

**COPENHAGEN  
EDITION**

**Christian  
Stadil leads  
his business  
using slow  
thinking  
and karma**

**We dissect  
the new  
political  
landscape  
after June's  
election**

**Head north  
to find an  
overlooked  
gem on the  
coastal road  
Strandvejen**



ISSN 2246-6150

# **Don't be a stranger**

**Lea Thau's podcast explores the fragility of being a human being**

# THE MURMUR

**SO THE** Danish People's Party (DF) won 21 percent of the vote. Left-wingers threatened to leave the country, right-wingers wagged fingers and said "don't be sore losers".

Hey, it's OK to be worried about the direction Denmark will move with such a powerful anti-immigration party in Parliament. You don't have to be a foreigner to worry that rules limiting immigration will affect Denmark's wealth, happiness and prosperity. Danes should worry, too.

Disliking a party isn't the same as disliking their voters. People have their reasons. Perhaps they wanted the animal protection police force, or think DF is best equipped to maintain the welfare state. Even if people chose DF for their immigration policies, dialogue is the best approach. It means something that the multicultural Nørrebro district had one of the lowest proportions of DF voters in the country.

The election campaigns were still totally miserable. Asylum seekers and unemployment are not the biggest problems facing Denmark, despite being the issues that got the most attention. There will never be 100 percent employment, and people will always flee conflict. Reducing benefits doesn't make it easier to be unemployed when there is no job for you, or when you're living in a foreign country with PTSD.

No, the biggest problems are the political paradigms. For example, the right wing's belief that we can sustain unfettered economic growth. So far, economic growth has been driven by consuming ever more resources, but at some point we will hit a wall where the planet simply isn't worth living on any more. In fact, a study published in the journal Science Advanc-

es says that the planet has already entered the sixth great extinction. If we want to survive, we are going to have to make some sacrifices.

The left wing has its own problems. Opening the borders to asylum seekers is clearly the most humanitarian course of action. It is a major problem, however, that only 47 percent of immigrants and asylum seekers are employed, compared to 73 percent of Danes. It's not that they don't want work, it's just that there are very few jobs for those without the right skills for the Danish labour market.

The secretary general of the Danish Refugee Council, Andreas Kamm, has suggested this can be addressed by lowering the starting salaries for some jobs. But the unions have dismissed the proposal, as it risks lowering wages across the board. There seem to be no other good ideas on the table, however, so refugees and asylum seekers will continue to lose their minds with boredom in asylum centres.

Lowering salaries across the board is bad for Denmark, and so too is turning our backs on industrialisation. What we need to do is consider options that are outside our normal field of view. We need forward-thinking solutions that are both sustainable and humanitarian – and that accept the fact that Denmark exists in a globalised world, which exerts pressure on its wages, borders and resources. These need not be threats, but opportunities, and we should seek leadership in the politicians, academics, artists, thinkers and common people who see it that way.

THE MURMUR

"Just before going to sleep, I write down what I want to think about during my sleep, and then in the morning, before the portal to the subconscious is closed, I keep on writing."

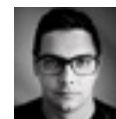
CHRISTIAN STADIL

page 14

## CONTRIBUTORS



**Elias Thorsson** Assistant editor at The Murmur. He is pursuing his master's degree at the University of Copenhagen, studying American politics. In this issue he interviewed Nadia Plesner.



**Rasmus Degnbol** The Murmur's photo editor, Rasmus is an award winning documentary photographer and filmmaker. In June he visited the political festival Folkemødet.



**Lesley Price** A freelance journalist and copywriter hailing from Australia, Lesley currently works for Danish NPO, INDEX: Design to Improve Life®. This month she interviewed refugee expert Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen



**Kristina Møller** A Danish/American, Kristina currently resides in Brussels. She recently graduated with a Masters in Security Studies from Aarhus University. She interviewed Christian Stadil in this issue.



**Henrik Chulu** Writer, speaker and activist, Henrik is partner in Solobeta, a qualitative research consultancy, and co-founder of Bitbureauet, an internet policy think tank. He interviewed digital activist Cory Doctorow. @chulu



**Oliver Raassina** An editorial intern at The Murmur, Oliver focuses on art, culture and nightlife. In this issue wrote the cultural calendar.



**Austin Sailsbury** Born and raised in the American wild west, Austin Sailsbury is a freelance writer, editor and creative projects junkie. This issue he heads up Strandvejen to explore the hidden gem that is Skovshoved.



**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 our research column this month.

## MASTHEAD

**Peter Stanners** Editor-In-Chief, peter@murmur.dk

**Mark Millen** Director, Sales and Marketing, mark@murmur.dk

**Mette Salomonsen** Art Director, www.salomet.dk

**Kevin McGwin** Journalist, kevin@murmur.dk

**SALES** For advertising sales, please contact: advertising@murmur.dk  
**CONTACT THE MURMUR**, Hedebygade 14, st.tv., 1754 Copenhagen V.  
info@murmur.dk

**PRINT** Trykkeriet Nordvestsjælland, www.tnvs.dk

**DISTRIBUTION** THE MURMUR is available at a range of businesses, institutions, cafés and public libraries across Denmark.

THE MURMUR is also available as a free digital download. Visit [www.murmur.dk](http://www.murmur.dk)

**SUBSCRIPTIONS** For home or corporate delivery of the printed edition, please contact: subs@murmur.dk

THE MURMUR is published 12 times a year.

This issue was published on June 29, 2015.

Cover photograph: Rasmus Jensen

Circulation: 15,000

CVR: 36198966



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# MONTH IN REVIEW

**Ghetto students**

Increasing numbers of socially-marginalised students are finishing upper secondary school, according to a survey by housing association Danmarks Almene Boliger (BL).

Between 2008 and 2014, 26.7% of young people aged 18-22 from the 33 poorest so-called 'ghettos' finished upper secondary school. This is an increase of 58%. The graduation rate is lower than the national average for the age group of 38.2%, but is rising at a faster rate.

**ELECTION ROUND UP**

Last month's election brought about major change in the political landscape. The right-wing parties were triumphant, claiming 90 out of the 179 available seats and bringing an end to the left-wing government in power since 2011. The biggest winner was the populist Danish People's Party that garnered 21.1 percent of the vote, almost 9 percentage points above their result in 2011. The other big winner was the new party The Alternative, which hauled in 4.8 percent. Despite right-wing gains, the election was catastrophic for the liberal party Venstre, which lost 7.2 percentage points, taking them down to 19.5 percent. This makes them the third-biggest party, down from largest in the last election. Venstre leader Lars Løkke Rasmussen (right) was still chosen by the remaining parties in the right-wing 'blue' block to return as prime minister and form a new government.

Despite modest gains that made them the country's biggest party, Socialdemokraterne lost both their power and their chairman – former Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt resigned on election night when the red block's loss became apparent. For a more detailed breakdown of the results, head to page 10.



News Oresund

**OCEANS RISING FASTER THAN ANTICIPATED**  
**Researchers from the Niels Bohr Institute have calculated that sea levels in northern Europe could rise significantly higher than previously thought. They estimate that the seas around Scandinavia, England, the Netherlands and northern Germany may rise as much as 1.5 meters this century.**

Elias Thorsson



Andreas Klinker Johansen

**Climate the real election loser**  
Several environmental organisations have expressed concerns about the election results, which could see the country take a sharp turn on its climate policies. The winning right-wing 'blue block' parties all place climate issues low on their list of priorities. The populist Danish People's Party rarely places much emphasis on climate policies, while libertarian Liberal Alliance was accused of climate change denialism after their climate spokesperson expressed doubt on Twitter regarding man's role in global warming.

"Many of the statements from the right regarding climate issues are downright scary," Greenpeace climate advisor Jens Mattias Clausen told Information newspaper. "It is vital that we continue our green transition, not just for Denmark, but also to maintain our leading position globally."

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A large image of a piano keyboard with white and black keys. On the right side, there are three small inset photographs: the top one shows a child playing a piano, the middle one shows two children, and the bottom one shows a close-up of hands playing a piano.

Sustainable bricks

Lego has announced that around 1 billion Danish kroner will be spent researching, developing and investing in new sustainable materials to use in its products. The investment marks the establishment of the Lego Sustainable Materials Centre, which will organise all operations relating to the research and production of new environmentally-friendly materials. Furthermore, Lego expects to hire more than 100 specialists in the field to work on the project in the coming years. The centre will also be setting up various satellite operations around the world and cooperating with outside experts and organisations.

"This is a huge step towards reaching our goal of having completely sustainable materials in 2030," said Lego administrative director Jørgen Vig Knudstorp.



Lego



Wikimedia

HACKER FOUND GUILTY

The Eastern High Court upheld the guilty verdict against Swedish hacker Gottfried Svarthom Warg who was last year sentenced to three and a half years imprisonment for the 2012 hacking of IT provider CSC. The Swede appealed the case, claiming that his computer had been controlled remotely. The ruling has been criticised by activists who argue the police overlooked basic protocols in handling evidence.



KBH Pant

PANT BINS

Copenhagen has introduced a new feature into the cityscape – a trash bin with a special container for bottles and cans. The new bin is meant to make it easier for people to collect bottles and obtain the 'pant' refund for recycling. Each year, bottle deposits worth 166 million kroner are lost, a number that has been increasing in recent years. It is hoped that the new bins will help bring that number down. Trial bins have been placed at Halmtorvet, Hovedbanegården and Sønder Boulevard.



Politi

CORRUPTION COMPUTERS

Last month, Zealand police arrested thirteen people, including national police employees, on extensive bribery charges. The suspects were brought in for questioning regarding suspicious monetary transactions with private IT firms holding state contracts.



