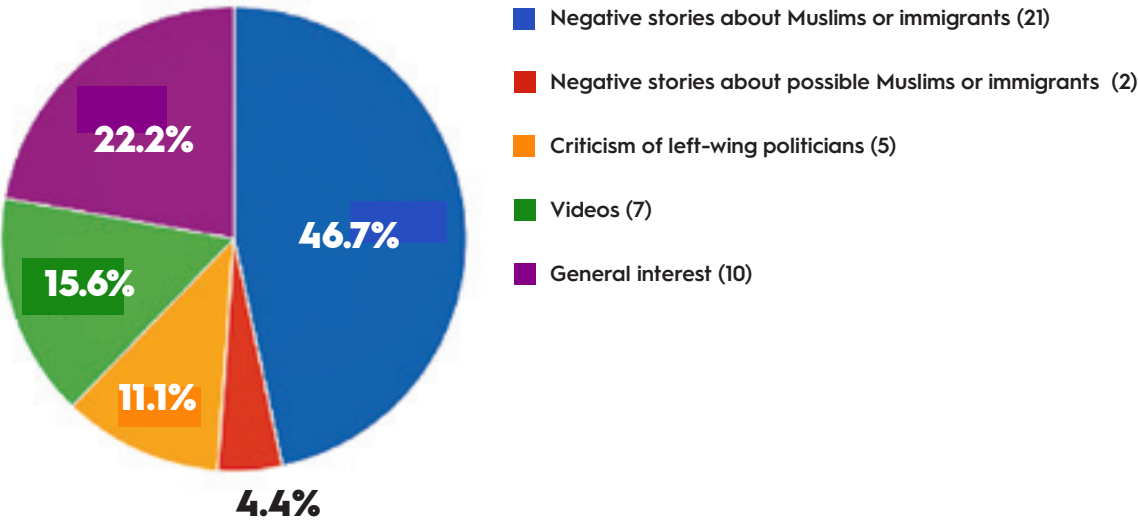
OUR METHODOLOGY

This article bases its conclusions on a survey of all the articles found on the front page of Den Korte Avis on October 22 at around 17:00.

Each article was categorised by topic and studied for its sources and the basis for its conclusions.

The Murmur recognises the use of subjective criteria in its assessment of Den Korte Avis.

Front page of Den Korte Avis, 22/10/2014



Inadequate sourcing

Of the 45 articles on the website, 14 were either videos, opinion pieces, or promotional content. Of the remaining 31 news articles, The Murmur found that many lacked adequate sourcing and were referenced incorrectly. Many also, in The Murmur's own view, made speculative or subjective claims.

95% of articles (29) had no original sources.

90% of articles (28) made speculative or subjective claims and/or conclusions

23% of articles (7) did not list any sources, or listed sources incorrectly



Photo: Peter Stanners

Helena Hansen and Irene Manteufel, co-founders of the Danish branch of the Everyday Sexism project.

Sexist stories are refuelling the feminist debate

The Everyday Sexism project lets women share their daily experiences of gender-based discrimination. It's the starting point for a renewed interest in feminism and a challenge to those who think gender equality has been accomplished

YOU KNOW how it is. You're a senior manager, but are always the one asked to prepare coffee and refreshments for the meetings. You're riding a crowded train to work, and a hand grabs you from behind. You turn down an approach from a stranger at a bar and get verbally abused. You tell your partner you don't want

"It's OK to be a victim"

HELENA HANSEN

to have sex but end up having sex anyway.

Well, you might know if you were a woman. But even when you are a target of sexist behaviour, you don't know if your experiences are shared by others. You might rationalise the incident – my skirt was rather short, perhaps I should just take it as a complement. Be-

ing a target of sexism can be a lonely experience, and seeds of doubt can quickly grow. It wasn't right, but maybe it was my fault.

The Everyday Sexism Project (ESP) challenges this doubt. Started in the UK in 2012 by feminist writer Laura Bates, women are now sharing their experiences in 20 countries around the

world. Taken together, the stories paint a picture of societies where sexist behaviour has become normalised, commonplace and shameless.

VIOLENCE AND PASSIVE BY-STANDERS

"I've never been assaulted, but I've been groped by men who

won't take no for an answer," explains Helena Hansen, a board member of the Danish Women's Society and one of the initiators of the Danish branch of ESP.

"Once, when I was out having a beer with a friend, a man standing next to us in the bar got annoyed when she turned down his advances. He then pushed my friend and when I tried to calm the situation, he grabbed and almost broke my wrist, but no one did anything about it. No one intervened, not even the barkeeper. We felt as if we might have done something wrong, because we stood up for ourselves. It showed us that this kind of violence was acceptable because he got rejected, which is scary."

