

**COPENHAGEN
EDITION**

**Live action
role play-
ers show
that adults
also need
to play**

**Frustration
as family
reunification
requests
face long
delays**

**Does the
language
you speak
affect how
you are
treated?**



ISSN 2246-6150

A couple of Klowns

Frank Hvam and Casper Christensen talk about friendship, forgiveness and taboos

THE MURMUR

LAST MONTH a columnist asked Danes to refrain from answering him in English when he tries to speak Danish. It sparked a small debate, and we received a couple of letters from readers who thought we were being unfair toward Danes.

That's understandable. Why moan about the small hiccups of living in a country with low crime, happy citizens, high transparency and incredible cycling infrastructure? Negativity in the media can be tiring, especially when there is so much to be happy and positive about.

But for all the discomfort that negative articles may bring, often it's a good tool for positive change. The column in question did well on Facebook and was widely shared. In the comments, we noticed a number of Danes who wrote that they hadn't realised it was such a problem, and that they would try harder to help new speakers learn the language.

This was precisely the ambition of publishing the column. If more foreigners now have positive interactions in Denmark, then our job is done.

We try hard not to be needlessly critical or petty, and hope that we are as constructive as possible. Sometimes, however, a message only comes across when it is made explicitly and directly.

In this issue, for example, are three articles that directly address the refugee and migrant crisis. It's an issue that has made headlines since boats started capsizing in the Mediterra-

nean. One morning in August on Radio 24syv, a man called in to say he was tired of hearing about it – isn't there something more pressing to talk about?

When it comes to human suffering on our doorstep, we don't think so. Hundreds of thousands of migrants will reach European shores this year. Many are fleeing war, others economic insecurity. Not all will qualify for refugee status, but they will all have taken long, expensive and perilous journeys to reach us. They deserve support and compassion, even if they have to go home.

Those who do stay will put our welfare system under enormous pressure. The situation is worrying Andreas Kamm, General Secretary of the Danish Refugee Council, who told Jyllands-Posten newspaper that the conflict between locals and refugees over space and resources could create "armageddon".

Perhaps he was exaggerating for effect – sometimes you need to, to be heard. There is no end in sight to the conflicts around the world, and we need to critically address how best to accommodate those who are entitled to protection. With the government continuing to ignore potential solutions, such as a common EU approach to handling refugees, the voices demanding action are only going to get louder.

P.S. We appreciate all feedback, so please keep it coming! Contact details are below.

THE MURMUR

We should
be better
at taking
our clothes
off and
showing
what we
really look
like.

PETRUSKA MIEHE-
RENARD

page 32

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Elias Thorsson Assistant editor. He is pursuing his master's degree at the University of Copenhagen, studying American politics. In this issue he interviewed the comedy duo Frank Hvam and Casper Christensen.



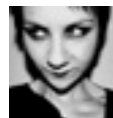
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Polly Phillips A freelance journalist, who cut her teeth in soap opera and women's magazines, before moving onto the newsdesk at the Daily Express. She investigated whether Danes were really as comfortable naked as they seem.



Nina Nørgaard Lorentzen Currently finishing her MA in English at KU, Nina has been working in radio and holds a diploma in screenwriting from the New York Film Academy. She wrote an article about the feature film 'Guldskysten'.



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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.



Daniel Rye A photographer, based in Odense, Denmark, Daniel says human beings are the most interesting part of this world – as a photographer he has a good excuse to go and explore them. He photographed Syrian refugee Omar Martini.



Sausan Berg Sausan has worked with community development and theatre in Africa and is currently completing a Professional Masters in African Studies at the University of Copenhagen. She wrote a column in this issue of The Murmur about the difference a language can make.

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Æ, Ø, ugh

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MONTH IN REVIEW

FOURTH-FREEST
A new study by the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, ranked Denmark in fourth place in its index of human freedom.

The index took into account factors such as rule of law, religion, freedom of expression, freedom to trade internationally, business regulations and the legal system.

Movie about Copenhagen terror
Danish film production company Zentropa has announced it is making a movie about Omar el-Hussein, the man responsible for last February's terrorism attacks in Copenhagen. Two men died in two separate attacks.

"I want to understand what went through his head, and what kinds of social conditions make a young man see something so terrible as noble," said director Manyar Parwani.

Despite still being in the planning stages, the movie has already caused controversy. Producer Peter Aalbæk Jensen was reported for racism by the right-wing extremist party Danskernes Parti after he told Radio24Syv that he chose to work with Afghanistan-born Parwani because a movie about the issue should not be made by a "pig-coloured Dane".



Peter Stammers

Hottest July
Despite below-average temperatures here in Denmark, globally, last July was the warmest in recorded history, with average temperatures 0.81 degrees Celsius above average. July is normally the warmest month of the calendar year, making it also the warmest month on record. It is thought that the Pacific Ocean weather phenomenon known as El Niño, in combination with global warming, was the cause of the unusually high temperatures.

Elias Thorsson

Heather Cowper / Flickr



MCDONALDS COMDEMNED OVER FREE COFFEE PROMO
The price of coffee is too damn high – that is if you believe fast-food giant McDonalds, which is launching a free coffee giveaway throughout the month of September. "On-the-go coffee has become an ordinary part of Danish life and we would like to – as one of the largest suppliers in the market – challenge the unreasonably high prices," spokesperson Pia Tøberup told Finans.dk.

The promotion was subsequently criticised by Copenhagen-based The Coffee Collective, which argues that most unfair aspect of the coffee market is that farmers are paid far too little. "That coffee is often a discount product, only further distorts what consumers think is an appropriate price for coffee," they wrote in a statement on Facebook.

The Coffee Collective buy their coffee directly from farmers for at least 25 percent above fair trade prices. They explain that the market price for coffee, adjusted for inflation, has not risen in over 50 years. "If [McDonalds] really wanted a fair and sustainable coffee market they should maybe try to make sure that those who really deserve a fair payment, receive it."

Why Not Theatre Company presents

SECRETS

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SEPTEMBER 11 - 26 / CARSLBERG BYEN

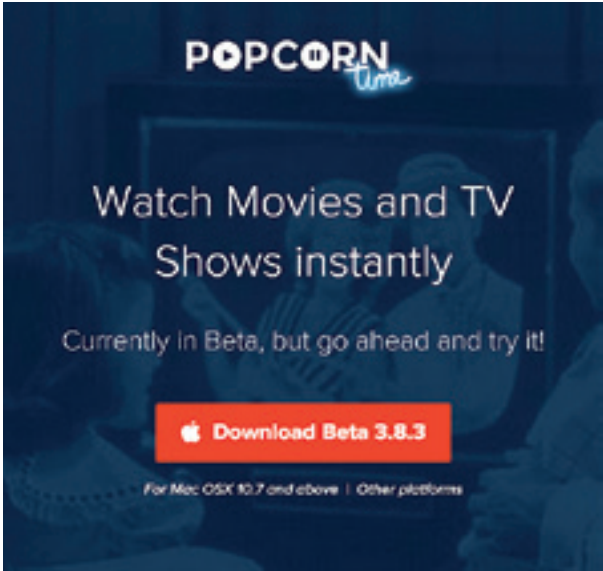
WHYNOTTHEATRE.DK

POPCORN PIRATES

Two men were arrested last month for running websites that showed people how to use the illegal video streaming service Popcorn Time. The men were charged with distributing information about illegal material on the internet. Both men admitted to the crime.

The case is ground-breaking because neither of the accused were charged with illegally hosting copyrighted material, but simply with providing information that others could use to commit copyright infringement.

The case continues an escalating domestic campaign against illegally-shared material. Twelve websites were blocked last spring, and cases against another twenty for illegally hosting copyrighted material are currently being considered by the court system.



Guinn Dombrowski

Big gay love
This year's Gay Pride Parade was the biggest in Danish history, with around 30,000 people gathering at Rådhuspladsen to celebrate sexual diversity. Police estimate that another 10,000 people watched the parade pass through the city. "It just grows with every passing year, and that is incredibly positive," said Copenhagen Pride spokesman Thomas Rasmussen.



Søren Svendsen

Bridges over troubled water
Unhappy neighbours, complaining sailors and the bankruptcy of its contractor, Phil og Søn, have all played a part in its delay. But in late August, Copenhageners delighted at the opening of the new Circle Bridge in Christianshavn, designed by Danish-Icelandic artist Ólafur Eliasson.

But while the Circle Bridge can finally put its troubled past behind it, the same cannot be said of another bridge, Inderhavnsbroen (the inner harbour bridge), which will connect Nyhavn with Holmen. It was originally supposed to be ready in February 2013, but a series of problems, including Phil og Søn's bankruptcy, made it a bridge to nowhere.

The most recent delay is due to a problem with the bridge's wiring, which means that it will open earliest this October.

HUGE PHARMA INVESTMENT
Novo Nordisk will build a new 7500 square meter factory in Kalundborg. The factory will open in 2020 at a cost of 1.5 billion kroner and will primarily produce drugs for treating haemophilia, including Novoseven. "The investment in Kalundborg underlines our long-term ambition of creating and keeping jobs in Denmark. This year alone, we expect Novo Nordisk to create around 250 jobs in Kalundborg," says Henrik Wulff, director of Novo Nordisk's global production.



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RESEARCH

OLD MAN LOOK AT MY LIFE

Are you a man in your early twenties? Are you intelligent? Good news – you will probably be healthier when you reach your 50s than those with less brainpower. At least, that is a finding that the Centre for Healthy Aging and the Department of Public Health at Copenhagen University (KU) has just published in the Journal of Aging and Health.

By comparing subjects' fitness at early adulthood and midlife, with fitness levels at childhood and end-of-life, the study is rather unique. Few studies take midlife as a reference point, but the researchers argue that this will yield better conclusions about how our childhood and adolescence affects our longevity.

"Our study clearly shows that the higher the intelligence score is in early adulthood, the stronger the participants' back, legs and hands are in midlife," says Centre for Healthy Aging PhD student Rikke Hodal Meincke. "Their balance is also better. The better the results of these midlife tests, the greater the chance of avoiding a decrease in physical performance in old age."

Only men were selected for the study, as data about males is more readily available. In Denmark, all 18-year-old men have to take a military conscription test to see if they are sound physically and mentally for military service. The process includes a full health examination and a group intelligence test with a point-score system.

Using personal registration (CPR) numbers, researchers selected a sample of men from the Copenhagen Aging and Midlife Biobank and asked them to participate in a physical performance evaluation. They then compared these results with the results of their conscription tests. Their final sample consisted of 2,848 Danish males born either in 1953 or between 1959-61 who lived in or around Copenhagen.

Physical performance was judged according to seven disciplines: rising from a chair, muscle

The higher the intelligence score is in early adulthood, the stronger the participants' back, legs and hands are in midlife.

RIKKE HODAL MEINCKE, PHD STUDENT AT THE CENTRE FOR HEALTHY AGING, KU

Nereya Otieno



Andrew Blight / Flickr

Young intelligent people end up stronger in later life, according to research from Copenhagen University.

power in legs, flexibility, balance, handgrip strength, abdominal force and lower back strength. The researchers found that a 10-point advantage in the military intelligence test taken at age 18 with a 0,5 kg increase in lower back force, a 1 cm increase in jumping height, 0.7 kg increase in hand-grip strength, 3.7% improved balance and 1.1 more chair raises in 30 seconds at midlife. This may not seem like much, but these small amounts can mean a lot in the understanding of the brain-body relationship.