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# RESEARCH

## THE BIRD IS THE GENETIC WORD

There are lots of birds on earth, and so far over 10,500 different species have been identified. This large family is now going to be comprehensively catalogued in a new project by the Danish Center for Macroecology, Evolution and Climate and the University of Copenhagen, together with partners in China and the US. The Bird 10,000 Genomes Project, or B10K for short, is a five-year endeavour to sequence every single living avian species. We will learn in greater detail not only about the subtleties of each species, but also how they are related to each other through evolution.

The catalyst for the project came in 2010, when Guojie Zheng and Thomas Gilbert – both from the University of Copenhagen – were trying to sequence the pigeon genome, but could not find its closest relative. At the time, the complete genomes of only three bird species had been sequenced – the chicken, turkey and zebra finch. They realized that there was too little data to go on.

Birds are the perfect vehicle for learning more about genetic evolution. Their sheer number of species and dispersion around the world make them a perfect model for studying population genetics, neurobiology, development, migration habits and animal conservation. Combine that with our penchant for using birds as food and the impacts they are having on our health – bird flu and West Nile virus come to mind – and the importance of understanding our feathered friends becomes clear.

When finished, the B10K will be a tree of life for the entire living avian class on the genomic level. It will shed light on the correlation between evolution and geographical location, showing us how an organism's environment affects the way it develops. Furthermore, we may gain insight into how different organisms affect each other's develop-

ment and dispersion around the world. At the very least, it will leave us better prepared in case we ever find ourselves in a real-life version of Hitchcock's *The Birds*.

## ONE MAGNANIMOUS MAGNET

Some say that size doesn't matter. The University of Aarhus wouldn't agree. The institution now boasts the largest magnet in Northern Europe. But fear not – they are using their power for good. The University's new Nuclear Magnetic Resonance spectrometer (NMR) allows researchers to magnify all the way down to the atomic scale. Two to three times more sensitive than previous NMR microscopes, it will help researchers focus more sharply on the smallest building blocks in the body, such as cells, proteins, and molecules.

The researchers initially hope to use it to further the field of antibiotics. Since the advent of penicillin, we have been fighting a losing battle against bacteria. Those little guys have been learning, evolving and growing in a way that resists antibiotic treatment.

Penicillin and other antibiotics work by entering bacterial cells and changing how some of their proteins work. Essentially, penicillin has the difficult task of going into enemy territory and making the troops march in a different direction. While this has been working effectively for some time, it is clear that the opposition has started understanding the strategy and is adapting to it. Increasing numbers of bacterial strains are becoming antibiotic-resistant, posing some serious health problems.

Researchers at the Interdisciplinary Nanoscience Centre (iNANO) are now using the NMR to monitor a new antibiotic strategy using antimicrobial peptides (AMPs). These molecules attack the cell membrane, which is essentially a layer of fat that acts as a rubber band that holds the rest of



*The new avian family tree based on whole genomes of 48 bird species.*

Jon Fields

the cell together. When the membrane is damaged, the cell dies.

The membrane cannot mutate, so it is believed that bacteria cannot become resistant to AMPs in the same way that they become resistant to other antibiotics. AMPs are already found in the immune systems of many classes of life, such as fungi, plants and snails.

But while AMPs show promise, there are some potential drawbacks. Some bacteria have natural systems in place to fight off AMPs, for example by switching the charge of the membrane, or by acting as though they have already been attacked by AMPs. AMPs are also digested in the stomach, and cannot be used to

**Birds are the perfect vehicle for learning more about genetic evolution**

Nereya Ofieno

specifically attack certain types of bacteria.

Still, they hold a lot of promise, and researchers at Aarhus University and iNANO hope to use the colossal NMR to see in even more detail how AMPs work and interact with bacteria.

"I believe in AMPs because their modes of action are so simple. They just destroy the cell. Working with them isn't simple, but the effect is," says Professor Vosegaard, head of AMP research at iNANO. "But we're very focused on the fact that we need quite a bit more knowledge about AMPs. We'll eventually use this knowledge to design some new substances that can be used for medicine." **M**

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# Q&A

## FREE SPEECH V. LOUIS VUITTON

NADIA PLESNER – ARTIST

What started out as an attempt to shine a light on war-torn Sudan evolved into a fundamental fight for freedom of speech against corporate interests. In 2007, Danish artist Nadia Plesner drew a picture of an emaciated black boy carrying a dog and a Louis Vuitton bag, intending to draw attention to the trivial way that the media was covering the ongoing conflict in Darfur, Sudan. She printed it on t-shirts and posters to raise money for an awareness campaign.

When Louis Vuitton sued, she retracted the posters and t-shirts, and repurposed the image in a larger painting entitled *Darfurnica*. The fashion giant sued again, and Plesner was fined €5000 per day the painting was exhibited in public or online. She countersued, taking the case all the way to the Hague, where the European Courts cancelled the accumulated €485,000 fine and forced Louis Vuitton to pay Plesner €15,000 to cover her legal expenses. This was only a fraction of her €80,000 legal bill, but her lawyers forgave her the difference.

Plesner has just released a book about the experience, *Simple Living*, so we called her for a chat.

*Why did you want to become an artist?*

I have been drawing my entire life. When I was a child, I would always be doing creative things like drawing and painting. As I was finishing high school, I told my student counsellor that I wanted to be an artist, but she told me that it was practically impossible to get into the Danish art academy, and that I should do something else. Today I think it was a stupid piece of advice, but at the time I followed it.

Instead of applying, I took all kinds of different art courses and kept painting. Then a friend of mine got into the art academy in

I was hit by a scooter. I landed on my neck, I couldn't move, and I lost my hearing in one ear and my sense of taste

Elias Thorsson



Nadia Plesner in central Copenhagen.

Amsterdam, and I knew I had to do the same thing. So I applied and got accepted the first time. I realised then that I should have done that from the beginning.

*What was your time studying in Amsterdam like?*

In the beginning, I was super-inspired by it. About 60 percent of the students were international, and meeting so many people from different countries taught me a lot. It showed me that we all have a very specific point of reference from which we understand the world, and that varies based on where you come from and what kind of culture you grew up with.

*But then you had a life-changing accident. What happened?*

I had been in the Netherlands six months, and it was the winter holiday. It had been very stressful. I was in an awful relationship with a Dutch guy, and I promised myself that I would just focus on my studies. During the holiday, we were

walking and we got into a fight – and as I was breaking up with him, I was hit by a scooter. I landed on my neck, I couldn't move, and I lost my hearing in one ear and my sense of taste. I would regain those things later, but it was terrible. I was also living in this awful caravan, and I was stuck there. I couldn't continue my studies, and I thought my life was over. Everything was just torn to pieces, and I fell into a really dark depression. I had no idea when or if I would ever fully recover, but during that dark period, something happened that snapped me out of it.

I was lying in bed reading the newspaper when I saw a teeny tiny update on the situation in Darfur, Sudan. I remembered hearing about it some years earlier, but as I hadn't heard about it for so long, I had thought it was over. The piece was only four lines long, but on the opposite page was a full-page article about Paris Hilton being sent to prison for traffic violations. I got really angry at the priorities of this serious newspaper. I wanted to make an

artwork that could pinpoint my experience of that realisation – something that might kickstart a debate – and that was the inspiration for *Simple Living*, which brought about my legal problems with Louis Vuitton.

*How did they start?*

Months went by between having the original idea and finishing the work. I printed it on t-shirts to raise money for humanitarian organisations working in Sudan, and sent it to Go-Card, which distributes free postcards to cafés in Denmark. Then, about four months into the project, I got a letter from the Louis Vuitton headquarters in Paris in which they informed me that I had to stop because my work was too similar to their product. I couldn't understand their point, as I had removed their logo, and many artists have made references to trademarked products before.

About two months after that, I got another letter in which I was told that they had taken the matter

to court in Paris, that I had been found guilty in absentia, and that I had to stop immediately and pay a fine for every day my website was up. But the project was all I had, and I felt violated and bullied, so I decided to take the issue to the media and fight it.

*What was the outcome of your legal troubles?*

The case got a lot of media attention, and Louis Vuitton wanted me to come and meet them in Paris to reach an agreement. I went with my lawyer to the Louis Vuitton mansion, where we were met by a lot of lawyers. I was told that if I ended the project, never showed it again, and made a public apology, they would use their influence to further my art career, get me into all the best galleries, and help raise awareness about the situation in Darfur.

When I refused and told them that the piece was a statement about media, and that their own actions had brought them into disrepute, they blamed me for ruining the name of the company and threatened to ruin me entirely, both financially and by using their influence to get me banned from all the top galleries.

It was really scary, and I took down my website, but refused to

apologise. My lawyer then advised me to incorporate it into a painting, since having it on a t-shirt was on the border of art and design, but if it was in a painting, they couldn't stop it. So I made a work inspired by Picasso's *Guernica*, and put the boy with the handbag into it. That prompted Louis Vuitton to reopen the case and sue me in the Hague, where I was again found guilty.

I knew then that I was not going to cave, and two Dutch lawyers offered to represent me in a counter-suit on the principle of free speech. As the first two cases had been conducted without me present, this was the first time I got to argue my case. I explained to the judge the idea behind the work and all the references I was making, and he ruled in my favour, which meant I didn't have to pay the fine I had previously been ordered to pay. Since then, I have twice been invited to the UN to talk about art and freedom, so I guess my legal troubles had some purpose and a happy ending.