Hansen sits beside Irene Manteufel, spokesperson for ESP Denmark, who opens up about a similar experience as a teenager.

"A man sat on my lap and when I pushed him away, he punched me

in the face and called me a slut. I didn't report the incident and no one intervened, even though I was in shock. I just thought it was a normal part of going out."

Since ESP Denmark went online in November last year, hundreds of Danish women have shared similar experiences. The stories run the gamut from overhearing men making derogatory statements about women to unprovoked physical violence and abuse.

Hansen and Manteufel explain that the stories contain many similarities, and that harassers tend to use the same set of disparaging terms when verbally assaulting women.

But another common thread is the sense of shame that women feel when they are subjected to the abuse, and the sense that somehow they invited the unwelcome attention.

"Many contributors say they experience relief by having the opportunity to talk. We know that women practice unconscious survival strategies. They rewrite the encounter in their mind, making excuses for the harasser's behaviour. What's striking is the amount of energy women spend doing this," Manteufel says.

RAPE VICTIMS IN THE SHADOWS

The anecdotal evidence of normalised sexism presented by ESP is backed up by statistics. A 2014 study by FRA, the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, found that half of Danish women over the age of 16 had experienced either threats or physical or sexual violence.

The EU statistics agency Eurostat also found that rates of violent crime against women increased in Denmark between 2003 and 2009.

Last December, the statistics

"A man sat on my lap and when I pushed him away, he punched me in the face and called me a slut"

IRENE MANTEUFEL

agency Danmarks Statistik reported a drop in the number of reported rapes, but their numbers were met with immediate scepticism by the Center for Victims of Sexual Assault at the Copenhagen hospital Rigshospitalet. They reported no drop in the number of women seeking help, but registered an increase in the number of women whose rape allegations were rejected by police – up from 2 to 6.6 percent from the previous four years.

Hansen explains that police often ask women who report rape about what they had been wearing, whether they knew the assailant, and if they had been drinking.

"People don't get raped because of these circumstances. Rape only happens because of rapists. There's this myth of the 'perfect rape' in which the victim is a totally innocent and pure figure, who is then attacked on a sunny

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day by a man jumping out from behind some bushes. But many rape victims know the people who attacked them, they might be an ex or a friend – so not all rapes are assault rapes."

This line of questioning demonstrates how pervasive sexism is, argues Manteufel, and that there is a need to change how rape cases are investigated and prosecuted.

"Rape is highly underreported, and one reason is because of the way victims are dealt with. The police won't pursue cases if it cannot be proved that the alleged assailant didn't know that the victim didn't want sex. As long as the rapist can cast enough doubt, the case won't be pursued. Rape is the only crime where you question a victim in this way, and it's because of entrenched, subconscious sexist structures within the police."

A MISUNDERSTOOD MOVEMENT

This year, an anti-feminist Facebook website exploded in popularity. Women Against Feminism shows images of women holding signs which, for example, proclaim: "I'm not a delusional, disgusting, hypocritical man hater!"

Pages like these are representative of a pushback against feminism gaining steam online. Some argue that feminism belittles women who enjoy traditional roles, while others argue that gender equality has long been accomplished.

Hansen seems exasperated when the issue is raised.

"There's this misconception that we already have gender equality, so what's the fuss about?" explains Hansen. "We have a female prime minister, and women are

"There's this misconception that we already have gender equality, so what's the fuss about?"

HELENA HANSEN

taking top jobs. But many cultural and gender obstacles remain. We still have an 18 percent pay gap and low representation in corporate board rooms, while thousands experience domestic abuse. Despite this, people say we have equality under the law, so that's all that matters. They think it's our own problem, that we're just being uptight."

SPEAK UP

The Everyday Sexism project reveals that gender discrimination is deeply embedded in both institutions and individuals. Hansen and Manteufel argue that the only way to counter it is to make it as unacceptable as racism.

"Our goal is cultural change, but we don't know all the steps. First comes awareness and recognising that it is a pervasive, and not an individual problem. Then we need to change our behaviour and language and decide on an acceptable way to talk about each other and these issues," Hansen says.

"The language we use affects how we see things. When a man murders his wife and it's called a crime of passion or a family tragedy, it diminishes the criminality of the act."

While the long-term mission of changing societal attitudes gathers momentum, in the short term, Hansen wants women to feel that it is OK to admit to being the target of sexism or sexual abuse. Only then can they find the support they need – support that it is ESP's core mission to provide.