This association between intelligence in the early 20s and physical capabilities in midlife suggests that cognitive abilities and physical activities may share some of the same brain development processes. It also suggests that intelligence may have its own, nuanced methods of influencing the body's powers.

Meincke states that, "Exercise can be viewed as a mechanism that explains the connection between intelligence and physical performance."

That is to say, smart people realise both the importance of exercise in a healthy lifestyle and that getting exercise will result in better physical performance as they mature. That really breathes new life into the old idiom 'mind over matter.'

THE POSSIBILITIES OF POOP

Researchers at the Technical University of Denmark (DTU) have found an innovative purpose for poop. To better study the spread and origin of infectious diseases, DTU took to Copenhagen's Kastrup Airport to take a long hard look at the excrement from passengers on international flights.

Each individual flight contains approximately 400 litres of waste – a healthy pool from which to extract data. The waste was separated into samples and sent for DNA extraction, sequencing and analysis to determine what small life forms were living in the fecal matter.

By examining the human waste from 18 international flights arriving from nine different cities in three global regions, this crew of researchers was able to gather data on which bacteria and pathogens were present, and where they were coming from.

DNA analysis of airplane excrement to discover emerging outbreaks has promising potential, according to Thomas Sicheritz-Pontén, a molecular biologist at DTU and co-author of the study, which was published in Scientific Reports last month. He explains that current methods of determin-

ing potential disease outbreaks are inefficient, time consuming and non-preventative.

"By the time you've detected it, you already have an epidemic," explains Sicheritz-Pontén.

DTU's new method is not preventative either, but it is more efficient and can predict patterns that may help to better prepare health organisations and governments before the onset of a microbial catastrophe.

For instance, from those 18 flights, the DTU researchers were able to determine that Salmonella enterica, a diarrhea-causing bacterium, was common in samples from South Asia, while Clostridium difficile, a bacterium responsible for a resilient infection spread in hospitals, was mostly present in North American samples.

Not only does this give an idea of the digestive bacteria that are most prevalent in various geographical areas, but it also provides a baseline for monitoring those bacteria.

According to a study published in The Lancet in 2012, infectious diseases cause around 22% of human deaths globally. This new method of monitoring the spread of infectious bacteria could help curb that number. **M**



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STUDIESKOLEN
DANISH FOR FOREIGNERS

Q&A

MICHALA BENDIXEN – REFUGEES WELCOME

THE HEAD of the volunteer organisation Refugees Welcome, Michala Bendixen, received massive media attention in early August when she published an opinion piece in UK newspaper The Guardian urging refugees to come to Denmark. A trained graphic designer, she has recently decided to give up her trade to volunteer full time with refugees. Her tireless work ethic and passionate attitude won her the 2014 Danish Institute for Human Rights' Honorary Prize.

We had a chat with her about politics, passion and making a difference.

What is Refugees Welcome?

Our main work is free legal counselling for asylum seekers and refugees. We offer this in person once a week, and at any time by email and phone. This is done voluntarily by a group of great people who all have some kind of relevant background, but they also take courses that cover all the complex parts of asylum law and practice. My role is to educate the volunteers and manage the many tasks as the leader of the organisation. I also spend a lot of time doing advocacy work for refugees in public.

What made you decide to do volunteer work with refugees?

I have always been interested in foreigners and other cultures, but I gradually realised that refugees are in a very vulnerable position and need someone who can understand and explain the complicated asylum system for them. Also, many Danish citizens do not realise what these people have gone through and why they cannot just go back to where they came from. For me, being a refugee must be the most terrible thing anyone could experience - to lose your whole base and everything you know, and suddenly be at the mercy of strangers.



Peter Stanners

To get rid of the smugglers and the many drowning accidents, we have to establish legal ways to get to Europe.

Joshua Hollingdale

Why is it important that we focus on this issue as a society?

Refugees have a right to protection. The UN Refugee Convention is one of the strongest pieces of evidence that the world could actually be more peaceful, respectful and just, if we choose to make it that way. The Danish society has a special obligation as one of the richest and most stable countries in the world. We have built a system based on the idea of distributing wealth and making sure that everybody has their basic needs fulfilled. This kind of thinking cannot stop at the border. And right now, there are so many refugees coming to Europe that we need to lead the way and show that we can take care of many more - if we do our best.

What are some of your most important experiences working in this field?

I have had many frustrating moments and sleepless nights, trying to find a way to keep somebody safe in Denmark.

However, I have also had many, many happy moments of celebration. I get so many invitations to dinner, dancing, coffee, weddings, birthdays that I have to say no sometimes. Some of the refugees become my close friends; they are always inspiring to be around. This summer, my family invited five Eritrean guys to our summer house for four days. We had a great time and laughed so much!

What makes you want to get up in the morning and try to make a difference?

I can't help it, and I don't remember how it was before I started. Sometimes I don't understand why everyone doesn't do this - maybe not the legal work, but the social work. It gives me so much and it

is so meaningful. I just wish I had more hours in the day to do more.

How do you stay optimistic?

I make sure to have a lot of fun too. We have fantastic Friday nights with dancing at the Trampoline House, and I have endless political discussions with some of the more intellectual refugees. Even those who have met the cruellest fates can be quite rewarding to be around. Also, I have become more 'professional' over time. I don't cry easily anymore when people tell me their stories. And I have to admit that a few of them are not quite honest - exaggerating or simply lying.

How do you balance working as a volunteer with making a living?

I don't! I made a choice recently that I have to find funding for my refugee work and stop the graphic design work gradually. The ref-

ugee work has taken over far too much now, and I still have to pay my rent. I hope my new website, refugees.dk, will be able to raise enough money to pay me a basic salary, and for the past year Refugees Welcome has paid me a small salary for all the tasks I do.

What was it like winning the Danish Institute for Human Rights' Honorary Prize in 2014?

I was very surprised and honoured! It's special because it is awarded by some of the people and organisations I respect the most. I always feel like an amateur in the company of experts, so this was a very strong bit of recognition for me. I also found it brave of them to give it to me because I have strong political opinions.

What made you write the piece in The Guardian urging refugees to flee to Denmark?

Two things: integration minister Inger Støjberg should not be allowed to get away with painting this image of Denmark as xenophobic and closed. Secondly, more refugees deserve to come here and get a good life. Besides, the more we can distribute them among the stronger European countries, the better it is for everyone.

What difference has the media spotlight on the Guardian article made to your life and work?

The Danish media went wild the day after it was published. I was live nonstop everywhere all day! So that was a tough day, but also great, as it was exactly what I had hoped for. And I think I managed to choose media outlets where I got time to talk in more detail, and not just do 40 seconds of quick answers. After that, a lot of people contacted me to show their support, and the opposite too. I had some real threats, but they didn't really make me scared. After that it was back to normal.

Is the government not correct when it says that people are coming to Denmark because of the obvious benefits of the Danish welfare state?

In terms of the general society, yes. Of course some will consider where the options of education, good jobs and some kind of support from society are better. But I have never met a refugee who knew about the different types of cash benefits available before arriving in Denmark. They all say, "I want to work, right away!" but then realise it's not that easy to find a job here, in spite of the low unemployment rates. But it was

I have never met a refugee who knew about the different types of cash benefits available before arriving in Denmark.

never the plan for them to live off the state's money.

You say that Denmark has more than enough funds to house a large amount of refugees. But the government says that we do not have enough money for all of the refugees applying for asylum in Denmark. Can you explain this?

It's a question of priority. Lebanon is much smaller and much poorer than Denmark, and they have taken in 1.3 million refugees. We spend much more money on things like the military and motorways than refugees. Only 1.9% of the Danish population has a refugee background, so we can handle many more. We also spend the money in a stupid way. Asylum seekers cost more than 200,000 kroner per year, because we place them in centres with all of the administration that goes into that. Councils also spend fortunes putting refugees in hotels instead of asking local people to rent out their guest rooms, which the refugees would clearly prefer, and build some more houses for the future.

Do we need a change of attitude towards refugees in general in Denmark?

There is a growing understand-

ing and willingness to do something among Danes - I hope this will slowly erase the growing cynicism and lack of empathy. I also hope the new refugees from Syria and Eritrea will be easier to integrate. In that way, they will be their own best advocates. Soon, we will also need young people to take care of our aging population, and maybe that will change attitudes, too.

In your opinion, what should be done about the enormous influx of refugees on a European level?

Unfortunately, I think we have to face the fact that it will continue getting worse for a long time. The neighbouring countries [in the Middle East, ed.] are filled up now, and there is a risk of new conflicts evolving. We have to find a fair way to distribute them in Europe, and we have to cancel the Dublin system, which is obviously not working.

To get rid of the smugglers and the high number of drowning accidents, we have to establish legal ways to get to Europe via embassies or the UNHCR. Think about what fantastic work we did after World War II, rebuilding Europe in no time. We can handle this situation if we accept it and work together on solutions. **M**



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DANISH THEATRE FOR ENGLISH SPEAKERS

POLITICS



Europol

PM calls referendum on EU participation

Danes will return to the polls later this year to vote on whether the country should take a more participatory approach in EU affairs. Prime minister **Lars Løkke Rasmussen** announced a referendum on December 3 to determine whether Denmark will abandon its opt-out on justice and home affairs, and replace it with an opt-in system.

Denmark was granted four opt-outs to European cooperation in 1993, a year after Danish voters rejected the Maastricht Treaty, which paved the way for the Euro and greater EU integration.

The government hopes Danes will vote in favour, so that Danish police can continue to collaborate with EU law enforcement agency Europol. The current opt-out means that Denmark would have to leave Europol once it transitions from an intra-governmental organisation to a full EU agency.

The new opt-in system would mean that politicians could decide on changes to EU legislation in the field on a case-by-case basis.

"It is crucial that we do not lose our cooperation with Europol. However, it is also important that we continue to determine our own asylum-seeker policies," said the Danish prime minister of the referendum.

Social Democrat (Socialdemokraterne) leader **Mette Frederiksen** agrees, telling Politiken newspaper, "We have a competent police force, but Europol coopera-

It is crucial that we do not lose our cooperation with Europol, however it is also important that we continue to determine our own asylum seeker policies.

PRIME MINISTER
LARS LØKKE RASMUSSEN

Lena Rutkowski &
Joshua Hollingdale

tion is crucial to ensure that we can combat cross-border crime such as child pornography and human trafficking."

Within parliament, support for a 'yes' vote is divided across the political spectrum and endorsed by five parties: the governing Liberal Party (Venstre), the Conservative People's Party (Konservative), the Social Liberal Party (Radikale), Socialdemokraterne and the Socialist People's Party (SF).

A successful 'yes' vote will mean that Denmark will opt-in to a number of areas of cooperation from which it is currently excluded. The Alternative party (Alternativet) is in favour of the proposal, but argues that the possibility of joining a common EU asylum policy should be among the items included in the opt-in.

The Danish People's Party (DF), Red-Green Alliance (Enhedslisten), and the Liberal Alliance (LA) all support a 'no' vote.

Enhedslisten is resisting the removal of a proviso that would allow the EU to determine aspects of Danish legal policy, such as criminal sentencing laws.