*Did your experience encourage you to get more involved in humanitarian work?*

It did and it made me feel that I needed to go bigger. So I founded the Simple Living Committee,



*The offending image, 'Simple Living'*

which is an NGO that focuses on raising awareness and working on causes related to Darfur and other areas in the developing world. We have shipped medicine and educational equipment and this year we have embarked on our biggest project yet, which is the construction of a school in Tanzania.

We have also sent solar cookers to refugee camps, because in many of those camps people have to leave the relative safety of the camps to gather firewood, which often leads to women being raped and kidnapped. But the solar cookers allow families to cook by using the power of the sun.

*What has been your experience of raising awareness and funds for your charity work?*

Raising money for Darfur is hard and I have heard that it's because the conflict is not 'sexy' enough. It can be very frustrating when you feel you have to trick people into being interested in something, but I must say that my case and the attention it garnered has helped the foundation and our work a lot. For example, the school we are building was funded entirely by this one individual who heard about my case and wanted to get involved. I have also written a book, because I wanted all the trouble I experience have happened for a reason. I also want to show that big companies do try to silence artists.

The final verdict in my case also set a precedent in similar cases, which I'm really happy about, because the struggle has paid off in a way that directly benefits other artists in similar situations. **M**

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# ELECTION 2015 : Liberals and populists unite against the left

The new minority government faces four years of balancing the needs of four parties. As it stands now, its legacy will be tighter immigration and lower benefits and taxes

**THERE ARE** 179 seats in the Danish parliament, but only 34 of them will rule Denmark for the next four years. The liberal party Venstre has decided to go it alone, supported by the remaining three parties in the right-wing 'blue block', after they collectively won a majority 90 seats in the June election.

Venstre leader Lars Løkke Rasmussen will resume as prime minister, four years after he lost the role to Helle Thorning-Schmidt and the Social Democrats. But he returns a weakened man. Not only has his party lost 13 of their 47 seats, Rasmussen has also struggled to recover from personal scandals around his use of party funds and his expensive, taxpayer-sponsored travel while chairman of the Global Green Growth Institute. The pressure is on to redeem himself and make this government work.

It must seem odd to outside eyes that Rasmussen doesn't even lead the largest party in the winning block (see graphic on opposite page). That honour befell the Danish People's Party (DF), which surged 8.8 percentage points to take 21.1 percent of the vote and become the second largest party in parliament.

It must seem even weirder that the former ruling Social Democrat party were the election's absolute winners, gaining 1.5 percentage points to win 26.3 percent of the vote. But because their left wing 'red' block could only secure a total of 89 seats, Helle Thorning-Schmidt had to say goodbye as prime minister, and has also decided to step down as party leader.

## COMPROMISE

Weird it may seem but on Sunday, June 28, Rasmussen presented his new minority government – representing only 19.5% of the electorate – to the public (see 'A government forms', opposite page). His 16 ministers give us an indication of things to come, with hardnosed members of Venstre's inner circle in the top jobs.

Most notable is the appointment of Inger Støjberg as Minister for Foreigners, Integration and Housing. A

Danish politics is in a deeply complicated place, but it is revealing a fascinating new fragmentation of the populace between the left, the populists and the liberals

Peter Stanners



The Alternative leader Uffe Elbæk beams as he learns that his party stormed into parliament on their first try. Their green and entrepreneurial platform was popular in urban centres and contrasted with the Danish People's Party rise across the board.

proponent for tighter immigration regulations, in June she promised on Facebook that any coming Venstre government "would not continue the government's weak immigration policies".

The appointment of the former chairman of the employer's association, Jørn Neergaard Larsen, as Employment Minister – the only minister the party drafted in from outside parliament – should concern unions. In April, Larsen proposed cutting social benefits to encourage more people to join the labour market, calling Denmark a "loser country" when compared to its neighbours, Sweden and Germany.

Venstre can only rule as long as a majority of MPs do not oppose their government. This will require strong cooperation with both their parliamentary supporters on the right wing, as well as across the aisle.

These compromises are outlined in the government platform the party released on the same day as it presented its ministers. For their fiscally-liberal partners Liberal Alliance and the Conservatives, the government committed to a labour market reform. In its first phase, they will in-

troduce a benefits cap to limit the total amount a person can receive from the state when accepting unemployment benefits. In the second phase the government will try and reduce income taxes by five percent.

There were early signs of conflict in the right wing when DF's leader Kristian Thulesen Dahl said he was not interested in supporting tax cuts. His party also wants to maintain robust investment in the welfare state while the liberal right wing parties want to see cuts.

Given DF's strong anti-immigration platform, Støjberg's appointment should make them happy. So too should the government's plans to make it harder to achieve Danish citizenship and reduce benefits for asylum seekers and immigrants who have been in the country for fewer than eight years. But the question will be how much the party can compromise its pro-welfare agenda in exchange for tightened immigration.

## LIBERALS VS POPULISTS

Ultimately, that is at the heart of the conflict in the right wing, and a major reason that DF chose not to join Venstre in government. While DF is

a pro-welfare populist party, the other three right-wing parties are liberal at heart.

Simply put, DF only belongs to the blue block because of their stance on immigration. Without that, their pro-welfare and public spending agenda would find more suitable companionship in the left wing. But so hostile are they to foreigners, and Islam in particular, that they would rather cooperate with the right to keep borders as closed as possible.

DF's decision to stay out of government might have disappointed many voters and resulted in calls of cowardice from left-wing opponents but the party is right to be wary of going into government. The two parties that suffered most at this election were the left-wing Socialist People's Party (SF) and the centrist Radikale Venstre. Both parties joined the Social Democrats in the 2011 government and both have now lost half their voters.

To the public, Dahl explained that his party stayed out of government because that's where they would have the most influence. This puts DF in the same position as

A GOVERNMENT IS FORMED

The 'blue block' earned the right to form a government after winning a slim majority of 90 seats out of 179 seats. The four right-wing parties all pointed to Venstre leader Lars Løkke Rasmussen to lead as prime minister, so the queen appointed him 'royal investigator', charged with leading negotiations to form a government.

After consulting all the different parties in the red and blue blocks (see right), Rasmussen decided to form a minority government supported by the remaining three right-wing parties; Liberal Alliance, the Conservatives and Danish People's Party. With only 34 seats, it's the smallest minority government to have formed. Historically, minority governments only last a little over two years before a new election is called.

they were in between 2001 and 2011, when they supported a right-wing government in exchange for massive restrictions on immigration. The difference is that this time around they have almost twice as many seats to play with and so will naturally want more.

DF'S LONG GAME

If we had to pick a winner at this election, it would be DF. Their campaign was a strategic masterpiece. While Rasmussen and Thorning-Schmidt battled it out in four televised debates during the election campaign, DF's leader, Kristian Thulesen Dahl, was nowhere to be seen. Instead, his party mounted a kind of anti-campaign. Large billboards proclaimed, "You know what we stand for".

The voters remembered DF's call for banning ownership of satellite dishes by immigrants, ending English-language education at university, sending asylum seekers to Kenya, moving Ramadan to the summer holidays, conferring citizenship only on people with at least one Danish parent and pulling out of UN conventions. Some of these were official policies, others just proposals or ideas told to journalists seemingly on a whim and then withdrawn. It doesn't matter – the voters remembered.

International media like to call DF right-wing or far-right but that doesn't accurately portray their voters. Policy proposals, such as the creation of an animal welfare police force and the easing of access to unemployment benefits, appeal to the socially-minded. But does immigration or welfare best explain the party's success?

One theory points to a growing rural-urban divide. DF became the largest party in rural areas of south Jutland and west Zealand, leading some to postulate that voters here are not benefitting from globalisation in the same way as urban areas, pushing them into the hands of anti-immigration parties. A reduction in public services and the closing of schools and transport in these areas may also have increased resentment towards power brokers in Copenhagen.

But Ralf Pittelkow, editor of the populist news blog Den Korte Avis, rejected this 'elitist' analysis of the election. DF voters aren't social losers who cast protest votes out of a sense of social injustice and abandonment by politicians in Copenhagen,

he argues, they are just worried about immigration.

"Most people who voted for Dansk Folkeparti will in all likelihood point to immigration policy, border control and limiting EU power as important justifications," he writes.

Pittelkow adds that DF's success in South Jutland should not be seen in isolation – the party did well across Denmark, including areas close to left-wing Copenhagen. They won in Greve and Solrød, working-class coastal areas south of the city, and they came second in the western suburbs of Høje Taastrup, Albertslund and Ishøj.