"We need to start a new discussion, that it's ok to be a victim." **M**

Peter Stanners

The Everyday Sexism Project (ESP) – Online testimonials

Since Laura Bates launched ESP in 2012, tens of thousands of women have shared their experiences of normalised sexism. Below are a few experiences from the Danish branch of the website, which was launched last November. The information is freely available on the internet, but are republished with permission from the organisation.

Mona2014-04-03-16:36:01

Efter en våd bytur tager jeg hjem til min kæmpest for at sove. Da jeg vågner siger han "Jeg må respektere dig meget, siden jeg ikke havde sex med dig igår da du gik kold".

//Du må respektere mig nok til ikke at voldtage mig?

After a rainy night on the town I go home to my friend's to sleep. When I wake up he tells me "I must really respect you, since I didn't have sex with you while you were passed out." So you respect me enough to not rape me?

GIS2014-09-23-13:46:33

Læreren af min uddannelse tegner i en pause en pindemand på tavlen. Han udstyrer den med to kæmpestore bryster, og joker med nogle mandlige studerende om, at det er en af de kvindelige studerende i lokalet. Da hun derefter klager over dette, og siger at det gør at hun føler sig dårligt tilpas, bliver hun affældiget, og får at vide at hun da skal tage det som et kompliment.

My teacher drew a stick figure on the board during one of our breaks. He outfits it with huge breasts and jokes with the male students that this is one of the female students in the room. When she later complained and said that it made her feel uncomfortable, she was told to just take it as a compliment.

AMS2014-09-23-07:11:06

Kommer gløende med veninde - 2 modne damer. To voksne mænd går forbi og hvisker ind i mit øre: luder. Skændrer langsomt videre. Skremmende

I am walking with my friend - two grown women. Two adult men come walking past and whisper in my ear: whore. Frightening.

K2014-09-23-01:00:29

Jeg mødte engang en fyr i byen. Vi flirtede lidt og ender med at kysse hinanden. Ud af det blå tager han kvælertag på mig og spørger om jeg kan lide hård sex. Han klemte min hals så hårdt at jeg næst faktisk ikke kunne få luft. Jeg gik hurtigt hjem, men var ret oprevet over oplevelsen.

I once met a guy while out on the town. We flirted a bit and then we ended up kissing. Then out of the blue he grabs my neck and starts choking me. He asks me whether I like rough sex and squeezes my neck so hard that I can't breathe. I walked home quickly, but was very shaken from the experience.

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A war against the straight world order

INTERVIEW Mads Ananda Lodahl is on a quest to open our eyes to how society treats heterosexual lifestyles preferentially, instilling sexual and gender expectations that get everyone in trouble

I'M A WHITE, heterosexual, private school and university-educated 30-year-old man from a traditional nuclear family. I rarely reflect on how these conditions have influenced my accomplishments and social standing, and how the world sees me. Doors open for me without my knowing they were there in the first place. I feel neutral and inoffensive. I'm normal.

In a small apartment in Nørrebro, I sit across from Mads Ananda Lodahl, a slight and soft-spoken man with a piercing through his septum and pink polish on his nails.

"When I'm dating someone and we're walking down the street, there's not a second when I'm not reminded that I'm a faggot," he says wearily, sipping tea.

"One of my biggest wishes is to kiss a partner in public with my eyes closed. But I have to keep my eyes open for fear of being attacked. That's a privilege I don't have, and one I'm constantly reminded of. I know straight people don't have to think about it. Their straight identity gives them a privilege I don't have."

THE STRAIGHT WORLD ORDER

Lodahl is a queer writer whose mission is to end the straight world order (SWO) that privileges heterosexual lifestyles and traditional families. He wants to challenge why we think this is "normal,"

One of my biggest wishes is to kiss a partner in public with my eyes closed. But I have to keep my eyes open for fear of being attacked

when many people cannot relate to or fit within it. And he wants us to understand the struggle that people who deviate from the norm face when they draw unwanted attention, or lack rights that straight people take for granted.

I feel uneasy saying 'queer', which I've always seen as a derogatory term for homosexuals. But the term has long been re-appropriated, and an academic discipline has been built around it – queer theory. In the words of American gender theorist David Halperin, "queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant."

Queer theory holds that gender and sexuality are primarily social constructs, and that a complex set of factors (including but not limited to genetics) influences which sexual practices, orientation and appearance a person identifies with. The message is that there is no normal, but rather a multitude of sexual and gender possibilities that are each as legitimate as any other.

While this may be, the gender binary is still deeply embedded in our society. We are surrounded by expectations on how to behave and talk, how our bodies should look, and how we ought to dress. These expectations alienate not only those who deviate far from gender and sexual norms, but also those

who unquestioningly fall into line.