DF is primarily concerned that the new system will mean one day extending the opt-in approach to immigration policy.

"I don't believe the 'yes' parties when they say that asylum policy will be left out of the opt-in system. Just wait. In a few years, they will be voting for full submission to the EU," the party's deputy leader **Søren Espersen** told DR Radio.

Tougher criteria could see citizenship candidates miss out

Closer to home, nearly 2000 residents due to become Danish citizens may find their applications thwarted after the government announced potential changes to citizenship requirements.

Immigration minister **Inger Støjberg** announced that the government was considering introducing tougher restrictions on the citizenship application process.

Citizenship is formalised by Par-

liament just twice a year, in Citizenship Acts. Any changes made to citizenship requirements before the Act passes could affect the 1,950 applicants who have met the current requirements and are counting on becoming citizens in October.

DF want the tougher requirements to be implemented immediately, and are demanding a higher level of Danish language fluency from new citizens.

"Fluency in Danish should be a prerequisite to becoming a Danish citizen," DF's citizenship spokesperson **Christian Langballe** told Politiken.

While the government is technically allowed to introduce changes to the citizenship process at any stage, both Enhedslisten and Alternativet have criticised the move as unfair.

"We're talking about almost 2000 people who have been through an average of 14 to 16 months of processing, who have met all the requirements, and who have even received notice that they can expect citizenship. It's outrageous," Enhedslisten's integration spokesperson **Johanne Schmidt-Nielsen** told Berlingske newspaper.

Langballe dismissed criticism that the changes will make it harder to become a Danish citizen.

"We believe that Danish citizenship and integration into Danish society is something very special, and we won't support a lax approach," he told Politiken.

DF spokesman in hot water over refugee comments

Meanwhile, DF's anti-immigration stance sparked a social media storm after the party's integration spokesperson **Martin Henriksen** insinuated that refugees should be kept away from Danish children. In a video he shared on his Facebook page, he criticised Dragør Municipality for planning homes for asylum seekers next to a kindergarten.

"Just three metres," complained Henriksen in the video, referring to the distance between the proposed building site and the kindergarten.

"We think that this is simply too

close to the children. No matter what you think about refugee policy, children should be allowed to be children. There is no reason for them to be exposed to the war and conflict in the world."

The video has generated over 225,000 views and prompted both parody clips and social media commentary. Among the respondents was Venstre councillor **Caroline Stage**, who sits on the Copenhagen City Council.

"A three-metre security ring between myself and **Martin Henriksen** is too little," she quipped in a Twitter post.

Dragør mayor **Eik Dahl Bistrup** defended the placement of the accommodation to Danish broadcaster TV2.

"It's part of Henriksen's political approach to stir up fear about refugees as our neighbours. It's my concern that we take care of the asylum seekers that our municipality receives, and I've only had one parent who was concerned about the proposed site," said mayor Bistrup.



Mr. Thekian / Flickr

Amnesty International's sex work stance prompts criticism

Amnesty International sparked criticism after voting to recommend that governments decriminalise prostitution and sex work.

"Amnesty has taken the sex industry's side and abandoned the fight for women's rights," said **Nanna Højland** from the Women's Council in Denmark (Kvinderrådet) in a press release.

Meanwhile, feminist columnist **Henrik Marstal** published an article in Politiken in which he accused the Amnesty International of having "sold its soul".

"I cannot support the normalisation of sexual exploitation, and neither should an organisation such as Amnesty International," he wrote.

However, Roskilde University researcher **Christian Groes-Green** defended the organisation's move as responding to the diverse needs of sex workers across the globe.

"Amnesty's move [...] deals with the right to sell sex under safe conditions with access to education, healthcare and sex workers' ability to influence the State's recognition of their democratic rights," the anthropologist and gender researcher wrote in an op-ed in Politiken.

Top civil servants accountable in statelessness case

A commission has harshly criticised two top-ranking civil servants for wrongly denying Danish citizenship to 36 stateless Palestinians, in violation of UN conventions.

Claes Nilas and **Kim Lunding** have been relieved of their senior positions at the Integration Ministry, after the Statelessness Commission released a report holding them accountable for the offences.

The report concluded that between 1991 and 2010, Denmark acted in violation of international conventions on statelessness, and that the civil servants committed offences of such gravity that they may be held liable.

While Nilas disagrees with the findings, he looks forward to the opportunity to present his case at a hearing.

"I hope to correct some of the Commission's misunderstandings about the case," he wrote in a press release.

Then-integration minister **Birthe Rønn Hornbech** (Venstre) was sacked over the case. In the report, Hornbech was given a milder reprimand for failing to inform Parliament of the breaches until 2010, after admitting to first hearing about them in 2008.

But the report also finds that while Hornbech failed in her duty to inform Parliament, it concludes that she did not receive adequate advice from her civil servants.

Justice Minister **Søren Pind** told Altinget.dk that he does not believe these are sufficient grounds for holding the former integration minister accountable in the case.



Venstre

3 billion kroner gap in state finances

The new Venstre government claims the former government left the national finances in a sorry state. An audit of the state's finances has found a three billion kroner shortfall.

"Now we have less funds than we expected to spend next year," said finance minister **Claus Hjort Frederiksen** (above) to Politiken. "The prior government 'photoshopped' the Danish economy in the election campaign."

GDP growth is also not as high as the Social Democrats had projected, due to a drop in profits from North Sea oil, which has dampened growth. While the previous government estimated 1.7 percent GDP growth, the current government's assessment predicts only 1.5 percent.

Frederiksen added that this year's budget deficit would more than double to 2.7 percent of GDP, on the verge of the EU's allowable limit of three percent. But former foreign minister **Martin Lidegaard** (Radi-

kale) argues this is primarily a result of lower than expected pension taxes and North Sea oil revenues.

Nevertheless, the Finance Minister maintains that the budget gap will require a stricter budget in the coming year.

"We have taken the budget gap into account and maintain confidence in the Danish economy to ensure that fiscal policy gets back on track," said Frederiksen.

SKAT lose 6,2 billion kroner

The tax authority, SKAT, announced it wrongly paid out 6.2 billion kroner in a complex dividends scam.

Danish companies withhold 27% in tax when paying dividends to shareholders, but foreign shareholders can apply for a full or partial refund from SKAT under double taxation agreements. The conmen manipulated this loophole by faking documentation that showed they owned shares they did not own, then applied to SKAT refunds to dividends paid by the companies.

"Our preliminary investigation shows that a large network of companies overseas have requested tax refunds based on fictive equity holdings and forged documentation," explains **Jesper Rønnow Simonsen**, Director General of SKAT.

Tax minister **Karsten Lauritzen** has requested that SKAT draw up a statement outlining the details of the enormous scam. The tax ministry has in recent history been one of the most chaotic ministries in the state, with nine different ministers taking charge of the ministry over the last 5 years. Former Head of Office at SKAT, **Michael Bjørn Hansen**, told TV2News: "Time and time again, SKAT has shown that its employees are not properly equipped – and that is the management's responsibility."

Asylum 'poverty' bill passes

From September 1, asylum seekers coming to Denmark will receive a new public benefit corresponding almost directly to the level of benefits given to Danish students – SU. This is stated in the new government's

Amnesty has taken the sex industry's side and abandoned the fight for women's rights.

NANNA HØJLAND,
WOMEN'S COUNCIL IN DENMARK
(KVINDERRÅDET)



News Oresund

new bill passed on August 26, and is the cornerstone of the new government's immediate intervention on asylum seekers.

Single asylum seekers without children will now receive 5945 kroner a month as opposed to 10849 kroner. Refugees with children will receive a 'provider supplement' on top of the benefit while there it is also possible to gain a 'language bonus' of 1500 kroner if you learn Danish.

"Today, with the passing of this bill, we are fulfilling a promise we made before the election and thereby taking the first step in bringing the foreign policy back on track," integration minister **Inger Støjberg** told Altinget.dk.

Enhedslisten's integration spokesperson **Johanne Schmidt-Nielsen** (above) took the opportunity to address parliament immediately before the bill was passed, saying: "This is an extremely solemn day. The integration benefit – and I mean it sincerely when I say that a more appropriate name for it would be the anti-immigration benefit – will directly make more children grow up in poverty in Denmark."

In late August, 1500 people gathered in central Copenhagen to demonstrate against the new bill under the slogan "Refugees are people too". The controversial bill, which drops unemployed asylum seekers under the so-called "poverty line", was passed with 56 votes in favour and 50 against. **M**

Not without my family

In June, Syrian refugee Omar Martini went on a hunger strike for nine days outside the Immigration Service in Copenhagen to draw attention to the prolonged processing of his family reunification case. Convinced that the delay was intentional, he is now setting up a committee to help other desperate Syrian refugees bring their families to Denmark

OMAR MARTINI arrived in Denmark in March 2014, fleeing war and potential death in his native Syria. After spending nearly six months at an asylum centre in Sandholm, he received his residence permit and now lives in Ringe on Funen. But after seven months of waiting for his application for family reunification with his wife and two children to be processed, he decided to declare a hunger strike. Nine days in, and after extensive media attention, the case was suddenly complete, and his family were permitted to join him from ISIS-controlled Idlib in Syria.

Omar Martini's case is not uncommon. Since his case made headlines, many others have come forward to complain that their applications have taken far longer than the three to five months the Danish Immigration Service promises on its website. So-called 'complicated' cases should take no more than five months, making the eleven-month wait some refugees have reported seem out of proportion.

Omar Martini is convinced the many delays are no coincidence.

"The delays are definitely on purpose. The immigration system is just playing along with whatever the government tells them to do. It is becoming a terrible bureaucracy, and I can hardly believe it. They are doing just what the government said: they are making Denmark less attractive – and succeeding."

ORGANISATION

Omar Martini was joined during his hunger strike by a handful of other Syrians, inspired by his example. After receiving news that his case had gone through, Omar sat with the other hunger strikers to let the Immigration Service know that his case was not a one-off. The strikers received massive support from many other Syrian refugees, who were either seeking family reunification themselves, or had experienced the tiresome

The delays are definitely on purpose. The immigration system is just playing along with whatever the government tells them to do. It is becoming a terrible bureaucracy, and I can hardly believe it.

OMAR MARTINI

Words:
Joshua Hollingdale

Photos:
Daniel Rye Ottosen

bureaucracy of the Immigration Service in Copenhagen. So many people offered to join the hunger strike that Omar Martini, worried he would not be able to control the crowd, decided to end it.

"In the end there were almost 25 of us striking, and people were writing on Facebook and telling me they had dozens of people willing to join. I was worried about us becoming too many, as I thought we might not be able to control the crowd. It was important for me not to disturb the friendly neighbours and keep the area clean while we were on the strike. I thought to myself: we need to be organised and efficient."

Omar offered to end the strike on the condition that the Danish Immigration Service processed the roughly 30 cases that were, in his eyes, the most pressing. He also promised that the Syrians would form a committee, telling the authorities that if conditions did not improve, he and his fellow strikers would return.

"I thought that talking to the Immigration Service on behalf of a committee, which represents a lot of people, would be more efficient. It is just a more diplomatic way to put pressure on the people processing the family reunification cases. I also told the Immigration Service that if they don't make an effort to process the cases that the committee views as the most desperate, we could declare a hunger strike again. And this time we will come back in big numbers – and we will be organised," he says.