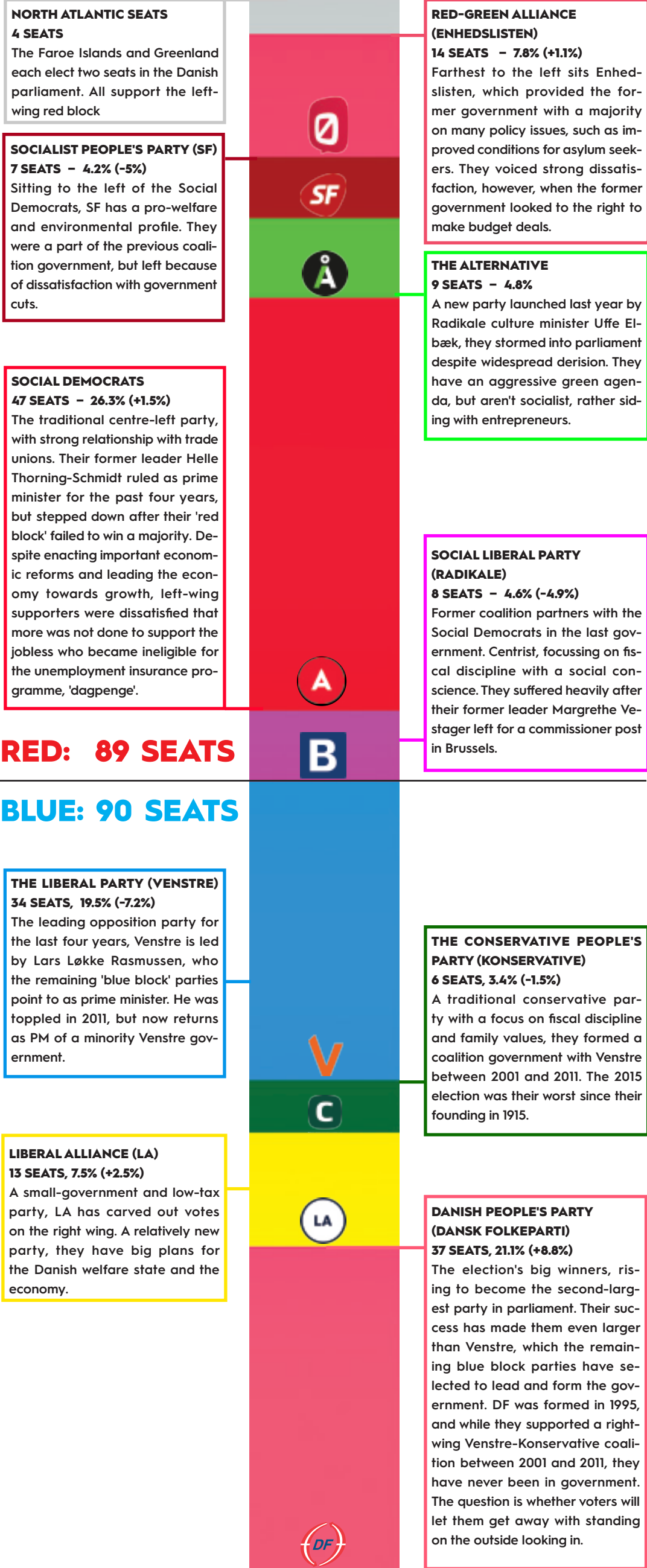
NEW VISION NEEDED

DF's rise also indicates that voters may be tiring of the parties who have ruled for the past fifteen years. Both right and left-wing governments pursued reforms that slimmed the public sector, cutting benefits in the name of responsible economic policy. The reforms may have kept Denmark within the three percent deficit allowed by the EU and brought the country out of the financial crisis with modest growth, but politics sometimes needs to represent more than the technocratic management of public coffers. Voters want vision, too.

Challenging the status quo on welfare is Liberal Alliance, which increased its share of the vote by campaigning to cut taxes and the public sector without reducing services, a claim no other party is willing to make.

Challenging the status quo on economic growth is the Alternative party, who stormed into parliament on their first try with 4.8 percent of the vote. In both Copenhagen and Aarhus, they won over 10 percent. They want to commit Denmark to a fully sustainable future while also promoting entrepreneurship and business. Dismissed by the right wing as 'the loony left', they are a party that refuses to put economic growth ahead of caring for the climate. Many voters agree, and think it is possible to grow sustainably without increasing our consumption of resources.

A turbulent four years lies ahead. Danish politics is in a deeply complicated place but it is revealing a fascinating new fragmentation of the populace between the left, the populists and the liberals, as well as a genuine desire for new solutions to welfare and economic growth. **M**





Tobin Jones / United Nations Photo

A young girl in a camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs), outside of Belet Weyne, Somalia's fifth largest city.

# Refugees: "Exploiting a grey area"

There are now more people displaced by war and conflict than at any time since World War II. Refugee researcher Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen argues that instead of trying to restrict migration flows, we should introduce a new global refugee programme

"**WE HAVE THE MOST** displaced people in over sixty years, but contrary to public perception Europe only receives a small fraction of the world's refugees," says Gammeltoft-Hansen, Research Director at the Danish Institute for Human Rights.

"Right now Denmark and other EU countries are employing the 'beggar-thy-neighbour' policy and simply improving their own nation's economy at the cost of others."

Gammeltoft-Hansen has been contributing to the academic debate on refugees and asylum seekers for more than a decade. Along with advising a number of national authorities and international organisations, he has been interviewed by the likes of The New York Times, The Huffington Post and a range of other media out-

lets for his insight on the growing crisis.

"In a way, we have to respect the current political situation – if there were an easy solution, they would've found it," he explains. "Right now, the situation in Denmark is dictated by a number of factors, of which economic concerns and a general fear of globalisation are among the strongest. It's hard for many to see refugees as a part of our society because we're so far removed from the situation. But we have to remember that they're real people and not just images in the media."

While the strict immigration policies in Denmark are designed to maintain social cohesion, Gammeltoft-Hansen believes they could prove problematic for Denmark in the future.

"The political discussion

is very much framed in an introspective way, with governments asking themselves, 'how will this affect us now?' But diverting most refugees to other nations doesn't solve the problem, particularly if they aren't equipped to take them. Without proper support, these countries will buckle under pressure and will then push even more refugees towards Europe – we can either address the problem now or wait for the crisis to worsen."

## GLOBAL DISTRIBUTION PROBLEM

As a liberal nation with a strong economy, Denmark should be leading by example, argues Gammeltoft-Hansen. But this unwillingness to take in and distribute responsibility for refugees stretches across Europe, and is absolutely dire.

"In terms of capacity, we have a small resettlement quota, and Denmark is taking its share – but we could take a lot more. From a distribution perspective, just look at Lebanon. They have a population about of 4.8 million and a smaller landmass than Denmark – and they've taken in more than 1.5 million refugees."

Since the start of the Syrian crisis in 2011, Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan and Northern Iraq have taken in more than three million Syrian refugees, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Meanwhile, under 150,000 Syrians have declared asylum in the European Union.

Bulgaria – one of the main access channels to Europe – has also been under immense pressure for some time. But since it is the poorest country in the European Union, Gammeltoft-Hansen is concerned that its asylum system won't be able to sustain the rapid flow of asylum seekers, and oth-

Lesley Price

ers will eventually have to step in.

"Many of these nations on the front line in Southern Europe may crack under pressure if we can't effectively reroute the flow," he explained. "The situation in Italy is getting worse every day."

The growing number of people risking their lives on the Mediterranean has captured media attention this year, particularly after the drowning of over 1,700 migrants in April alone. The dangerous Mediterranean route has always been used by human smugglers, but its increasing popularity has less to do with calm seas and more to do with a lack of other options.

"We're now in a real crisis, with conflicts raging in many parts of the world. The capacity in the regions of origins is simply maxed out," he explained. "To get to Europe, refugees used to go through Turkey and Greece, and before that the Canary Islands in Western Africa, but sea patrol and se-

curity have been slowly beefed up."

"If you stop the flow in a number of places, of course the pressure will mount somewhere else – the Mediterranean is a particularly dangerous route, but it's virtually the only one left from Africa," he added.

According to the United Nations Refugee Agency, 38 European countries recorded 264,000 asylum applications in 2014, an increase of 24 percent compared to the same period in 2013. Even so, these figures don't account for all those arriving undetected or residing in Europe illegally.

Germany continues to receive the largest number of asylum applications, followed by France, Sweden, Italy and the United Kingdom, the agency reports.

Although many nations in Europe may formally meet their legal requirements for accepting refugees, Gammeltoft-Hansen says the issue of human rights with

respect to immigration remains charged.

"States are increasingly trying to exploit the gaps and grey areas in the respect to refugee and human rights. The most recent amendment to the Danish Asylum and Immigration Act provides many Syrian refugees with a lower class of protection and no family reunification during the first year. The latter is possible because family reunification is a different legal regime, not explicitly addressed to refugees. But these people need protection just as much as their spouses who made it here already. So the law is clearly intended to deter refugees from arriving in Denmark, hoping that they will apply somewhere else instead."

#### NEW MODELS FOR EUROPE

Gammeltoft-Hansen says the only way forward is the development of new strategic alternatives to relieve the pressure on irregular mi-

**We're now  
in a real  
crisis, with  
conflicts  
raging in  
many parts  
of the  
world**

gration and create a more equal distribution of refugees.

"If countries that can sustainably support more refugees adopt even harsher measures, it will only create a downward spiral," he explains. "The most sustainable solution is going to be a cross-regional system."

Such a regime should include access to safer migration channels, along with more clearly-defined commitments to provide both economic assistance and resettlement quotas, he argues. But for such a regime to work, the majority of Europe will need to opt in.

"If we want developing countries to continue to shoulder the vast majority of the world's refugees, we need to show both economic and political solidarity. Countries like Lebanon and Jordan not only need funding, but also a helping hand in terms of resettling the smaller portion of refugees who will not be able to find protection in these countries. We also need to send a strong signal that we are not simply abandoning the Refugee Convention in Europe." **M**

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# When good karma equals good business

Christian Stadil's commitment to 'karma' and 'slow thinking' makes him an unusual business guru. But with a successful portfolio of 120 companies under his belt, his ideas might be worth listening to

Peter Stanners



Christian Stadil, photographed in the Thornico offices in Hellerup.

**IT TOOK A MINUTE** to get used to the fact that the muscular and tattooed man in front of me, dressed in a casual cotton suit and black sneakers, was one of Denmark's most iconic businessmen. Christian Nicholas Stadil is the founder and owner of the Thornico Group, which has a controlling stake in around 120 companies that span sports fashion, real estate, shipping, food production, and technology.

But Stadil is more than a business guru. He is a mountaineer, sergeant, author, environmental activist, entrepreneur, and tattoo enthusiast. He is charming, slightly erratic, and eccentric. Who else do you know that has built a business empire on the principles of good karma and creativity?