"We all need queer theory. When I look at the people I grew up around, some of them are just trying to make ends meet and get through the day. But a lot of the things that make life difficult are actually related to gender. Take a working class family, where the man can't express sadness and therefore feels insecure and doesn't know how to communicate. Gender stereotypes make us insecure because we become victims of people's expectations of how we should behave. This is my background, I know it well."

A WORKING-CLASS QUEER

Lodahl comes from a provincial town that was permeated with sexism and racism. He moved to Copenhagen as a teenager and joined the punk and autonomous movements. It was in this political setting that he realised that he was entitled to demand change for people like himself – people who could not identify with the norm and went through hell because of it.

Together with some friends, he formed the Queer Jihad movement. This was a group of activists and artists who painted graffiti, printed t-shirts, published zines and held parties. They wanted to challenge gender stereotypes, but were unaware that a path was already being cleared for them.

"A year or two into the project,

a friend called me and said, 'Hey Mads, there's something called queer theory and people study it at university! And there's something called feminist theory!' But we had no idea, we were just activists trying to change stuff."

They quickly dived into the academic theory, learning and reading everything they could. Many went on to study it at university too, but Lodahl eventually decided he knew what he needed, and looked for ways to apply it. He turned to military strategy, reading Sun Tzu, Machiavelli, Malcolm X. What's the point in having this knowledge, if it doesn't reach the people who really need it, he thought.

"I come from a family where I never once saw my parents read a book. So I know that the people who need queer theory the most aren't people who read books about it, any more than the people who need knowledge about racism aren't the people who go to university and do PhDs on racism."

SPREADING THE WORD

Lodahl gets his message out by holding talks, writing, and speaking on the radio. On his website almindelig.com – which translates as ordinary.com – he asks you to think about what a man is and what the opposite sex is. He asks whether you think you have to answer people who ask prying and disrespectful questions. He



Photo: Fryd Frydendahl

outlines the argumentative techniques that are used to silence and shame sexual and gender minorities. Once you've learned them, you can use them against your attacker. Offense is the best form of defence, so stand up for yourself!

"I know what it looks like inside a white male norm, and how confusing it can be to look at a world where the reality is different from your expectations. After all, when you turn on the TV, there's a 99% chance it's about white straight men."

He has compassion for people who don't realise that the world is structured to favour the heterosexual norm. Often it is reinforced structurally, through the tax system and the gender pay gap, for example. Married couples are allowed to share their annual tax deduction between them, and because women earn on average 18 percent less than men, it makes economic sense for the man to take both tax deductions, while the woman stays at home.

Still, increasing number of rights have been granted to peo-

ple who don't identify as heterosexual. Same-sex couples can now marry, and trans people can legally change their sex without first having to undergo surgery.

But the SWO still suppresses trans people, who are forced into choosing which side of the gender binary they want to be. And often, they aren't even given a choice.

"We are very ignorant and disrespectful toward trans people as a society. They aren't protected by the law, and don't have the right to make decisions about their lives. For example, it's still illegal to have a name more commonly associated with the so-called opposite gender. But the fact is, the gender binary doesn't fit everyone. Many people are born intersex and have sex organs that diverge from the norm. Often they are operated on as infants in order to fit the norm, even though they are healthy people. At the same time, trans people find it very difficult to get the operations and hormones they need to diverge from the norm. So in this sense, the entire health system is

I want to meet you with patience and understanding. You can't wash the straight world order off you

reproducing a gender binary norm, which creates a lot of hurt."

GENERAL IGNORANCE

Earlier in the month, I interviewed the founders of the Everyday Sexism Project, which helps women share how sexism affects their daily life (see page 14). It was an eye-opening experience, and I told Lodahl that I almost felt the project was targeted at someone like me – a man who rarely, if ever, notices sexism in the world around him.

Lodahl interrupts me with a laugh as he pours us both more tea.

"It's funny, straight white men often feel that everything in the world is made for them and is about them," he says. "I think ESP is primarily designed to empower women. It's also for people like you. But it's primarily a resource for women."

I rally a defence.

"Just because I'm a straight man doesn't necessarily mean that I think the whole world revolves around me. I think I'm just a person that..." I say, before he cuts in again.

"You're not just a person; you are a straight white man. Many people who live within the norm have a tendency to see themselves as just a person, as something neutral. But nobody is just a person. I'm a faggot, a queer person. But I'm also a white person and a person with male privilege, because people see me as a male person. Nobody is just a person."

Ultimately, his mission is to get us to look at ourselves and each other, and question whether the assumptions we have about sexuality and gender are accurate and useful.