Omar is now in the process of setting up the committee, which he has called the Syrian Refugee Help Committee. He estimates that it will have over 2000 members.

CASE DELAYS

Omar Martini is not the only one who believes the cases are being delayed on purpose. The new Liberal Party (Venstre) government has publicly stated that it wants to make Denmark less attractive to refugees, and integration minis-



Omar Martini went on hunger strike for nine days outside the Immigration Service after his family reunification application faced long delays. He now lives with his family in a town south of Odense.

ter Inger Støjberg wants to put adverts in foreign papers to persuade refugees to seek asylum in countries other than Denmark.

Law student Asrin Mesbah, who is a part of the refugee network Venligboerne (Friendly Residents) and has done pro-bono work for many Syrians seeking family reunification, is in no doubt as to whether the Danish Immigration Service is making the application process overly complicated on purpose.

"I have seen so many examples of applicants not being helped properly by the Immigration Service. The communication is almost non-existent, so when you decide to provide the applicants with hardly any information at all, it is no wonder that the applications are often lacking in some way. I have 50 cases pending at the moment. They have all been delayed by small details like this. It just does not seem proportional," she says.

She goes on to explain that if an application is lacking a signature or a copy of a marriage certificate, for example, the Immigration Service is entitled to file the case away in the so called 'screening period' until the application is complete. When applicants are able to

provide the missing elements, the whole process starts over – thereby delaying the case significantly.

Mesbah is worried that Støjberg has directly requested that the Immigration Service delay as many cases as possible.

"I am afraid that the Immigration Service is being dictated to by the Ministry of Integration to reject and delay as many cases as possible until the government tightens up the rules," she declares.

BACK TO NORMAL PROCEDURE

Kirsa Reinholt, head of the Immigration Service, denies all accusations that her office is deliberately slow-walking cases, stating that the delays experienced over the summer period had to do with the enormous rise in applications as well as the setting up of a new, second office to deal with the cases.

"Even with the extraordinarily large number of applications in the year 2015, the vast majority of cases, around 80 percent, are being completed in the targeted five months. Missing information in the applications, which has kept us from starting the processing of cases, has caused certain applicants to become understandably frustrated. Therefore, our goal has been to shorten the screening time so that even cases lacking information will be completed in 3-5 months," she says.

She adds that the Immigration Service has increased their staff significantly, taking the number of employees in the office from 46 to 90 people. This, she says, is to tackle the problem of the so-called 'screening period', which she says has been shortened by about a third over the summer.

She concludes by explaining that the office is now fully functional again, and has resumed normal procedures, calling the current processing times "very satisfying".

MAKING DENMARK UNATTRACTIVE FOR REFUGEES

While declining to comment on individual cases, Venstre integra-



tion spokesperson Marcus Knuth openly stated that one of the central goals of the new government is to make Denmark a less attractive destination for refugees.

"It is absolutely the case that we want to make Denmark less attractive for refugees – that is written in black and white in our policy on this matter. At the moment, Denmark is receiving an incredibly large number of asylum seekers compared to other European coun-

tries, and we want to bring that number down," he says.

He adds that "to his knowledge," the deliberate delay of family reunification cases is not a strategy being used to achieve this goal.

"If I were to say anything on the individual cases, I think a possible reason for their delay could be the new government setting up the brand-new Ministry of Integration."

He added that while the govern-

ment is preparing a series of new laws that will tighten and restrict services for asylum seekers, as well as affect the possibility of earning family reunification, these laws will only be implemented once they have passed in Parliament.

"It would be rather strange if we were implementing future laws in this area that have not yet been passed in Parliament. That is not customary for us – as far as I know." **M**

Head of refugee charity: Europe faces Armageddon

HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS of refugees are expected to reach Europe this year and conflicts are starting to erupt across the continent. This August, Macedonian riot police failed to keep thousands of refugees from crossing the border from Greece. Hungary's attempts to keep out migrants also failed, after a razor wire fence along its border with Serbia failed to hold the migrants back.

For some Europeans, migrants are unwelcome. A number of arson attacks have destroyed asylum shelters in Germany. Denmark too has suffered experienced xenophobic attacks. A new asylum centre in North Jutland, was daubed with Neo Nazi graffiti and had its van set alight.

While many Europeans welcome migrants fleeing war, persecution and economic instability, the sheer scale of the issue will continue to cause rifts within Europe, argues Andreas Kamm, head of the Danish Refugee Council. The issue is heightened given the unwillingness among European countries to cooperate, he argues in an interview with Jyllands-Posten newspaper, where he sets out a grim future for Europe unless new solutions are found – and fast.

"We risk that the gulf between refugees and migrants on one side, and the local population on the other, will just continue to grow and escalate, and in my eyes we are facing an Armageddon," he said.

We are not witnessing a passing phase, he adds. Europe's migration crisis lies in insecure and failed states suffering from ethnic conflict, competition over resources, and a lack of opportunity.

"There are indications that we are witnessing a paradigm shift, a new historic phase of how we live in the world, in which we risk becoming overwhelmed by the imbalance between refugees and migrants, and the world's ability to help," he said.

"I don't think the solution is for Europe to import the surplus population. We cannot cope with 60 million people. I really don't think so. The conflicts need to be resolved where they are. It is not a solution for us to take in the 12 million internally and externally displaced people in Syria. Looking at history it just doesn't make sense." **M**

Peter Stanners



Avedøre power station, framed by windmills. Denmark is one the leading producers of renewable energy and has committed to becoming independent of fossil fuels by 2050.

Climate leaders have cold feet

The June election was won and lost on immigration and the economy. But an important divergence between parties on the left and right was hardly even discussed – the climate and environment

THE PREVIOUS LEFT-WING government ushered in some of Denmark's most ambitious climate targets, including independence from fossil fuels by 2050. The path to this target is punctuated by a number of smaller goals, including a 2020 target to reduce CO2 emissions by 40 percent.

But months ahead of a crucial international climate summit in Paris, where it is hoped a global deal on reducing carbon emissions will be reached, the minority Liberal Party (Venstre) government

has announced a new 37 percent target instead.

"It will be very expensive for Danish society to reach those final few percentage points, so they burden businesses with extra costs – that is not what Denmark needs now," climate minister Lars Christian Lilleholt told Altinget.dk.

Only Venstre and the Danish People's Party (DF) did not support the 2014 Climate Law, which included the 40 percent target, after expressing concern at the possible additional costs it might

impose on businesses and consumers.

"We were very sceptical about the government's 40 percent target and feared that reaching the final stages would be very expensive," DF climate and energy spokesperson Mikkel Dencker told Altinget. "So we are pleased by a government that has a more pragmatic and realistic approach."

TO BE A LEADER

While the 37 percent target is still

Peter Stanners

enormously ambitious, NGOs and political parties expressed dismay that the government is weakening Denmark's position as a leading nation when it comes to the climate. Socialist People's Party (SF) Chairman Pia Olsen Dyhr said it was an "irresponsible" proposal, while Red-Green Alliance (Enhedslisten) climate spokesperson Maria Reumert Gjerding said she would call the climate minister in to a meeting to discuss the message the new target sends to the international community.

NGO the Danish Ecological Council (DEC) also warns that if Denmark reduces its targets, it will only make it harder to convince other countries to set ambitious targets.

"Denmark is an important role model for other countries because we have shown that it is possible to unite ambitious climate policies with a healthy economy. We must continue if we want other countries to join us," Christian Ege, the DEC's secretariat leader, wrote in a press release.

Christian Ibsen, CEO of the green think tank Concito, points out that Denmark's 2050 fossil-free target still stands, so reducing the target now only means more ground to be covered after 2020.

He adds that political commitment to the target is vital if it is to be reached, as new technologies are needed to make the transition to a fossil fuel-free economy. But businesses will only make the investment if they are sure politicians aren't going to backtrack.

"Big companies are seeing the Paris conference as the first platform for creating a global climate deal, which will direct investment and the economy," says Ibsen. "The energy sector has already made progress, but there is plenty more to do in agriculture and transport, so we think it's a mistake not to start developing these sectors in a climate-friendly manner. We hope that by next year, we can set some international climate targets for 2030, which so far we have failed to do."

Jens Hauch, Deputy Director of think tank Kraka, agrees that if the global economy is to wean itself off fossil fuels, investment in alternative technologies is needed – but legally-binding targets are needed first.

"The 2050 target is realistic if we develop new technologies. Ambitious global targets will power investment in these technologies and reduce costs, but if we lack ambition, the development will be expensive," he says.

"If governments give up on these ambitious targets, businesses won't invest, so changing strategy and weakening targets is politically risky. If they sense the targets will get even weaker, they might not make the necessary investments."

INDEBTED AGRICULTURE

The 2014 Climate Act faced particularly strong criticism from the

agricultural sector, which argued that it risked making it even more expensive to be a farmer. According to Seges – a research organisation under the Danish Agriculture and Food Council lobbying group – Danish agriculture is 360 billion kroner in debt, and 85% of milk and pork producers run large deficits. In August, associations representing these industries sent emails to their members urging them to seek help in declaring bankruptcy.

To help struggling farmers, the government, along with DF and the Conservative People's Party (Konservative), announced sixteen initiatives to help make farming become more profitable.

"We need to provide better conditions so agriculture is in a position to earn money. This is essential if we are to reduce debt," business and growth Minister Troels Lund Poulsen told DR Nyheder.

"We have witnessed exhaustion in the agricultural sector because we have made special rules and gone further than our European colleagues. That is why we need to give agriculture better opportunities for growth," he said.

Among the sixteen initiatives are more intensive pig farming, increased fertiliser use, and an abolition of fertiliser exclusion zones within 10 metres of waterways. While Venstre have voted in favour of the latter proposal in the past, they have now changed position due to the agricultural sector's strong opposition.

Environmental groups have voiced their dismay at the government's proposals, with Gitte Seeborg, CEO of WWF, saying that it was a "horror plan" to base economic growth on increased pollution, more incentivised farming and higher CO2 emissions.

"Can it be true that we base our plans for growth on destroying our nature and environment? That's an old-fashioned approach to growth. I honestly thought we had moved on," she wrote in Politiken newspaper.

ECONOMIC LIFELOOD

Denmark is the most intensively-farmed country in Europe, and the exclusion zones were designed to limit runoff of fertilisers and pesticides into waterways. A recent study by the University of Aarhus found that biodiversity in streams drops 40 percent after strong rains flush agricultural chemicals into

waterways. While some species manage to recolonize their habitats, more frequent intense rains could make this harder.

"Over a decade, you see a gradual reduction in biodiversity," postdoc Jes Rasmussen told Ingeniøren.

But Professor Jørgen Eivind Olesen, of the Department of Agroecology at Aarhus University, explains that the situation is not so black and white – the new rules might not have a great impact on the environment, but neither do they address the root causes of the agricultural crisis.

"Landowners will be pleased because higher yields and productivity will increase their profitability, and this will be reflected in land prices. But in the longer term, it doesn't really affect the debt situation," he says.