"I have a special mind, maybe a bit of Asperger's mixed with some OCD. And that special mind-set – thinking, thinking, thinking, all the time, kind of obsessed in many ways – is really irritating."

He tells me this at the Thornico headquarters in Hellerup, a few weeks after we first met at a nearby bookshop called Books and Company. He was invited to talk about his new book, *In the Shower with Picasso*, which explores how individuals and companies can promote creative thinking and innovation. At ease in the limelight, he is a confident and eloquent public speaker, weaving witty anecdotes and colourful personal stories into his narrative.

Stadil believes in the power of creative thinking, and talks about it as a state of mind, something that can be accessed by entering a relaxed state and allowing the subconscious mind to take over. He calls this "taking a creative break" – letting the conscious and rational mind taper off, and letting "slow thinking" dominate.

"You need to work hard, but then stop and take the creative break, trusting that the subconscious will keep on marinating. Then, if it's important to you, the ideas will bubble up."

Kristina Møller

 @christian\_stadil



So after proving my worth (in real Tyler Durden fight club style) I got this amazing tattoo. A wild transcending experience which I can highly recommend to those with a HIGH pain threshold! Good karma



Hamilton joined dad for training while Winston stayed and mum @alice\_brunsoe hit the beach

He uses a variety of tools to take a break from focussed thinking, from running and walking to showering and meditation. These tools also help him rein in his 'monkey mind', a Buddhist term for a mind that is undisciplined, jumping from one idea to the next.

But when it comes to accessing his creative side, Stadil swears by the power of sleep.

"Just before going to sleep, I write down what I want to think about during my sleep, and then in the morning, before the portal to the subconscious is closed, I keep on writing. This technique comes from a Japanese scientist, Ishiwara. In the morning, you keep on writing, right away, before the subconscious is closed. Salvador Dalí used to set his alarm at a random time - like 2AM - and when he woke up, he would start painting before his conscious mind caught up with him. So that's kind of interesting."

**FEAR=BAD, DOUBT=GOOD**

Businesses need to give their employees space to take creative breaks if they are to tap into creativity and ingenuity Stadil believes. But it is also just as important to eliminate the culture of fear and domination in many workplaces.

"Fear is crippling. It has been neurobiologically proven that fear makes you go into fight-or-flight mode. You concentrate your attention and your awareness only in your conscious mind, which has a really narrow bandwidth. This means that you simply close the door, the portal to your subconscious, which is really where your ideas come from."

But while fear is kryptonite to creativity, he says self-doubt is not as undesirable.

"Self-doubt is a constant companion. It's what propels me. The doubt, the pushing, the energy. You have to have that, because becoming too complacent is bad. Doubt makes us ask questions. How do we do this, and how can we do it another way?"



Just another day at the office! During the Rooftop Festival in Rotterdam, we had a tour around the Thornico building with a small group of people - consisting of two students from #CBS, who via a competition had been invited down here to see our sustainable initiatives in Thornico, a couple of people from #MTHøjgaard and our director and technical manager here in Holland. At this tour we found some time for a small meditation session up on the roof, the twelfth floor, among bee hives, in the sun and in 30 degrees - a powerful experience :)



Here with hummels sales director @simon\_schiolin . Simon is also the founder and sports director of Denmark's most charitable football team that is playing a charity match at Østerbro Stadium at 15:00. Profits will be to UNICEF where the goal is 25 million of clean water for children in need around the world #unicef charity #fodbold

**OCD makes you ask 'what if', which is very good question for creativity!**

**NATURE VS. NURTURE**

What drives people to seek new ways of doing things? It's a question Stadil has invested a lot of time in researching. After consulting psychologists and theorists around the world, he believes that there is a correlation between some disorders and creativity.

"What you may consider to be the biggest barrier in your whole life may in fact be your greatest strength," he says, adding that people with conditions such as ADHD, borderline schizophrenia, or some mood disorders may have an easier time accessing "slow thinking", and thereby can be more creative.

"For instance, OCD makes you

ask 'what if', which is very good question for creativity!"

It's a funny insight from a man who hums with energy and seems unable to hold his own focus, swiftly moving from subject to another. But it seems to me that it is precisely his ability to embrace these mental acrobatics that has paved the way to his success. While he thinks some people may be more predisposed to creativity, he also contends that everyone has the potential.

"The most important thing is to decide to be creative. If Mozart didn't have a piano in his home, would he have become Mozart? For sure I am not Mozart in any sense, but would I have become what I am

today if my parents weren't so supportive? I, for sure, don't think so. I owe them everything."

**NOT-SO-HUMBLE BEGINNINGS**

It's an important confession, for Stadil's story is hardly a rags-to-riches tale. His father was a famous lawyer, his mother a supermodel. He says that he is a true combination of them both. From his mother, he inherited his flair for style and fashion and his spiritual inclinations, and from his father, his pragmatism and business sense.

Raised in Copenhagen's wealthy northern suburbs, he attended Denmark's best private school before joining the Royal Infantry. He

quickly rose through the ranks and made sergeant at just 18.

"My time in the army was pivotal for me. In terms of leadership, I realised that I had the ability to motivate and to inspire others."

Stadil left the army in 1992 to attend Århus University, where he studied law for two years before leaving it in favour of pursuing his business career. In his twenties, he teamed up with his father, and together they began investing in shipping and real estate. It was the start of the Thornico Group.

In 1999, he bought hummel, an iconic Danish sports brand that had been declared bankrupt. It raised eyebrows, but after an aggressive rebranding strategy, the gamble paid off. Hummel was restored to its former glory, and Stadil cemented his position as a major business player.

#### GOOD KARMA

Stadil was first attracted to Eastern philosophy at age 12, as a means to rein in his 'monkey mind'. Buddhism and meditation may actually be his saving grace, keeping him from being completely overwhelmed by his daily responsibilities.

But it's not just in his personal life that these philosophies guide him. Stadil has developed a business philosophy he calls 'Company Karma'. In Buddhism, karma is the understanding of cause and effect, of how our actions affect the world and lead back to us. Applied to business, Stadil's goal is to find innovative ways to make companies both profitable and socially and environmentally conscious.

One example of Company Karma in action is a recent Thornico endeavour, Mät Foods, which is being launched in the autumn. The high-protein snack bars are designed to address two different problems: a lack of protein in non-Western diets, and obesity in the West.

"We want to give high-protein products to developing countries, while on the other hand providing a high-protein, super-healthy product to Western youth. High-protein products help you feel more 'mät' [full up], so you don't need to eat as many burgers or chips later in the day."

Stadil wants to integrate the Company Karma philosophy into all of Thornico's companies. He be-



*Self-doubt is a constant companion. It's what propels me. The doubt, the pushing, the energy.*

## Being a father has been the biggest defining moment in my life. I now know why I do what I do

lieves that everyone wins when business leaders think holistically and integrate customers, partners and causes into the process. Simply put, it's a way for businesses to do good.

#### LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Stadil has no intention of slowing down. When I ask him how he remains focused and inspired, he says he is driven by passion.

"I feel really privileged to be working with different kinds of companies, start-ups and different kinds of industries. I think that's really interesting. There's not one day that's the same as the other. It doesn't get boring, because there are always new things, new projects, new ventures."

Now with two children under the age of three, the arrival of these new hummel-clad rugrats has only inspired him to do more.

"Being a father has been the biggest defining moment in my life. I now know why I do what I do. I know what it's for. I know it makes sense now to work so much, but also to work even more, you know?"

Christian's father, Thor Stadil, is now in his seventies and remains an active board member of the Thornico group. Christian affectionately calls him "the Danish Warren Buffett".

It's hard to imagine that Christian will ever mellow in his old age, but when I ask him about his plans for the long-term future, he does suggest he'd like to slow things down.

"In twenty years, I'll still be doing business, but I'd like to be involved with fewer projects and at a deeper level. I'd like to focus on business that I'm passion-

ate about. More Karma projects. Hopefully, 'Company Karma' will be a household phrase by then. But I'd also like to spend some time living abroad. Maybe outside Tokyo, working with some tech start-ups, or in the south of France, living with my wife. Spending more time with the family. My two children will be older and more independent by then. Maybe we'll have a third child?"

As the interview comes to a close, he hands me his business card. It features an Allen Ginsberg quote: "Follow your inner moonlight, don't hide the madness."

It's an apt mantra for Christian Stadil, and the key to his success. **M**

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# "Utopia is our willingness to look after each other"

**Why are digital locks a security threat? Why is policy becoming increasingly less evidence-based? Can science fiction help us reach Utopia? One of the world's foremost copyright reformists and internet policy progressives explains**

**C**ory Doctorow is one of the leading advocates for reform of the global copyright system. He is also a science fiction writer, co-editor of the influential blog Boing Boing, and special advisor to the digital civil liberties organization Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF).

His is an intense personality, but not unpleasantly so, and he talks at length about the issues he cares about at a speed that can leave a non-native English speaker desperately trying to hold on to his ideas.

I met him at the Click Festival in Helsingør, where we spoke about the ways politics can be shaped by scientific evidence as well as by science fiction. Our conversation ranged from mass surveillance, the lack of evidence informing digital policy, and what a real utopia looks like.

A central issue in his most recent book, *Information Doesn't Want to Be Free*, is digital rights management, or DRM. These 'digital locks' (see 'DRM Locks' on page 20) are protected by copyright laws that make it illegal to circumvent them.

If DRM protects a copyrighted work, it means that, for practical purposes, DRM vendors can write their own copyright law. For example, it is illegal to break the DRM on a Blu-ray disc, even for legal purposes like making a backup or watching the film on a device other than a Blu-ray player. This pre-

vents the user from accessing other legal uses of the copyrighted work.