"I try to walk a fine line between patient and compassionate diplomacy and uncompromising demand for change. I try to juggle those two things and to constantly have both. I do demand of you and everyone else that you realise your privilege and that you have an identity. But I want to meet you with patience and understanding. You can't wash the straight world order off you." **M**

Peter Stanners

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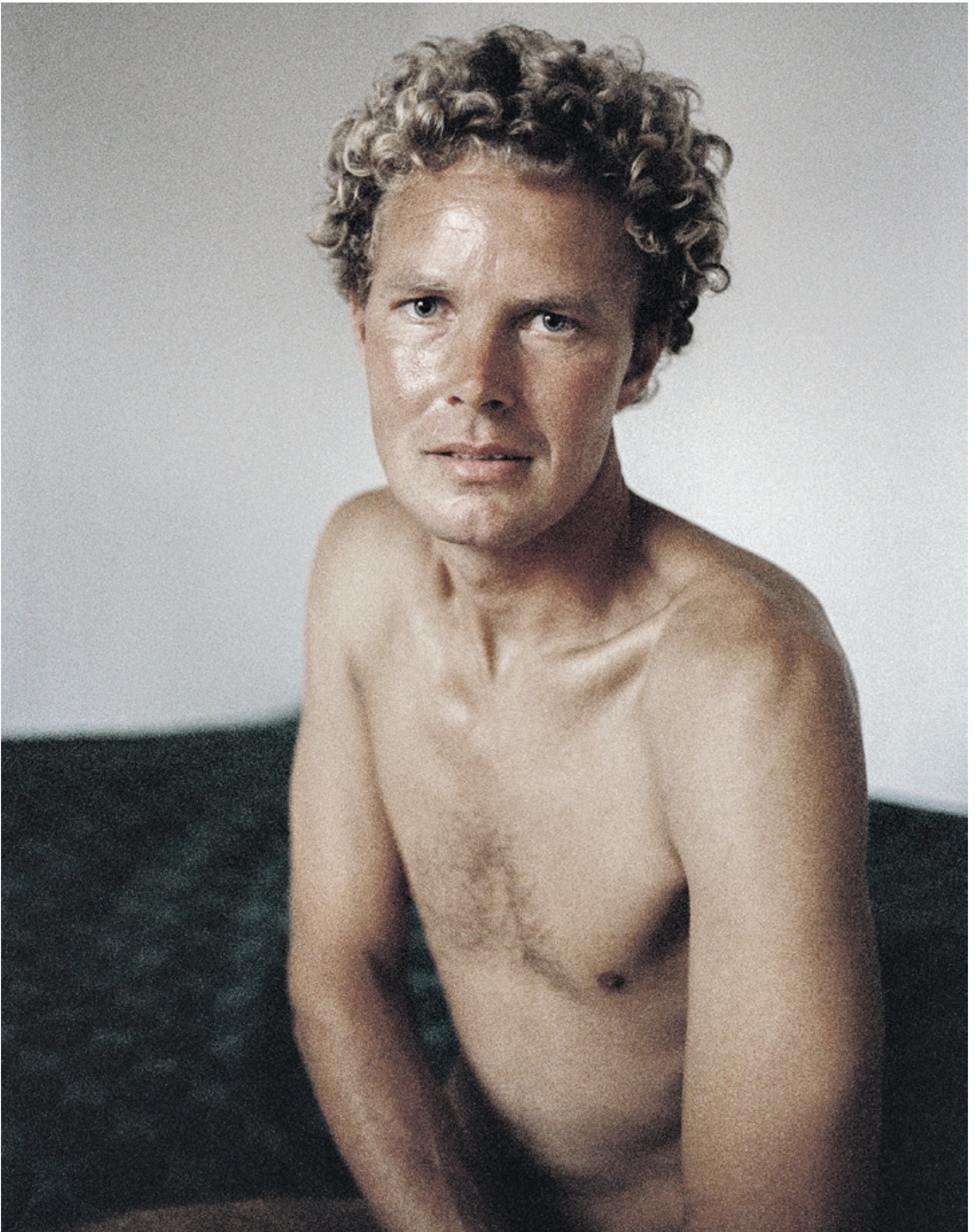
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CAPTURED

Two photographs from Helga Theilgaard's latest exhibition *Body of Desire* that focusses on prostitutes in Copenhagen's Vesterbro district. Read an interview with Helga online to <http://murmur.dk> where she recounts the process of gaining their trust and turning their bodies into artworks.



Morten



All photos: Peter Stanners

Katerin Mendez, photographed on a sunnier day in Malmö.