"The current debt situation is not related to this regulation. The debt is due to a bubble in land prices before the crisis, when many farmers were also taking on loans to invest in activities other than farming, some of which were not profitable. Farmers were borrowing too much before the crisis, and this is very difficult to get out of. The farmers would argue the need to get rid of regulation to produce more, but increased productivity and yields come with a cost of increased spending on fertilisers and pesticides, so it's not turned directly into profit. For many farmers, this will not save them – there is a need to restructure the debt."

Farmers aren't wrong in claiming that fertilisation could increase without a dramatic impact on the environment, he argues. The problem with fertilisation is mainly the runoff, but fertilisation levels are currently so low that there is little that remains unused by crops by the time they are harvested.

Environment and food minister Eva Kjer Hansen's claim that Denmark "overregulates" compared to European neighbours is harder to assess, as member states implement EU regulations in a number of different ways, says Olesen. What is different about Denmark is that there is poor communication between farmers and the government.

"What we need is much better dialogue between the farming and regulatory community," Olesen says, arguing that in this way Danish farmers are less likely to be subject to regulations that nei-

We were very sceptical about the government's 40 percent target and feared that reaching the final stages would be very expensive.

DANSK FOLKEPARTI CLIMATE AND ENERGY SPOKESPERSON MIKKEL DENCKER JESEN

ther protect the environment nor help their bottom line.

OPPORTUNITY IN GREEN SOLUTIONS

In both climate and agriculture, reducing our impact on the planet comes at a cost – the question is how much we are prepared to spend. But in both cases, a movement toward sustainability can bring with it opportunity. In 2013, Denmark exported 165 billion kroner in green technology solutions, according to industry lobby group Dansk Energi, creating 58,000 jobs in 1,500 businesses.

"The jobs that are created in green services and goods are typically knowledge-heavy, and Denmark is a leader in these skills," says Rasmus Tengvad, Dansk Energi's chief consultant. "This results in salaries that are five to ten percent higher in green businesses than in non-green ones. Half of these jobs are industrial, which means that green businesses are fundamental to keeping industrial production and jobs in Denmark."

While conventional farming still dominates, organic food producers are also doing good business, and account for 7.6 percent of supermarket sales in 2013 – the highest share in the world, up from 7.2 percent in 2012. Exports of organic foods also rose 31 percent over the same period, to reach 1.5 billion kroner. While Germany is the single largest export market (52 percent) for Danish organics, the greatest potential for growth is in China, which bought 0.5 percent of these exports in 2012, but six percent just one year later in 2013.

The agricultural industry as a whole remains a major earner for Denmark, employing 169,000 Danes and generating 158 billion kroner in exports in 2013. With rising food demand around the world, Karen Hækkerup – who swapped a job as justice minister to lead the Danish Agriculture and Food Council last year – argues that it is vital to help farmers through this tough time.

"Politicians need to work to ease the burdens on Danish farmers in their competition against foreign colleagues," Hækkerup wrote in an op-ed for Berlingske newspaper this August. "We need more flexible environmental legislation and less paperwork and taxes." **M**



Dissecting trust in the other

A Danish study indicates that more multiethnic neighbourhoods have lower levels of social trust. But despite increasing levels of immigration, trust in Denmark is at its highest in 30 years

TO TEST how native Danes coexist with foreigners in residential areas, two researchers, from The University of Copenhagen and Aarhus University, conducted a study on how their social trust is affected by ethnic diversity. The result: Danes living among more immigrants had lower levels of social trust.

"Understanding social trust is absolutely essential – it deeply influences the way we act and how we contribute to society," explained professor Peter Thisted Dinesen. "It can also greatly impact how well a state functions including its' economic growth, the stability and efficiency of a democratic government, and overall social cohesion."

He added: "Considering previous findings, we weren't exactly surprised, but it's only one small part of a very complex issue."

TRUST IN DENMARK

Dinesen and professor Kim Manne-mar Sønderskov made the discovery after analysing nationally representative survey data merged with detailed individual-level data from the national Danish registers.

"On a global scale the data we have available in Denmark is quite unique. It allows us to more accurately assess the ongoing debate about the impacts of ethnic diversity in a local context," said Dinesen.

The duo first used responses from native Danish participants who took part in the European Social Survey (ESS) – an academically driven cross-national questionnaire that monitors the changing attitudes and values across Europe.

The survey revealed that respondents who were generally less trustful of others tended to live around more immigrants, as well as have immigrants of more types of ethnicities present in their neighbourhoods.

WHY DON'T WE TRUST FOREIGNERS?

According to Statistics Denmark, there are approximately 676,000 immigrants currently residing in Denmark, making up around 12 percent of the population. While the survey identified the universal ef-



Lesley Price



Frits Ahlefeldt Laurvig

fect across almost all Danish neighborhoods, Dinesen and Sønderskov could not identify exactly why it occurred with the data at hand.

"Our theoretical argument is that we know people use local experiences to extrapolate their perspectives as to whether people in general can be trusted or not. Several studies report a general human tendency to evaluate members of other ethnic groups as less trustworthy compared to 'in-group' members," explains Dinesen.

"It's also known that humans are better at inferring other peoples' thoughts, intentions and feelings if the person belongs to their own ethnic group – this is also a crucial component in building trust and is also likely to increase empathy."

According to various studies, we can also be physically programmed to have a negative reaction to other races or cultures. The duo's research also linked to cardiovascular and skin conductance tests, where participating individuals displayed strong physical signs of distress or fear when encountering others of a different ethnic background.

"We can have these feelings towards other ethnicities even without

any prior knowledge or exposure," said Dinesen. "It is, most likely, partly innate and partly socialised."

While a lack of faith in other people may seem like a minor issue, declining social trust can raise severe problems for any society according to Dinesen.

"Trust promotes cooperation and collective action to solve problems for 'the common good'. For example, people tend to live and act more pro-environmentally when they trust others and feel as though their peers would do the same," he explained.

"If they don't, then no one wants to be the only sucker making an effort to live sustainably, which in the aggregate means that society has to face greater environmental issues and the costs associated with addressing them."

NORDICS LEAD ON TRUST SCALE

Racial, ethnic, and religious tensions exist all around the world and many nations have even collapsed under their weight. But according to Dinesen, the negative impact of local ethnic diversity on trust is only one part of the puzzle.

Another recent study conducted by Dinesen and Sønderskov has

confirmed that trust in Denmark is at its highest in over 30 years.

"When measured in 1979, a number of surveys held in Denmark indicated that the national level of social trust was around 50 percent, and when measured in 2009 through the same channels, it was closer to around 80 percent," said Dinesen. "In the same period, ethnic diversity in Denmark has increased by about three-fold, and the share of all immigrants has increased by about six-fold."

"This is an observation unique to Denmark. More generally, together with the other Nordic countries, Denmark is the country in the world with the highest level of trust," he added.

In order to improve social trust in society, Dinesen argues that we should look towards improving institutions guarding our everyday life.

"While we should obviously take the negative consequences of ethnic diversity for trust seriously, we should not lose sight of other factors – most importantly education at the individual level and institutional quality at the societal level – which matter more for people's social trust," he said. **M**

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An artist's rendering of the new CIS campus in Nordhavn.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

How to move a school without losing its spirit

Denmark's first international school is building a brand-new, high-tech facility in the developing Nordhavn district. But as ambitious as Copenhagen International School's new campus might be, it's not without risk

IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN:

the summer holidays are over, the days are getting shorter, and all around Denmark, teachers and students are headed back to school. While it's a time of uncertainty for some, for others, 'back to school' is an exciting time of the year marked by a whole spectrum of newness – new courses, new books, new classmates, a new year, and a chance to start again.

But for the Hellerup-based Copenhagen International School (CIS), there is another 'new' on the horizon that has students, parents, staff and many in the Copenhagen community palpably excited – the opening of the new, 25,000 square meter CIS Nordhavn campus, scheduled for January 2017. As of the 2014-2015 school year,

CIS's Hellerup campus (pre-K, primary and middle schools) and Østerbro campus (high school) were operating at nearly full capacity, serving around 900 students in total. When finished, the new school will be the largest in Copenhagen, housing all four divisions of CIS's student population on a single site, with the potential to accommodate between 1100 and 1200 students.

The collective anticipation surrounding the new school is not the simple excitement that comes with moving to a new building in a new location, but seems instead to be charged with a kind of identity-defining ambition.

"The whole project fits with our pioneering spirit and reflects our history," says CIS Director of

Communications Thomas Nielsen, who describes the CIS Nordhavn endeavour as essential not only to the school's expansion, but also to its soul.

"We're not willing to rest on our laurels. If we are going to encourage our students to be risk-takers every day, then as a school we also have to take risks."

Risk is certainly an apt word for the ambitious new school project. Not only is CIS taking a chance by moving from the suburban and transport-friendly Hellerup to the under-development Nordhavn district, but the school is also counting on the continued influx of professional expatriates coming to Denmark.

Last June's election saw a move to the right and a significant

strengthening of the anti-immigration Danish People's Party. In late August, the party announced that it would seek to limit the number of highly educated foreigners moving to Denmark.

While the party is in a minority on the issue, they support a government that plans to publish adverts warning refugees against seeking shelter in Denmark. The proposal was condemned by representatives of Danish industry, who warn that the adverts would make Denmark less attractive as a destination for highly-educated knowledge workers.

So, the question is: after moving to Nordhavn, will it be possible for CIS to continue to thrive as a haven for Copenhagen's transient international community without be-

Austin Sailsbury

coming even more isolated from Danish culture and the city of Copenhagen?

COMMUNITY SPIRIT

Anders Smith – an architect and one of the CIS Nordhavn project leaders – believes the answer to this question is 'yes'. He argues that the school's new location can and will be an ideal bridge between the international community of CIS and the city of Copenhagen.

"Nordhavn is the only place for the new school to be. It will allow CIS to become a city school and not just a suburban school," he says, explaining that by designing and building from scratch, the new campus has the potential to become something the existing site couldn't: "A destination not just for students, but for the community."

The school's facilities will be open to the public during as well as after school hours – facilities that include a library, fitness centre, four full-size basketball and indoor football courts, drama studios, a theatre, individual music lesson pods, studio space for artists and makers, a learning kitchen, and a top-class cafe and restaurant.

Looking ahead to phase two, Smith can't help but dream out loud.

"We're already discussing sailing facilities, a naturally-heated swimming pool, and community garden spaces," he says, beaming.

HI TECH

The functional space is not the only thing that is likely to draw visitors to the future CIS Nordhavn campus. The school's innovative design and energy profile promise to attract the attention of architecture aficionados and green energy admirers alike. By incorporating over 12,000 custom-made solar panels into the scale-like facade, the new school is expected to generate at least half of its own energy needs and will live up to 2020 European energy standards.

Undrinkable saline water is drawn up out of the ground beneath the building to be used as a coolant and balance the excess heat generated from the school's extensive windows. The water is also used to flush the toilets. Inside the building, LED lighting, oversized classroom windows, full HD interactive screens and signage will help increase student and teacher performance and overall experience.

"By considering all of these things from day one, we've been able to make energy use and user experience the core of the building's DNA. These are not overt things you may notice as you use the space from day to day, but you will certainly feel that it is a different kind of environment," says Smith.

The new CIS Nordhavn campus will push the architectural and function-

CIS Facts

Founded in 1963, its original location was in Søborg, Gladsaxe Council. A small group of students were enrolled on the first day.