DRM may be bad for both creators and users of creative works (see fact box), but it poses even greater problems. Because it is not only illegal to break DRM, but also to disclose how to break it, DRM leaves gaping holes in the security of computers.

Today, digital security is not only about keeping data safe, it is about physical and infrastructural security as well. It is about protecting cars and planes, hearing aids and pacemakers, water works and electrical plants. If the software controlling these systems is protected by digital locks, it becomes illegal for researchers to report their security flaws, leaving the systems open to attacks.

Doctorow's call to action against this problem is meant to persuade ordinary people to reconsider their support of the kinds of services that rely on DRM, and re-prioritise a bit of that money to the cause of digital freedom.

*You want people to set aside money from their DRM-purchases and give it to organisations that fight for digital civil rights. But is that enough? Are there other ways civil society can act against DRM?*

"Making good choices is a big deal, but nobody can make good choices everywhere. I don't want people to despair, and I don't want them to feel that because they can't

**The fact that mass surveillance doesn't catch crooks definitely demonstrates a lack of evidence-based policy**

Henrik Chulu

be pure, they might as well do nothing. I think there are ways that we can fight against it.

"In terms of activism that's meaningful, the EFF and other groups like Fight for the Future are always developing new tactics. The mass phone calls into the [US, ed.] Senate on the Stop Online Piracy Act and network neutrality made a huge difference. Joining up for those actions makes a huge difference."

*But these digitally locked services offer a convenience that most people are unwilling to give up.*

"You know what's interesting about the proliferation of DRM? If we can get rid of the laws protecting DRM, and make it legal to break a lock for a legal purpose, then the more DRM there is in the field, the better – because every one of those is an opportunity to start a business unlocking value that's been locked up by the DRM. Making personal video recorders for Netflix, for example: if everybody uses Netflix, and it's legal to make a digital video recorder for Netflix, that's ideal, right? That's perfect!

"The thing we're targeting with the EFF is legal reform through impact litigation, through a lawsuit. The good news is that if the US doesn't keep the law on the books, then all of the countries that have bilateral obligations with the US are ripe to abandon their own DRM protections."

*One of the problems in the copyright debate is that the arguments on the side of people who want stronger copyright laws are not based on evidence, but rather on 'common-sense' assumptions. Is there a way to make it more evidence-based, besides just presenting more evidence?*

"That's not unique to entertainment policy, though. That's surveillance policy and security policy, climate policy. One after the other, every policy domain has become dominated by firms that see commercial advantage in ignoring the evidence. They then lobby for ignoring evidence, and they make enough money so that they can pay to continue lobbying.

"Having said that, I think the rise of the Pirate Parties, particularly in European states with proportional voting systems, has really scared at least the left-wing parties, and has made them adopt better information policy. Across Europe, the Greens and the Liberal Democrats have become a lot more switched on about IT policy, and have produced much better IT policies in their platforms. .

"Competition doesn't solve everything, but in this case it seems to be doing something very good."

*Does the lack of evidence-based policy also explain the rise of mass surveillance?*

"The fact that mass surveil-



Cory Doctorow hard at work in his office.

Cory Doctorow argues that a utopia is when we choose to look after each other when times get tough, rather than a perfect political system. In which case technology has a role to play. To the right is a 'utopian' space habitat called a Stanford Torus that was designed by NASA.

lance doesn't catch crooks definitely demonstrates a lack of evidence-based policy. But mass surveillance does produce procurements. You have to buy stuff to do mass surveillance, so there are firms that lobby for mass surveillance, just like they lobby for private prisons and for other sources of what the economist Max Keiser calls 'gulag wealth'. They lobby for gulag wealth not because they are ideologically committed to gulags, but because they are ideologically committed to wealth. I think in the case of mass surveillance, you can see it particularly with the CIA.

"The CIA has historically been a human intelligence agency. They dressed people up in fancy costumes and gave them putty noses and false moustaches, and sent them off to go, "Hey comrade, you wanna buy some blue jeans? Hey, what's going on in the Kremlin?" That's been their historic role. But these days, the CIA is an almost entirely signals intelligence entity. And the US already has this really big signals intelligence organization called the NSA. So why is the CIA doing signals intelligence?

"I think it's because nobody lobbies for fake moustaches. You don't need explicit corruption. All you need is a finite budget. If you have a finite budget and continuous pressure towards signals intelligence, more and more of the budget will be pulled towards signals intelligence and away from human intelligence, until human intelligence is effectively starved off – and then you have another signals intelligence agency. I think that mass surveillance can in large part be explained by that kind of procurement.

"I also think that, historically, wealth disparity has produced social instability, and the way that social instability has been corrected has been through a combination of redistribution — social programs, and coercion — guard labour. Carrots and sticks. What happened with mass surveillance is that the stick got a lot cheaper.

What is Utopian is the belief that when the disaster comes — and it will come — your neighbours will look after you, and so you should go look after your neighbours. And if you believe that, then it becomes self-fulfilling

DRM Locks

When iTunes first launched the Music Store in 2003, the downloaded music was protected with Digital Rights Management, or DRM. This was supposed to protect the file from being copied and shared with people who hadn't bought it. But it also prevented users from playing the file on computers or music players that knew how to unlock it.

While this is simply annoying, it is also deeply problematic. Users who want to extract the information and use it on a different device are forced to break the law to do so. This is because of laws such as the Digital Millennium Copyright Act that criminalises breaking DRM locks.

While DRM always fails to protect against copying – software for unlocking DRM, as well as unlocked works, are freely and readily available – the laws protecting DRM help keep the market power for vendors that use DRM, such as Amazon, Spotify or

Netflix. It is not the DRM that protects copyright, but vice versa.

Without the protection of DRM in copyright law, it would be useless both for its stated purpose of protecting copyrighted works, as well as its intended purpose of protecting the business models of the distributors who rely on DRM for maintaining market power. As a creator, you get locked into the distributor's ecosystem, which makes it impossible for users to bring works already paid for onto competing platforms. This gives distributors a strong position when negotiating with creators, since they have already locked in the audience.

Today, DRM is the standard business model of online entertainment like bookstores, music and movie streaming services, hindering competition and locking both creators and their fans to DRM-based middlemen.

"So, the point at which it's economically rational to build schools or hospitals or roads instead of CCTVs and prisons – that point shifted significantly when surveillance got a lot cheaper. The Stasi used to use one informant to spy on sixty people. Today the NSA can use one spy to spy on ten thousand people."

*So when we look at our mass surveillance society, it's not a conspiracy of people wanting to keep us all under surveillance, it's a convergence of economic forces?*

"Yeah, I think that's exactly right. It's corruption driven by self-interest, whose incidental outflow is control. But the self-interest is unchecked greed."

*And the control is self-reinforcing?*

"Yeah, because the more that greedy people are allowed to control things, the more unstable society becomes.

*Most of the science fiction I grew up with — Alien and Blade Runner for example — was dystopian, and when I read about mass surveillance and climate change and so on, it all seems to be converging towards that kind of future. You've*

*written more utopian science fiction. Do you think we need better models?*

"I think the way to think about science fiction's relationship to the future is that you have all the possible futures articulated by all the science fiction writers, including the ones that never get published. They are all winnowed through a fitness function that reflects the fears and aspirations of science fiction readers, and the publishers who have their fingers on the pulse of the readers.

"So it's not that science fiction writers are oracles, but the system of all science fiction being written — plus all of the fears and hopes of all the people who make the collective decision about which science fiction is successful — is a really good insight into what we fear and aspire to.

But I also think that what science fiction does do in relationship to the future is that it tells us how to expect that our neighbours will behave when things go bad. And I think this is a really important contribution to the future.

This really does impact our future, because if you believe that when disaster strikes, your neighbours will come over to kill you, then what you should do when the lights go out is go kill your neighbours.

But if you believe that when disaster strikes, your neighbours will come over with the contents of their freezer for a barbecue, because there's no power and you better cook it now, then when the lights go out you make potato salad.

Even if you have a utopian society that has solved all of its problems, it would still be subject to exogenous shocks — meteor strikes, other societies, tsunamis, whatever.

Even if we lived in an egalitarian utopia, the tsunami still would have hit. It may have been different. If we had evidence-based policy, we might have had better water breaks, not so many people living on the shore, more resilience and so on, but we still would have had the tsunami. No Utopia is static.

What is Utopian is the belief that when the disaster comes — and it will come — your neighbours will look after you, and so you should go look after your neighbours. And if you believe that, then it becomes self-fulfilling.

I think that Utopia is a theory of human action, about our willingness to look after each other in times of extremis, and not a political system that describes what we must and must not do, or can and cannot do. **M**





Lea Thau, photographed outside her home in Los Angeles, California. Thau is originally from Denmark, but moved to the US 20 years ago.

# STORYTELLING that cuts a little deeper

**INTERVIEW** In her popular podcast *Strangers*, Lea Thau finds meaning in the lives of others. But along the way, the Danish radio documentarist explores her own feelings and place in the world, between the dynamic but heartless American society, and her roots in the compassionate but dull Danish welfare state

**Words:**  
Peter Stanners

**Photos:**  
Rasmus Jensen

I know Lea Thau well. I know that the breakup with her son's father was painful, that she is deeply conflicted by conservative politics in America, and that the inflections of her voice can reveal her moods.

I feel like I know her, but actually we are strangers – which is appropriate, because that's the name of her podcast. From her home in Los Angeles, California, she makes radio documentaries that explore how people deal with the challenges life throws at them.