"We are so close, yet so far away"

The waves between Denmark and Sweden mark a border. To the east, the new government has proudly declared itself feminist, but to the west, feminism is largely absent from the political debate. As Sweden's feminist party starts to make itself heard, why does it feel so unlikely that a sister party will arise in Denmark? Is there even a need?

IT IS A GREY and rainy day when I board the train at Copenhagen's central station. My destination is the Swedish city of Malmö, and as the train rolls into the tunnel after leaving the airport, the final stop in Denmark, the tone of the computerised conductor changes. Moments before, I was being kindly asked by a soft-spoken woman not to leave my luggage unattended.

Elias Thorsson

Now I'm being ordered by a stern man not to place it anywhere but under my seat. It seems only too fitting that I would notice the gender stereotyping of the speaker system – I'm going to meet the Feministiskt initiativ (FI), the country's feminist party.

"I think a lot of people voted strategically for the Feminist Initiative to get them over the

four percent threshold in order to create a counterbalance to the [right-wing] Sverigedemokraterna," Frederik tells me in the pouring rain.

"I am a feminist, but I didn't vote for them because there are a lot of things, such as their views on the economy, that I don't agree with."

Frederik is referring to the

electoral threshold that each party has to cross in order to be represented in the Swedish parliament, Riksdagen. The party was consistently polling at around the 4% threshold before the September election, and exit polls suggested that the party would cross it. But the polls were wrong, and FI finished with a disappointing 3.1 percent of the national vote.

Leading up to the election, FI presented a dilemma for left-wing voters. On the one hand, they realised that some of the party's more radical ideas would make it difficult to form a left-wing government, but on the other, they felt that it was important to get the party over the threshold to provide more votes and support for the left wing parties in Rigsdagen. If they could, it would tip the balance away from the far-right Sweden Democrats, whose rising popularity has split the country.

TROUBLE WITH VOTERS

"Sweden is becoming increasingly polarised, and politics are getting more about being oppositional, rather than doing what is best," says Mette, a freelance journalist working in the city. She, like Frederik, is very sympathetic to FI's cause, but admits she did not vote for the party.

"I think there is a need for them, because they raise awareness of how important equality is, not just for women, but for everyone. However, I felt that other things were more important, and that is why I didn't vote for them."

Since its founding in 2005, the party has had problems convincing people like Mette and Frederik that they are what the country needs, with voters especially balking at their economic policy. FI's economic ideas are quite radical, including proposals for a six-hour workday, free public transportation, and the creation of a large 'equality fund' to facilitate equal pay for men and women.

However, even though there appears to be a schism between

voters and FI, the 3.1 percent result was its strongest yet in a national election. Earlier in the year, during the European Parliament elections, the party received 5.4 percent of the Swedish vote, with their candidate Soraya Post becoming the first representative of a feminist party to take a seat in Brussels.

BEHIND THE NUMBERS

I meet Katerin Mendez in the unrelenting Malmö rain on the Möllevångstorget market square, underneath a statue depicting the naked, muscular working classes quite literally carrying the wheels of industry. Although FI failed to enter the national parliament, the party has fared much better on the local level.

Mendez is one of the 26 councillors that won seats in 13 different municipal governments across the country. She only joined the party last November, and eleven months on, she is a part of a group of local councillors that will seek to maintain the party's profile until the next election, and help push it onto the national scene in 2018.

"For a long time I had observed how things in Sweden were not running as they should, but I was reluctant to get involved both because of the political atmosphere and because I couldn't find a party that I wanted to represent. All the parties seemed to have too much baggage, too many suspicious things – they just didn't seem right," she tells me in a crowded cafe off the square. "But then I was introduced to the Feministiskt initiativ, and you could say it was love at first sight."

Mendez is animated as she



Malmö

talks about politics and her party's platform, which has a thought-provoking approach to feminism. Throughout our talk, more traditional feminist topics such as the gender pay gap and sexual assault are hardly mentioned, because, as Mendez explains, FI sees feminism as a platform to counter the structural problems of power and oppression across society.

"I see Feminism as a means to eliminate the idea that our society is built on a structure designed by a powerful class who rule over the conquered," she explains while stuffing a sachet of tobacco into her upper lip. "We use feminism as the foundation that everything else should be built upon. We do address the classic issues as well, but we see them as symptoms of structural inequality, not the causes."

Mendez's view on society and

power seem quite radical, almost revolutionary, and her thoughts on democracy go beyond the structural inadequacies of western society and into the domain of language itself.

"We have to change the way we look at power. We forget that in a democracy it is absurd to talk about 'those in power.' In our constitution, all power comes from the people, so how come we still talk in a way that reinforces the opposite? We call politicians and people in power 'magthaver' (rulers), and what does that do for our discourse? Well, it teaches us that power is located elsewhere, and not with the people."