In 2015 CIS consists of two campuses in Hellerup and Østerbro. Around 900 students are enrolled, representing 82 different nationalities. 53% of students come from the US, UK and Denmark.

CIS is an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School and has been accredited by the Council of International Schools since 1973. CIS is also accredited by the US based New England Association of Schools and Colleges and the school is one of the five founding members of the IB Diploma Programme.

A non-profit private school, CIS is financed through admission fees and state support. A scholarship programme enables students from all walks of life to join the school.

The Nordhavn Campus will have space for 1,200 students when it opens in January 2017.

It was financed in part by the sale of the Hellerup campus, along with over 350 million kroner of donations from the Danish business world.

The major donors for the Nordhavn Project are The Møller Foundation, Novo Nordisk Fonden, Villum Fonden, Dampskibsselskabet NORDEN A/S // D/S Orients Fond, Hempel Fonden and Augustinus Fonden.

al boundaries of what a school building can be. Thomas Nielsen explains that this will not make CIS more exclusive. On the contrary, he argues that it will allow the school to be more open and inclusive.

"Despite upgrading to the new campus, the fees for students and families will not increase significantly. What families pay in fees goes to the running of the school – the new building is a separate entity entirely."

But, of course, all of this progressive design and technology comes at a price. Ejendomsfonden for Copenhagen International School (ECIS), the non-profit foundation charged with developing and managing the building project, has projected the total cost of the project to be approximately 500 million kroner. More than half has been donated by Danish corporations and foundations, including the A. P. Møller Foundation (Maersk), the Villum Foundation (Velux), and the Novo Nordisk Foundation.

And while ECIS is receiving no public funds for the school's construction, CIS does and will continue to receive the school tax subsidies available to all public and private schools in Denmark.

However, the new CIS building isn't just about improving the facilities for foreign families. With its move closer to the Copenhagen city centre, as well as its lo-

cation along the future M4 Metro line, there is also a chance that the school will become an attractive option for Danish families looking to expose their children to the international school experience.

"Our hope is that by moving closer to the Nordhavn and Østerbro neighbourhoods, we will see our Danish student population continue to grow and engage with the other eighty nationalities represented here at CIS," says Nielsen.

KEEPING THE SPIRIT

Touring the CIS Nordhavn building site with a group of fifth and sixth graders this summer, Smith taught us about the complexities of architectural superstructure while the cranes worked above us. We climbed an unfinished stairway to the first floor and, from the elevated position, the students took in the work in progress all around them: the concrete shell of the performing arts centre, the expanse of the future football pitches, and the skeleton of four classroom towers above.

Decked out in hard hats and steel-toed boots, the students saw, touched and heard something that few people get to experience – something that CIS Director Walter Plotkin calls "an idea becoming a building."

According to Plotkin, two concepts have guided every decision connected to the new CIS campus: a desire to create an optimal learn-

ing environment for every student, and for CIS to continue to be a community-centric location.

And, as this idea turns into a building, the current CIS students, staff, and families will have to sort out just how to make the transition from their current home to the new campus without losing the spirit of their current school community.

"We have launched a Cultural Advisory project and invited students, parents and staff to help us define and record the CIS culture. It is relatively easy to plan the moving of books and computers, but it's another matter to ensure that the many and diverse things that make today's CIS a special place will move with us to our new campus. By understanding our culture as a school and as a community, we will be better prepared to maintain our identity as we transition to our new campus," says Nielsen.

With this new venture, CIS Nordhavn represents a sea change for the school and for Copenhagen. A new address, a new facility, and, perhaps, a new standard for other international schools of the future.

"Symbolically," reflects Anders Smith, as we look over the building site, "this new school represents who we are – right here on the edge of the water, looking out toward the world, doing our part to write a better story." **M**



CIS students at the official inauguration of the new campus' building site in June, where mayor Frank Jensen spoke.



CAPTURED

Rasmus Degnbol is an award winning documentary photographer and filmmaker, and The Murmur's photo editor. In August he travelled to the Greek island Lesbos where hundreds of refugees were arriving each day.

I CAN TASTE salt from the ocean on my lips. The Greek flag flies in the wind behind us, while across the narrow strait I can just about make out minarets above the mosques in Turkey.

Last year, 5000 refugees and immigrants arrived on Lesbos in small rubber-boats, but this year alone over 90,000 have reached the island. There is almost no support from the government once they arrive – no food, water or shelter – as

official support has collapsed under the strain.

There are 12 of us on this hilltop and we chat while we scan the sea for arriving boats. Some are journalists like me, while locals such as Eric and Philippa Kempson are there to organise support for the arrivals. Throughout the day they drive up and down the dirt track to the nearby town Molyvos. Men then must walk 60 kilometres to Mytilini to register and gain permission to



leave the island, while some women and children are lucky enough to be put in busses provided by the UN refugee agency UNHCR. There is no accommodation for them in Molyvos while they wait, and when Eric finds families with babies sleeping rough in car parks, he brings them to his olive orchard where he has set up tents. Today his family and volunteers helped over 1,000 people.

Supporters of the fascist party Golden Dawn,

who have tried to stop us supporting the migrants, dominate Molyvos. At night they harass and assault migrants, while car rental companies try to scare us off from using their vehicles as transport. When refugees arrive by boat, locals rush out to be the first to scavenge them for their motors (above).

I've interviewed hundreds of the migrants during my week-long stay. They seemed humbled by

the opportunity to start new lives in Europe. Most have been displaced for between six months and three years, and all point out that Syria is still at war. With the total collapse of the Greek asylum system, only volunteers are here to greet them. Otherwise they would be all alone – standing on the beach with no idea where to go, shivering from the cold water, eyes filled with fear, and their hearts full of hope. **M**



Friends forever

Our interview with Frank Hvam and Casper Christensen was foul-mouthed and with graphic scenes of a sexual nature. Like their films and TV show, it's not for the faint of heart, squeemish or easily offended. It's their tool for celebrating the awkwardness of the human condition and, as they launch their latest cinematic escapade 'Klovn - Forever', it's clear they've perfected a very special comedy recipe

It is violently coarse, occasionally gross and insufferably embarrassing. But most of all, the comedic universe of *Klovn* is painfully funny. Creators Casper Christensen and Frank Hvam are an odd duo, and as they chat in the backyard of a stately house in Frederiksberg, they act like an old couple, finishing each other's sentences and bouncing jokes off each other.

Klovn began as a TV series that originally aired in 2005 and continued for six seasons. In 2010 they released their first film, *Klovn The Movie*, which garnered international attention and set them up for this year's sequel, *Klovn - Forever*.

Hvam: "After season four, Casper didn't want to do it anymore."

Christensen: "Didn't I? I don't remember that, why was that?"

Hvam: "I don't know, I think it was that we made the first four seasons in such a short time span, and we were just exhausted."

In *Klovn*, they play the odd-couple best friends Frank and Casper, just like in real life. Christensen is Casper, the flamboyant, high-status playboy. He shows up to our interview in sunglasses and a tight shirt with sleeves rolled up, showcasing his many tattoos. It is the sort of getup that would fit right in at a wild yacht party. Frank, in his plain polo shirt and jeans, seems more at home enjoying a hot dog and a beer somewhere quiet.

"In the beginning, we decided to make Casper a more evil character than in real life, and he just became more and more evil. And we made Frank a little bit more stupid," explains Christensen.

"But there is actually very little of us in the characters, though there is a lot of reality in the situations and the stories we want to tell."

They certainly write about what they know, using their experiences as a reference point from which to uncover awkward and painful aspects of the human condition. It's comedy in the same vein as *Curb Your Enthusiasm* and *The Office*. The characters don't really seem to learn, their lives an endless series of poor decisions and unfortunate coincidences. But throughout it all, their friendship remains. Or does it?

BLURRED IDENTITIES

Despite their depraved antics, their terrible alter-egos have somehow survived for ten years without suffering long-term incarceration or death. But when Hvam and Christensen return to their everyday

There is nothing cool about just making fun of people. The people you are targeting have to find it funny, interesting and understandable, too.

CASPER CHRISTENSEN

Elias Thorsson

lives, it can be impossible to leave Frank and Casper behind – as after so much time playing the characters some members of the public find it hard to discern where fiction ends and reality begins.

Hvam: "It's not a problem for me, because people just feel sorry for Frank, the poor guy. But Casper, the evil bastard, has all sorts of problems, real problems."

Christensen: "Before we did *Klovn*, I was very well-liked in this country – I was in fact voted the most wonderful man in Denmark at one point. Then we did *Klovn* and everything started going downhill. I might be more famous and more popular, but people fucking hate me."

Casper's endless cheating and womanising is the source of most of the hostility he experiences. Elderly women, in particular, revel in expressing their hatred upon meeting him on the street.

"This myth just builds around all the young girls [that I'm with on the show], but over the last twenty years, I've only had three different girlfriends and, aside from my current wife, they have all been my age. I don't think that is extreme, right?" Christensen implores.

"But it's what you have done to those three girls that matters," Hvam jokingly interjects, before adding that people expect him to make a fool of himself.

"The other day, when I was sailing my boat into harbour, the gears got stuck, so everybody took out their phones. I could hear them saying 'typical Frank!' and singing the *Klovn* theme song."

Christensen: "Then again, we did it to ourselves. Mostly people like the series and the movie, and to be honest, I am a fucking asshole and Frank is just so weird."

Their friendship is as tight in real life as it is on screen, and in both cases their bond seems unlikely. But as Christensen explains, being similar is far from the decisive factor in a successful friendship – it's more complicated than that.

Christensen: "Frank and I live very different lives, and we have really different values and ways of approaching life. But there are some areas where we really hit it off and have so much fun together. And that aspect is so strong that it makes all the other things interesting. I think that is what makes a good friend."

Hvam: "There is also a time dimension to it. Maybe we were more similar when we met. Maybe – not really, we were also very different back then."

Christensen: "I mean, I look at my other friends, and none of them are anything like Frank. And I look at his friends, and he doesn't ►



have friends that behave like I do, most of his friends are just very sick." Hvam: "When you have known someone for ten years, you can go in very different directions, but you will always have many things in common, because you have memories and a history together. For instance, I knew his two ex-wives, we can talk about them."

A DARKER DIRECTION

Klovn The Movie was a light summer comedy about fatherhood, but *Klovn – Forever* has a distinctively darker and more serious feel to it, featuring themes of betrayal and a breakdown in their hitherto unwavering friendship.

"We wanted to tell a story about friends betraying each other, about forgetting their friendship. We do terrible things to each other and each other's women, so it's okay that it's darker," explains Hvam and laughs.

"The first movie was just about these two guys. It had a road movie feel about finding some girls and getting laid," says Christensen. "This one takes place five years later. I'm turning 47, we are getting old, and life is no longer so happy-go-lucky all the time. We might go back and do a Tour de Pussy 2, but this felt right this time."

Hvam adopts an impression of a Televangelist: "It is also based on the Bible, on the Old and the New Testament's views on forgiveness."

Christensen: "We are both extremely religious."

Hvam: "We have to have God approve everything we do, and he has, he has blessed us."

Putting aside the mock peity, Christensen underlines that although the two plot revenge on each other in the new film, the message really is about forgiveness

Christensen: "Forgiveness is the right path."