There's 25-year-old Adrian Wagner, who's having a hard time adapting to going blind, and there's Andrew and Akina, who seem like any other hipster couple, except their marriage was arranged through the sect the Unification Church. At the core of her stories is human interaction, where lives meet and part, for it's at these intersections that meaning in life is found, says Thau.

"I am driven by stories, which are the desire to understand something essential about what it is to be human," she explains over a crackly Skype connection. "Sure I like science too, but that's a different approach to understanding life. It can't get to the emotional core of what it means to be human – stories can. I do find that endlessly fascinating."

## FROM AARHUS TO NYC

This search to find meaning in real life has permeated both her studies and her radio career. Originally a philosophy student, Thau switched to literature before moving to New York at age 23 to continue her studies. Philosophical theories weren't as good as literature at explaining the human condition, she felt. But even the study of literature was often too theoretical.

"I was a pretentious young intellectual, but I quickly lost interest in abstraction and philosophy. I was interested in humans

and what made their lives worthwhile. So I moved from theory to stories and realism. I'm not that interested in debating whether this chair exists or not."

Her first job after graduating was at the United Nations, which dissatisfied her because she felt disconnected from the people that made the city palpable and attractive. So in 2001, she joined *The Moth*, a live storytelling organisation, where she worked for the next ten years. Through their outreach programme, she met New Yorkers from all walks of life and helped to tell their stories.

"I experienced every aspect of New York, from top to bottom. It was enormously appealing."

The *Moth's* principle is simple. Participants stand and tell their story to a live audience, without any props or script. In their outreach programme, producers work with the storytellers for weeks beforehand, but there's no guarantee that they will succeed, and many bomb.

As a producer, Thau helped hundreds of people turn their lives into stories, which isn't easy. People often forget that a story is much more than a series of events. What brings the events together is a higher principle, but finding that takes soul searching.

#### FINDING THE STORY

"You need to go deep inside yourself to find what the story is really about. We don't normally have that meta-awareness of what has happened, of why we do what we do, so we have to sit down to figure that out. That has to come even before you structure the story, and it requires a great deal of honesty. The answer we end up finding is often not the one we thought it would be.

"The second part of telling the story is finding out why anyone

else should care. The introspective mode risks being confessional, creating a story that we should tell a therapist, priest or our mom, rather than a roomful of strangers. After the introspective process, you need to hold the story with your arm outstretched, to give it as much distance as possible. Even if it is a first-person story, try to shape it for someone who isn't you or your best friend."

When Thau started *Strangers* in 2011, she continued to try and shape other people's stories, albeit in a different format. Hours of interviews would be woven together to create the perfect narrative arc. But as she included more and more people into a single show, she realised a need to introduce herself, to tie the stories together.

Among the popular storytelling and documentary podcasts, *Stran-*

*gers* is one of the most intimate, and Thau often blurs the lines between subject and presenter. Instead of taking a step back, she airs her own doubts and feelings along the way. The audience is brought close, sometimes too close. It's a fine line, but instead of feeling awkward, I found myself becoming invested in Thau and her search for understanding in people and their stories.

Her most popular episodes put her at centre stage. After four years of being single, and while researching a story about online dating, she decided to investigate why she was having a hard time finding love again. During the four-part series *Love Hurts*, she spoke to friends, relationship experts, and men who had turned her down. It was vulnerable and awkward, but her biggest hit to date.

"From a storytelling perspective, they might not be the most successful pieces I have made, but it's the most talked about and beloved series I have done. It's transgressive and has an appeal – an element of that base voyeurism that drives reality TV. I had to do it against my better judgment. I sent it to my best friends first, and they weren't sure I should put it out. But when I heard their hesitation, I knew I had to do it anyway. And that's the reason it got respect in the radio world, because it was new in podcasting and impossible to do with normal radio. From an artistic point of view, it was experimental."

#### HER AMERICAN DREAM

Thau doesn't think she'd be making this type of radio in Denmark, where standing out is less the social norm than in the US. It's one of the reasons she's stayed. She loves that anyone can move to New York and get a job waiting tables in a restaurant and call themselves a New Yorker. The political consensus in Denmark that foreigners must 'integrate' sounds absurd to her now. In America, you are accepted for who you are.

"Americans ask, 'Who do I want to be?' That's naïve, but it pays off. They have this idea that they can create themselves in their own image and vision – that you can

**I am driven by stories, which are the desire to understand something essential about what it is to be human**

move 3000 miles across a country to chase a dream. Europeans are so much more insular and guarded about what is possible or OK, looking instead to others. When Europeans ask, 'Who am I?', they look backward and inward to determine something that they think is a pre-existing fact that they just need to grasp. But Americans ask, 'Who do I want to be?' and they're off. Yes it's a little shallow, but it's exciting."

Some of Thau's stories reflect the social and economic exclusion and poverty found in the US that would never be acceptable in Denmark. She still can't adjust to the wealth divide, and shudders at conservative Republican values, with their passive support for inequality and lack of compassion for the poor. She stands divided between the social compassion of her roots in Denmark, and the drive and attitude in America.

"At the end of the day, it is horrible that people are dying on the streets in America, that there are 50 million people who live in food-insecure households, without enough to eat. It's the second-richest economy in the world. I struggle enormously with that and my choice to live here, because the next logical question I get most from Americans is why do you live here?"

It's a question her Danish friends and family ask her too: why would she give up six weeks' vacation and generous maternity leave to live in a country so full of conflict and lacking compassion for the weakest? But there's an exciting underlying dynamic that she can't help but love, and which makes her stick it out.

She's not completely entirely, however, as she misses her family, especially now that she has a child. She tries to return to Denmark twice a year, often using up all the holidays she gets.

"Sometimes when I sing a Danish song to my son, I realise that time is finite, that every choice has a consequence. That I could choose to live and die here. And that's still a bit weird to me – the idea of dying in the US, of never making it home. I have no desire to live in Denmark, but I would like to die at home." **M**





## CAPTURED

One of the winners in June's general election is the new political party the Alternative, represented by the letter 'Å'. Their strong environmental and entrepreneurial platform saw them take 10 percent of the vote in Copenhagen. At their election party they invited supporters to ride a canal boat around the city. Photo: Peter Stanners





## THE 'PEOPLE'S MEETING'

Every June, the island of Bornholm hosts a festival of democracy and ideas called the 'Folkemødet'. Our photographer Rasmus Degnbol headed over to the 'sunshine island' to find out what the fuss is all about

**BEFORE I ARRIVED** in Bornholm, I was sceptical. I imagined that Folkemødet would be lobbying on steroids, a hotbed of networking by career climbers. Is it really for the people, as its name suggests, or simply another media-infused event for the intellectual elite?

But as soon as I was on the ferry, hearing dialects from across the country drift over me, it was clear that this meeting really is for everyone.

The Folkemøde takes over the town of Allinge on the north side of the island for one week a year, hosting around 100,000 people who participate in over 2000 talks, debates and events. One moment you're in a heated debate with a politically engaged 16-year-old, and the next you're sitting on the beach with a beer, talking to a former freedom fighter from the Second World War. The atmosphere is very special, and welcoming in a way not usually experienced in Denmark.

On the flip side, you have to battle your way past through one attention-seeking celebrity after another. TV host Emil Thorup told a debate audience one Saturday morning that if you didn't know who he was, you should leave the tent. I decided to take his advice and find something with a bit more substance.

Some of the events seem like they're being held for their own sake, lacking energy and engagement. But if you dig deep, you can find some really interesting workshops and organisations that are honestly interested in discussing the future of Danish democracy in new and refreshing ways. I certainly walked away with new insights – isn't that what Folkemødet should be about?

You can't help but leave Bornholm with hope for the future of Denmark, and feel grateful that we in 2015 are able to discuss our own democracy so openly and peacefully – especially at a time when it feels like many places in the world could use their own Folkemøde. **M**





### 1. Historic Fisherman's Cottages

Start your journey at Café Jorden Rundt, going north on Strandvejen as it splits off and continues inland. You will pass several blocks of large, classic houses and modernist glass homes. The road narrows around Skovshovedvej, where a patchwork of traditional thatch roofs will come into view, and you can start to wander the side streets, paths, and alleyways on both sides of Strandvejen. Take some time to study the variety of garden spaces hidden from the road, since many are public access. And have your camera ready – this area is an Instagrammer's paradise. If you happen upon one of the cottage residents, don't be bashful. Many are more than happy to talk about the colourful history of the area and of their homes.



### 2. The Swimming Hole

Heading east from the fishermen's village toward the water, you will pass over the main coastal road (Kystvejen) and arrive at the south end of Skovshoved Havn. Before exploring the harbour, turn south and walk along the sidewalk until you arrive at a freestanding changing hut and a wooden dock extending out over the water, 'the swimming hole.' It's amazing how many people bike past this spot during the year and never know exactly what it is. A gathering place for daring winter bathers and carefree summer swimmers alike, the swimming hole is as informal as it gets – just trim down and jump in. After you take a dip and let the Baltic reignite your circulatory system, complete the euphoric experience by sunning yourself on the rocks of the seawall and watching others take the plunge.

Austin Sailsbury

## Summer in SKOVSHOVED

It's early June, and Oliver's Garage and Isbar is busy. The sun is shining (for a change), so a sizable queue has formed for ice cream. Students are clustered around Oliver's outdoor tables, a pair of wetsuit-clad women pass by toting a sea kayak, and a father and son arrive, discussing the merits of stracciatella versus jordbær as they park their bicycles. In the end, jordbær wins. It seems that summertime has finally arrived in Denmark. The livin' is genuinely easy here in the little coastal village of Skovshoved.