Dissecting the concept of power is hardly a novel idea, especially on the left. But in an age of consensus politics, it is both curious and fascinating to meet a politi-



Arriving in Sweden after crossing the Øresund from Copenhagen.

cian more eager to engage in fundamental philosophical questions about our society than practical, realpolitik issues.

WHY HERE, WHY NOW?

Last month, when Social Democratic Party leader Stefan Lofven formed a minority government with the Green Party, he announced that it would be the world's first "feminist government". In fact, it seems that most parties in the country claim feminism as part of their agenda. That, coupled with the fact that Sweden is ranked fourth in the world on the UN's Gender Inequality Index, makes me curious to know why Mendez feels there is a need for a party dedicated to feminism today, and what it is that makes them different from the other parties.

"We are more equal than most other countries, but that says more about other countries than about Sweden," she tells me as she puts the tobacco away. "It is also interesting that feminism is the

only area where being better than others is given as an excuse for not doing better. There are many different levels where we need to improve gender equality. But we also need to address racism and discrimination, and raise awareness of these issues too."

Mendez explains how the party utilises grassroots tactics to engage with voters. They offer to meet with small groups in people's homes so residents can pick the brains of politicians who are usually far removed from the public. She also claims that the surge of feminism as a political buzzword is due, at least in part, to how successful FI has been at raising the issue and popularising the term.

"This year in Sweden, only one party has not claimed to be feminist, and that is the Sweden Democrats. Everyone else seems to have become feminists. Mona Sahlin [former leader of the Social Democrats] has said that she is so happy that feminism has finally gotten on the agenda, because her

party and others were afraid that just using the word would scare voters away from them. But that is just political cowardice, and you need bravery. We had nothing to lose, and that is the most beautiful part about our party. In fact, if we don't approach society through a gender discrimination lens, then we are letting our voters down, so we can't get comfortable. This also means that we can never be caught in typical politics – our voters won't allow it."

NEIGHBOURLY CRITICISM

Feminism's values are universal, and our conversation wanders inevitably across the bridge. Although both Sweden and Denmark share a relatively high standard of gender equality, it seems unlikely that a feminist party would arise in Denmark today. Despite being led by Helle Thorning-Schmidt – Denmark's first-ever female prime minister – the government's 80-page political platform does not mention feminism once.

"We are more equal than most other countries, but that says more about other countries than about Sweden"

KATERIN MENDEZ

"I have been to Copenhagen many times, talking to people in their homes and to journalists, and they all tell me that 'we are so close, yet so far away,' and that we in Sweden don't realise how good we have it, especially since there is so much racism in Denmark. I see that there are a lot of things happening to address this in Copenhagen, but people there need to find their own expression, and a platform that suits Denmark. For instance, I know that the tabloid Ekstra Bladet has topless girls on page nine – that is something that would never happen in Sweden."

As our talk ends, and Mendez leaves me behind in the crowded cafe, I am left feeling a bit like Frederik and Mette – it seems there is a real need for a party like FI, but I'm not sure I would vote for it. It is still raining when I arrive back in Copenhagen. I alight from the train and am exiting the Central Station when a bus drives past, its billboard advertising plastic surgery with a picture naked of breasts. And I wonder. **M**

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COLUMN



Photo: Samenwerkende Hulporganisaties

The Dabaab refugee camp in Kenya is home to half a million people. Some Danish politicians have suggested that asylum seekers who reach Danish borders should be flown to Danish-funded camps in the country.

The sad scapegoating of asylum seekers

DENMARK is often mistaken for being an atheist country, but there is a pervasive religion that worships at the alter of the traditional nation state. Worshippers do what they can to maintain its ethnic and cultural purity. They fear that outside influences will dissolve and eventually wipe out the majority Danish culture. They fear extinction.

It is not the same as xenophobia or racism. Many practitioners of this religion are worldly people who enjoy travel, global cuisine

and subtitled cinema. But when they look at the outside world, that's where they would like to keep it; outside. They worry that Denmark might just get swallowed up and diluted out of existence.

Is it paranoia, or do they have cause for concern? If there were no immigration limits, would the influx of outsiders offset the majority culture? What if outsiders amounted for to 50 percent of the population?

It would be unfair to sug-

gest that most Danes possessed this worldview - I have few, if any, friends who do - but what is striking is how prominently it is expressed in the Danish parliament. The former centre-right government went to great lengths to restrict immigration in the first decade of the new millennium. But when the centre-left government took power in 2011, they left most of the immigration barriers in place.