Hvam: "Yeah, because if you are going to have a long relationship with another person, you have to be able to forgive, because of course the other person has an idiotic side. Everybody does, and you have to live with that. If you can't, then you can't have a long relationship at all. I think that is one of the points of the movie – we have to forgive."

GROSS AND AWKWARD

We are all familiar with the invisible line that cannot be crossed in proper and polite society – things that should be left unsaid and behaviour that goes beyond what is acceptable. Hvam and Christensen understand this line better than most, and by toying with it, they challenge our taboos and social inhibitions.



Scenes from 'Klovn Forever', in which Casper moves to Los Angeles to pursue a solo career. The move puts his relationship with Frank to the test, who follows Casper Stateside to win back his best friend.

Stills: Nordisk Film / Egmont

We wanted to tell a story about friends betraying each other, about forgetting their friendship. We do terrible things to each other and each other's women, so it's okay that it's darker.

FRANK HVAM

"We are just two little boys playing with matches," explains Hvam. "Some of these taboos are very funny to explore, to see what happens when you cross the line. Sometimes they are just culturally ancient things, and we have forgotten why they are taboos at all. They have just been that way for so long that everybody agrees. But then you break them and you think, 'Hey what happened, nobody died?'"

Christensen: "The important thing, however, is that there is nothing cool about just making fun of people. The people you are targeting have to find it funny, interesting and understandable, too."

As offensive as their jokes might be, the duo claim to have received few strong reactions from the public. And when they do, it's often of fence by proxy.

"The criticism has never come from people who were themselves affected by something in the show, but from people who are offended on behalf of others," explains Christensen.

"I remember one scene where Frank was lying about a miscarriage in therapy. It is a very delicate topic, losing an unborn child. But the scene was never about making fun of people who have lost a child. It was to make fun of this idiot who lied about it just to get out of an awkward situation – that's what's funny about it, seeing socially handicapped people who don't know how to behave, be faced with these issues. So we got a letter from somebody who knew somebody who lost an unborn child."

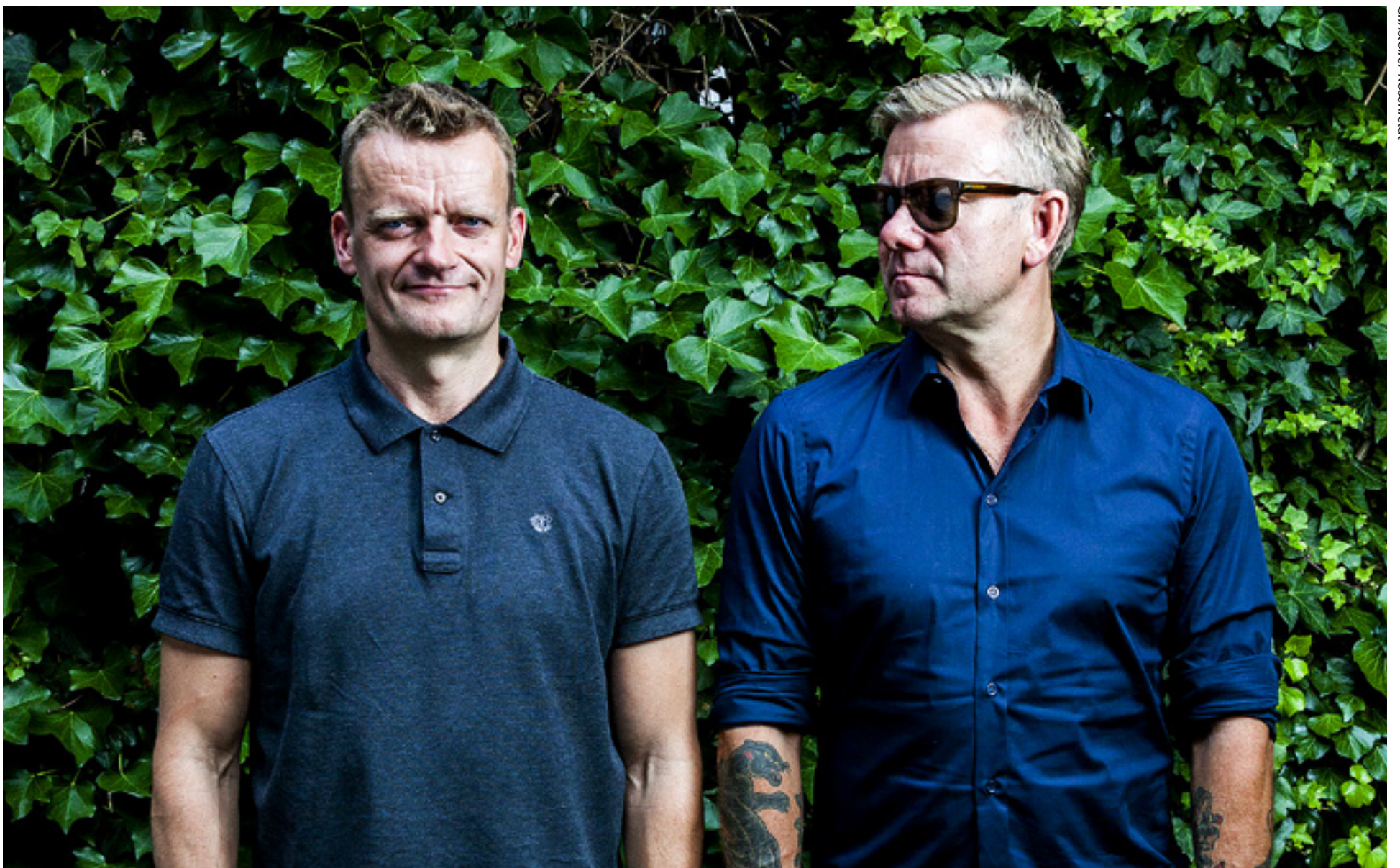
Hvam: "Yeah, and we believe 100 percent that you have to address everything in this world – to make it easier for people with that kind of problem to live their lives. If you don't talk about it, they become isolated and feel outside of the community."

Christensen: "The person we are making fun of is never the handicapped person, or the person with cancer, or the person who lost a child. It is the awkwardness of the people around that person. That's what we want to show. Real emotions, high stakes, and vulnerability. People losing control and status always make me laugh. When people think too highly of themselves, and their bubble gets punctured and collapses – that is always funny."

FOREVER ERECT

It is not enough to think and write about taboos and line-crossing, the scenes have to be acted out, too. While they both claim to be fine with playing situations of bare awkwardness, sometimes the interaction with other actors can be too much.

"Casper and I are so in sync, we know this universe and we have



agreed to pay the price," says Hvam, adding with a heavy dose of humour: "In the last movie, we had a scene with a girl who wanted a finger in her ass. That was a hard scene to shoot, because she was sweet and really wanted it. But she was also very nervous and sweating."

Christensen joins in the banter: "That was not the problem, the problem was that she was just really horny," he says, and laughs.

"She was so extremely horny that I had to say stop, because she was totally naked I was just wearing a small thong, so it was very intense. No we are just kidding. She was so cool and incredibly professional on set."

During the horrifying and cringe-worthy climax of the new movie is a sight that would be more at home in a porno or a Lars von Trier movie – a profile shot of Christensen's erect penis.

Hvam: "We decided to do it because we had this situation that we didn't want to soften, and we felt it would be unnatural if you couldn't see anything."

Christensen: "The thing is also that Casper is a threat to Frank, and it is pretty threatening to have a hard-on pointing at him, but it was also one of the harder scenes."

Hvam: "I was very proud of him."

Christensen: "I think it took us seven takes, that was too much."

Hvam: "Seven takes? That's two hours!"

Christensen: "We did do seven takes! What happens is that you go to the bathroom, start masturbating, and when it is hard, you go in where the whole crew is waiting. You only have about 40 seconds with an erect penis and then you have to do the scene again. I mean porn is easy, you go in with a hard-on and have sex. That's easy. But try having a conversation with your best friend in front of a whole crew when nobody is even touching your penis."

Hvam: "You did well. The funny thing is that to have an erection you have to have this huge amount of self-confidence. You have to feel like an old gorilla, owning the room, and every time Casper came out of that door he was just like, 'Now we go!'"

Christensen: "No, no, no, that is not how it was! I knew I only had 40 seconds, that's why. So I came in saying 'please shoot!'"

AN UNEXPECTED SUCCESS

In its ten years, the series has evolved from a small cult TV show into a highly popular and profitable brand. *Klovn The Movie* was Denmark's most popular movie in 2010, selling upwards of a million tickets. This phenomenal success has brought with it international fame,

It's not a problem for me, because people just feel sorry for Frank, the poor guy. But Casper, the evil bastard, has all sorts of problems, real problems.

FRANK HVAM

with remakes of the TV show being planned in countries such as Germany and Belgium, and Warner Bros obtaining the rights for an American version of the first movie.

Hvam: "We were surprised when this became a hit, and we are so grateful. When we started, we were convinced that it was a very narrow project, on a small channel, only appealing to creative people in Copenhagen."

Christensen: "They told us that they were going to finance us, but only because they liked us."

Their success is even more fascinating in light of their beginnings. Hvam dropped out of veterinary school, and Christensen made a name for himself entertaining in restaurants and clubs as well as hosting kid shows. Those lowly beginnings provided them with a unique perspective and taught them a valuable lesson.

Christensen: "Frank didn't make it, I didn't make it. So there is a lesson for young people in Denmark. Don't think about it, just lean back and let it come to you. Don't get an education, it's a waste of time."

Hvam: "That's not true, I would say that most of our colleagues should go back to school."

Christensen: "I think most of our colleagues should just go back to working in a kindergarten."

KLOVN FOREVER, FOREVER KLOVN

Despite Christensen's post-fourth season jitters, the duo is looking to the future, and a third movie is already in the cards.

Christensen: "We might go back to making television, but we definitely want to do another movie. What is interesting to us is higher stakes, stronger emotions, bigger problems – that's what's good in movies. We will definitely do one more movie, many more, we'll do 60 movies!"

He adds: "I mean sometimes I hate Frank, and I know he feels the same way, but we have so much fun that we know that we have to keep this together, and that is a good feeling."

Hvam: "And because of the money."

Christensen: "It's pretty much about the money. All that money, the Benjamins – it's all about the Benjamins. We never talk about money between us. We split everything we do in half, we have always done that. I don't know how much money Frank has, and Frank of course is always trying to find out how much money I have."

Hvam: "I can tell you."

Christensen: "Please do, because I have no fucking idea!" **M**

WHEN ADULTS COME OUT to play

Growing up often means leaving behind our imaginative worlds. But with research suggesting that play is also vital to adult development, some adults thankfully continue to spend their spare time being someone – or something – rather different

I grew up too quickly. When I was 12, I became the first in my circle of friends to be embarrassed by imaginative play. But after I convinced everyone to stop, I secretly regretted my decision. When I tried to take it back, it was too late, and every now and then I still miss the feeling of disappearing into the world of play.

Childhood play is about exploring identities and re-enacting experiences. But once we reach a certain age, we are expected to have found our identity so society seems to think that play is no longer needed.

The choice to play or not to play is therefore ultimately about the definition of identity and whether we see it as permanent, or as something that can be developed throughout your life.

In his TEDx talk from 2008, Dr. Stuart Brown, founder of the National Institute of Play, says we are designed by nature to play our whole life long.