Situated just north of Copenhagen, along the coast road between Hellerup and Klampenborg, Skovshoved (the name means 'head of the forest') is a small, eclectic community with

a distinct history. For generations, Skovshoved was a base for fishermen working the waters of the Øresund, so the community has always had the harbour and the sea at its heart. Only shadows of Skovshoved's historic fishing industry remain, but it's still the sea that draws both residents and visitors to the area, whether winter bathing, summer sailing, or just the time-honoured sport of looking out over the water toward Sweden.

From its beloved swimming hole to its numerous 'secret gardens', from quirky restaurants to high-scale dining, and from modernist mansions to humble cottages, Skovshoved is an overlooked gem. Follow our guide to make the most of the north Copenhagen idyll.

### 3. Skodshoved Havn

A short walk north from the swimming hole brings you to Skovshoved Havn. Originally built in 1936, the harbour is currently undergoing massive modernisation to double the capacity for sailboats and improve the facilities. Though crews are still at work on the renovations, the harbour is open for business and pleasure – lounge in one of the cafes, venture out in a rented kayak, or insinuate yourself onto a sailboat.





#### 4. Oliver's Garage and Ice Cream Parlour

At this point in your journey, you've more than earned a sweet indulgence. Luckily, from the harbour, you're just a few meters from one of Denmark's most unique ice cream shops: Oliver's Garage and Isbar. Originally built as a Texaco petrol station in 1938 by modernist architect Arne Jacobsen, Oliver's still functions as a filling station for travellers. Instead of petrol, the crowds now come for ice cream, milkshakes, coffee, and sandwiches.

#### 5. Costa Smeralda Pizzeria

No visit to Skovshoved would be complete without a stop at the neighbourhood's most vibrant take-away eatery: Costa Smeralda Pizzeria. On any given summer evening, the queue at Costa Smeralda can be twenty customers deep – and for good reason. Voted Copenhagen's best pizzeria several times over, Costa serves up fresh, creative pizzas as well as towering sandwiches and handmade tiramisu at student-friendly prices.



#### 5. Skovshoved Hotel and Krostue Pub

If by now you've decided you need some more time in Skovshoved, but you're not quite ready to relocate, spend a night or two at the venerable Skovshoved Hotel. The 22-room hotel is a neighbourhood institution, hosting guests since the 17th century. If you'd prefer not to shell out upwards of 1500 kroner a night for a room at the hotel, there's always Krostuen, the neighbourhood pub and billiards room just next door. After a long day of kayaking, exploring Dyrehaven, or cycling the coast road, Krostuen's oak-trimmed dining room and cosy outdoor terrace are both great places to spend a long summer

#### 6. Relax!

If none of these diversions appeal to you, there's another activity you can readily experience in Skovshoved this summer – just doing nothing. Relax. This is what people come here to experience after all – slowing down, enjoying the sea, and taking advantage of the long, lazy summer evenings. This is a town for chilling out.



**PETER BALSTRUP**, a Danish filmmaker and entrepreneur, has lived in Skovshoved for nearly two decades. As we sit on the terrace of Krostuen one night in June, we talk about why he enjoys it so much out here:

"When I travel around Europe and hear people talk about Denmark – that it is a kind of paradise – I'm reminded of how lucky we are to live here. I think sometimes we Danes forget how blessed we really are. And right here in Skovshoved, you can experience some of the best parts of Danish life: the sea, Dyrehaven, good food, friendly people, even a little bit of history. This is a place for everybody, it has something for every interest. Especially in summer."



# The jazz takeover!

With over 1,000 concerts at over 100 venues, the **COPENHAGEN JAZZ FESTIVAL** offers something for everyone. But with so much choice, it can be hard to find a place to start. Sure jazz is all about the music, but often the right setting is as important. So here's are a few of our favourite places to soak up some tunes this July



## JAZZHOUSE

NIELS HEMMINGSENS GADE 10, 1153 KBH

The city was a poorer place when Jazzhouse had to close its doors after severe flooding in the summer of 2011. A year later, they reopened and continued almost 25 years of service drawing some of the world's finest jazz musicians to town.

The highlight of their festival programme this year is the Vijay Iyer Trio with Steve Lehman on July 8. Vijay Iyer (left) was just named Jazz Artist of the Year in the annual critics' poll by DownBeat magazine that also named Steve Lehman Rising Star of the Year. The concert is guaranteed to be a winner, with some of the jazz world's most acclaimed international stars of the moment.

The last two days of their programme are also worth checking out. Fire! Orchestra from Sweden will play two nights in a row, July 10 and 11. It's a huge ensemble, and their shows have received rave reviews. They played the Roskilde Festival last year, but it's quite rare to hear the group in a club atmosphere, so it'll definitely be a hot ticket. [HTTP://BIT.LY/CJFFJAZZ](http://bit.ly/cjffjazz)



## HØJBRO PLADS

HØJBRO PLADS 3, 1200 KBH

It would be a waste to spend your sunny July days indoors, so thankfully there are plenty of outdoor jazz stages. Among the best is the stage at Højbro Plads, a square in the heart of the pedestrian district and with a view of Parliament.

The stage's house band is The Spirit of New Orleans, formed in 1990 and playing everything from traditional jazz, to ragtime and blues, to gospel and spirituals. Guest performers include the Kansas City Stompers on July 5, a group that has just celebrated its 63rd anniversary. Sure, the musicians have changed over the years, but with Niels Abild still at the helm, their playing style is as tight as ever. [HTTP://BIT.LY/CJFFHOJBRO](http://bit.ly/cjffhojbro)

## HARBO BAR

BLÅGÅRDSGADE 2D, 2200 N

The festival continues across the bridge in Nørrebro, where Harbo Bar is hosting a number of intimate concerts. It's a place where locals rub shoulders with passing tourists, and the rustic furniture plays counterpoint to an excellent kitchen.

The bar, located on Blågårdsgade, has participated in the festival for several years now, championing musical acts from the core to the fringe of the genre. This year, they go a step further, seeking to present a programme with an even gender split.

The result is a diverse and high-quality bill of fare. On July 4, Marie Laurette Friis will explore the space between primal, classical, noise and folk on her Korg keyboard and tambourine. On July 11, you can catch Rest in Beats (right), a vocal-instrumental duo consisting of Rezwan and Sebastian, who explore the deep beat culture of hip hop. [HTTP://BIT.LY/CJFFHARBO](http://bit.ly/cjffharbo)



**Copenhagen  
Jazz Festival**  
July 3-12  
[jazz.dk](http://jazz.dk)



WHAT'S ON • JULY

ALL MONTH

**VIDEO ART**  
American visual artist Angelica Mesiti brings her latest work, the video installation 'Citizens Band', to Denmark.

**Nikolaj Kunsthal**  
Nikolaj Plads 10, KBH  
nikolajkunsthal.dk



**SCENIC ART**  
Catch the last few days of the 'Sculpture by the Sea' outdoor art exhibit in Aarhus.

**ARoS**  
ARoS Allé 2, 8000 Aarhus  
http://en.aros.dk/  
Until July 5

3

**GOOD OMENS**  
Young Danish jazz pianist August Rosenbaum presents his 'Omen' project with other hand-picked musical talents. A must-see this Jazz Festival.

**Jazzhouse**  
Niels Hemmingsensgade 10  
Jazz.dk



**BAYOU BLUES**  
New Orleans cult blues musician Dr. John is known for his eclectic and genre-blending brand of music. He gives a performance at DR's Koncerthuset.

**Koncerthuset**  
Ørestads Boulevard 13, KBH  
dr.dk/Koncerthuset/  
July 5



**GRAPHIC THEORY**  
Take the chance to meet Tim Biskup at his exhibition opening this Friday, an LA artist known for his complex theories and a decidedly populist aesthetic.

**Limited Works**  
Blågårdsgade 7, KBH  
http://bit.ly/biskupMM  
July 8

15

**REGGAE ROYALTY**  
Damian Marley, youngest son of legend Bob Marley, returns to Denmark with his career's work spanning 19 years.

**Vega**  
Enghavevej 40, KBH  
Vega.dk



**GIN & JUICE**  
California hip-hop legend Snoop Dogg graces Tivoli with his hazy catalogue of classic material.

**Tivoli**  
Vesterbrogade 3, KBH  
fredagsrock.dk/en/  
July 24

24

**UK BASS**  
British electronic artists Blawan and Pariah join forces as Karenn to play some records at culture-box.

**Culture Box**  
Kronprinsessegade 54, KBH  
culture-box.com

25

**VIKING FAYRE**  
Vikings from far and near meet at the Viking Moot to recreate the festive markets held in the early days of Aarhus.

**Moesgaard Museum,**  
Moesgaard Alle15, 8270  
moesgaardmuseum.dk



**SUNDAY FRIENDS**  
Out in the wilds of Refshaleøen, one party refuses to stop – Søndagsvenner. Dance to some of Denmark's finest DJs at this free Sunday event.

**Refshavevej 189, KBH**  
bit.ly/sundayfriends  
July 26

30

**ART & MUSIC**  
The Trailerpark Festival returns for another year with a celebration of art and music, presenting concerts and art installations in the heart of Copenhagen.

**Copenhagen Skatepark**  
Enghavevej 80, KBH  
trailerparkfestival.com



**OPEN AIR SCI FI**  
The Danish film institute is provides scifi fans the opportunity to see Stanley Kubrick's classic 2001: A Space Odyssey in an outdoor setting.

**Kongens Have**  
Gothersgade 11, KBH  
dfi.dk  
July31

Oliver Raassina

# Æ, Ø, ugh

AT IA SPROG CENTER WE TAKE THE  
“**UGH**” OUT OF LEARNING DANISH



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IA SPROG Vibevej 9-11 • 2400 Copenhagen NV •  
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