This demonstrates how far-reaching the consensus is on lim-

iting immigration. Well, limiting the wrong kind of immigrants, for the limits that have been put in place are directed at keeping out unskilled non-westerners. White university-educated westerners are welcome, though I know of at least two who have been deported for not living up to the strict requirements.

Not that I'm against requirements. I can't just settle in the US or Australia and I respect their right to select the right people to let in. A borderless world terrifies me.



Photo: Karl-Ludwig Poggemann

A bomb is dropped on Kobane during the Islamic State's siege on the Syrian city. More than 5,000 Syrians have so far found their way to Denmark to seek shelter.

Where the debate in Denmark gets totally disjointed, is on the issue of asylum seekers. The debate over the past month has shown that many politicians don't have the faintest idea both how the asylum system works, as well as the hardship that people go through to pack up their lives and flee.

But let's roll back a couple of years first. When the current centre-left government took office in 2011, they promised to improve the conditions of asylum seekers in Denmark and allow them to live and work outside centres, if their asylum applications are still being processed after six months in the country.

This was a welcome humanitarian policy. Once a person seeks asylum in Denmark, they abandon control of their life. They are told where to eat and sleep, they mostly cannot work, and they have little to no money. As a result, many suffer mental health issues. Letting them live and work outside centres while their applications was a sensible humanitarian initiative.

DENMARK IS TOO ATTRACTIVE!

The right-wing opposition thought it was a bad idea, however. They argued that if Denmark became a better place for asylum seekers to live, more would make the journey. For example, immigration spokesperson for lead opposition party Venstre, Inger Støjberg, said in June 2013, "more asylum seekers are coming to Denmark. These are not necessarily people who are persecuted but people who are trying their luck [...] we are a magnet for asylum seekers from all over the world."

Støjberg is partially right: after the government improved conditions for asylum seekers the numbers of asylum seekers rose. But while there is correlation, there is not proof of causation. The increase of asylum seekers coming to Denmark – around 4000 in 2012 to over 7,000 in 2013 – is mirrored across Europe and correlates with the conflicts in North Africa and the Middle East.

According to the immigration service, around 11,000 asylum seekers had arrived in the first nine months of this year – almost 3,000 in September alone. While the government thought that 20,000 might arrive by the end of

the year, a sharp drop in arrivals in October quelled the fear.

But the number of arrivals does not even remotely correspond to the numbers that end up staying. According to the immigration service, almost 5,000 don't stand a chance of getting asylum and will either leave the country voluntarily or be repatriated. Of the remaining 6,000, around a third should expect to have their applications rejected.

Some political parties are terrified of the impact these few thousand asylum seekers would have on the Danish society. So much so, that they have proposed setting up and paying for refugee camps in neighbouring countries to where they fled from.

"They should be turned around in the airport and put on planes and deposited in a refugee camp near to where they came from," Liberal Alliance's leader Anders Samuelsen told DR.

The idea found support from Venstre leader Lars Løkke Rasmussen who called it "interesting" while Martin Henriksen from Dansk Folkeparti suggested sending the Syrian asylum seekers to Africa.

"It would make Denmark incredibly uninteresting to seek asylum in and the numbers of asylum seekers would thunder down once they realise they can't get residence permits here," Martin Henriksen from Dansk Folkeparti said, adding that Kenya would be a good potential location for setting up a camp.

Unsurprisingly, Kenya wasn't thrilled about the idea, and a spokesperson for the Kenyan government told Politiken that the proposal was "condescending and disingenuous".

Let's just step back and get some perspective. To protect Denmark from receiving a few thousand refugees each year, some politicians want to ask other countries to host the asylum seekers who had managed to get to Denmark. It's not surprising that Kenya is opposed to the plan, given that its Dabaab refugee camp is already home to half a million people.

SHOULDERING THE BURDEN

Thankfully, far from everyone shares the view that accepting a few thousand asylum seekers each year will result in the destruction of the Danish state. Danish refugee and aid agencies have condemned the idea, along with parliament's left wing.

The mayor of Årø also stepped up and offered to host more asylum seekers.

"I think we have a duty to accept our share of the burden," mayor Jørgen Otto Jørgensen told TV2.

That's ultimately the point. Denmark and Sweden are particularly popular destinations for the Syrian asylum seekers, probably because they are known for being happy and wealthy countries. Shouldn't the wealthiest do what they can to help people who come to them in need of shelter?

Many Danes are stepping up to help. From the Trampoline House in Copenhagen, to the volunteers in Als, South Jutland, who have set up football matches and other initiatives to accommodate the new arrivals, there's plenty of reason to be proud of Denmark's hospitality. **M**

Peter Stanners

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