"Neoteny means a retention of immature qualities into adulthood. And we are, [according to] physical anthropologists, [and] many,

many studies, the most neotenous, the most youthful, the most flexible, the most plastic of all creatures. And therefore, the most playful. And this gives us a leg up on adaptability," he says.

So the question is: if adults are genetically designed to play, why then do some choose to stop? And for those who continue, why do they choose to do so despite the social stigma?

ROLE PLAYING

Bifrost – The National Association for Creative Development of Children and Young People – supports the creative and social development of children through empathy and reflection, as well as through exploring creativity and challenging the definition of reality.

According to Bifrost, there are around 5,500 role-playing associations in Denmark and around 100,000 role-players. Their platforms include tabletop and online gaming, but also extend into real-life enactment, known as Live Action Role-Play (LARP). Most enter the universe of role-play in childhood, but some continue into adulthood.

Words: Mia Irmgard Klit
Photos: Rasmus Degnbol





Clockwise from top left:

Rikke Dollerup. 35, Doctor.

Mo Bøeg. 26, Studying design technology and clothing.

Mads Carlsen (with red sash). 18, Studying to be a kindergarten teacher.

Frederik Sylvest. 25, Kindergarten teacher.

Astrid Svendsen. 23, Studying medical chemistry.

Katja Vinding. 25, Studying to be a kindergarten teacher.

Mikael Bonnet. 28, studying law.





The scenarios can last hours or days, with the characters improvising dialogue based on narratives and rules that are dictated by the arrangers, or gamemasters. There is no single format for LARP, however, and while sometimes characters act out a showdown using simulated weapons, other times dice are used to determine the outcome of a setting or conflict.

Common to all role-playing, however, is that participants immerse themselves in a fictional world and interact with each other as characters. This is what I found when I observed a LARP event this summer in Hareskoven, a forest of north of Copenhagen. The event was organised by Nordlenets Saga, a LARP association that focuses solely on role-playing for those aged 15 and over. When they gather on the first weekend of the month, they arrive dressed as elves, warriors and other mystical creatures – leaving behind the world as we know it, and entering something far more fantastical.

THE ULTIMATE FEELING OF INTENSITY

Ole Risgaard Hansen, 30, has played over 45 different roles since he was introduced to LARP 15 years ago – everything from a minotaur and mercenary, to a hot-dog vendor and a pirate. The latter is his preferred role, and he often reprises it in new scenarios, or lifts elements from one role to create another.

"Sometimes I just reuse the smile," he says with a cheeky grin on his face.

He always integrates his own personality into his roles, and he never plays a part that he does not understand or cannot relate to – there is, after all, plenty that separates him from an orc. He says that it is the creative process and social relations within the LARP community that keep him active.

"It is also about chasing a good play – it is the



ultimate feeling of intensity. A good play is surprising. It is about creating situations that you have to act yourself out of, but on someone else's terms " he says.

Rikke Dollerup, 36, argues that a good role-play also depends on the challenge of playing a role that one does not understand – or even fears or dislikes. One of her most eye-opening experiences was playing a member of a sect that traded time for cigarettes.

"Ten minutes of someone's time can be very useful if you need someone to look the other way," she says with discomfort at the idea.

Rikke adds that LARP is just like going on holiday or to the cinema, and the different roles you create are just like the different genres of films you can choose from. Different roles are just ways of achieving different types of experiences, though the most intense experiences only arise if you have the courage to let go and dare to think, act and feel like someone else. To many this might seem more like escapism than heroism, but Rikke disagrees.

"It is more a break than an escape from everyday life. For seven years I played a careless and playful elf child. It was fun, and such a relief from my otherwise serious life."

After playing this role for several games, Rikke says other LARPer were suddenly surprised how tall she was out-of-game, as in-game they perceived her as a small child.

"I actually played myself smaller," she laughs.

PERSONAL THERAPY

Lukas Johnson started role-playing when he was about seven, and as a child he used role-play to live out fantasies. Now 18, LARP is ►



Left to right:

David Sørensen. 22, Assistant kindergarten teacher.

Kim Henningsen. 32, Self-employed electrician.

Signe Feldstein. 18, High school student.



just a hobby, but as a boy he used to use role-play as a form of therapy to deal with problems he has faced.

"In LARP I found freedom, acceptance and a sense of accomplishment. Accomplishments can be anything I put my mind to. It can be to eliminate the highest power and take over a city – not something most people can brag about after a long day at work," he says, before giving an example of a therapeutic use of LARP.

"When I was about 15, I created a role that was betrayed by everyone around me and in the end wanted to get revenge. This role was a relief for me, as at that time in my life, I felt betrayed too and had lost a lot of friends. Role-play allows you to think and act out things you are not allowed to in reality."

He also enjoys the social aspects of LARP, which brings together people who feel, each in their own way, different. It gives people the opportunity to define themselves, rather than be defined by others.

There was a down side, however. The more freedom he found in LARP, the more he lost in 'real life'. He says people around him had a hard time understanding what it was all about, so he was unable to share his experiences without facing mockery.

BECOMING BETTER ADULTS

Mo Bøeg argues that the media's generally negative portrayal of LARP culture – filled

with geeks and outsiders – is responsible. She used to refuse to talk to the media, but now she's changed her mind, because she wants to help form a more nuanced view of LARP. She says that it's not just for people who are escaping from reality, and that plenty of LARPers live ordinary lives.

"I think adulthood is about taking responsibility for your choices and facing the consequences," says Bøeg, who started role-playing when she was eight.

"This is what children as well as adults experiment with when role-playing. Role-players are simply adults who are trying to become better adults."

When she was young, she could rely more on her imagination, but as she's aged she has had to take more cues from the setting. The key to a good role play is creating roles that are strong and deep enough to not only carry multiple stories, but also to both create and receive ideas. The interaction that is created between the characters really forces people to be on their toes and makes them think and adapt to the situations.

Sadly, she feels that role-playing is too simplistically represented in the media. In defiance of the stereotypes – men wielding weapons and running about in the forest – many different types of people are involved in the community. She thinks, however, that LARPers are opening up and increasingly being met with curiosity instead of judge-

In LARP I found freedom, acceptance and a sense of accomplishment.

LUKAS JOHNSON

mental comments about how they are too old to play.

A PLAYFUL ADULTHOOD

Most people can probably relate to what it is like to have an intense experience, only to feel sad when it is over – after a summer holiday or romantic fling, for example.

Role-plays can be overwhelming too, due to their intense social interactions and personal journeys, and many spoke of post-LARP depression after returning to the 'real world'.

According to Dr. Brown, nothing lights up the brain like play. But if we are to benefit from it, we shouldn't set aside time for it – in fact, that's the problem with the way we normally regard play. Instead, we would do well to infuse life with transformational play, which stimulates the brain and makes us more flexible and adaptable.

We might all benefit if more adults chose to be involved in role-play or other playful activities. It's not a matter of choosing play over work – it is about implementing play in our adult lives. Childhood play is important in preparing for adulthood, but adult play may be important to maintain a relational, constructive, innovative, adaptable, social, narrative and creative existence. **M**

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There was a time when happiness wasn't SKIN deep

As a British woman, I was fascinated by how physically liberated my Danish counterparts appeared. But perhaps the golden age of body confidence is now past

N

aked and proud." In international circles, the phrase is often uttered – half in shock and half in awe – about Danes and their lack of inhibitions. Most of those commenting are conditioned, like me, a body-conscious Brit, to expose as few of my erogenous zones in public as possible.

We raise our eyebrows at what we witness in Danish changing rooms and on beaches. Nude bodies are almost perpetually on show – uninhibited and free.

I have some theories about why Danes feel so free in flashing their flesh. It could be the Law of Jante, which, in this instance, might roughly translate as, 'no person should look down on another's imperfect body'. Alternatively, the wave of Danish feminism in the 1970s may have created strong women who are busier working than worrying how they look. I wonder too if the early sex education in Denmark also plays its part.

After another day at the beach spent contorting myself into my swimsuit while shielded by a towel the size of Texas, I became determined to understand why Danes can do something I cannot – be happy and naked in public.

AN OLD WOMAN'S GAME

I started out by assembling a sample group of Danish acquaintances, friends and strangers. They quickly shattered my preconceptions and unanimously pointed to a generational divide on matters of nudity.

"There were a lot more topless women on the beach 20 years ago," says Anne-Mette Pedersen, 39.

"Now, there's increasing pressure from Facebook and other social media outlets for us to present ourselves as picture-perfect. So I think it tends to be women aged 40 and over who don't care so much how



Rasmus Degenbol

"Being nude when winter bathing is just a practical thing – have you ever tried to wear a wet swimsuit when the temperature is below 5 degrees Celsius?"

DORRIT DAMM-OTTESEN

Polly Phillips

others view them."

Hanne Frederiksen, 37, agrees.

"I have detected a trend toward being less free and naked than we used to be. Nakedness is increasingly being interpreted as something less natural, or something related to sex or the danger of sexual harassment," says Frederiksen, who admits to nude early-morning dips, so long as it's in a private setting.

"I was inspired one morning when this elderly and distinguished man who was standing close by calmly took off all of his clothes and went in, very elegantly and naturally. Somehow it just made me feel a bit ridiculous with my swimsuit."

Indeed, swimsuits can be unwellcome, particularly in the winter, explains 67-year-old Dorrit Damm-Ottesen (left).

"Being nude when winter bathing is just a practical thing – have you ever tried to wear a wet swimsuit when the temperature is below 5 degrees Celsius? You would not want to!"

Liva Hyttel, 31, doesn't think that her generation will embrace nudity in old age in the same way the current generation has.

"I would never do it myself. I have this sense that it was the generation in the 1970s that was consciously choosing to

have a different attitude to their bodies and nudity and gender, and I think it's left over from them. That generation was the exception."

SHAMELESSNESS

Statistics seem to back her up. The average age of outdoor bathing club members is rising, says Jens Rasmussen, chairman of the 1000-member Danish Naturists Association, who confirms that the organisation is trying to return to the free ideals of 1970s.

Further research supports the hypothesis that the confidence to 'dare to bare' is more associated with Danes who grew up in the 1960s and 1970s.

"In the 1970s, nakedness was not necessarily linked to being sexy and could just be considered a state of being," says Lise Dilling-Hansen, a PhD student researching body image at the University of Aarhus.

"Younger people live in a different cultural context than older Danes. Naked bodies are now always judged as attractive or non-attractive, and beauty standards are more demanding now than they were decades ago," she says, adding that young people are also generally more insecure about their identity and looks.

"They are at a place in their lives where they are finding out who they would like to be, and are therefore more sensitive to public ideas of how they should look."



Rasmus Degenbol

Hanne Frederiksen thinks that Danish society is becoming increasingly uneasy with nudity.

Other research suggests, however, that Danes are among the world's least inhibited people. A survey by the University of Zurich earlier this year saw the Danes voted the most shameless people in the world. Perhaps this is because a mere 1.62% of Danes suffer from gelotophobia, or fear of ridicule, the lowest proportion of the population in any country surveyed.

A lack of shame does not entail a nation of self-confident nudists, however, warns psychologist Pernille Lanev.

"Foreigners often comment on how common it is to find Danes naked in swimming pools or in the sea, but that's not necessarily about confidence, it's more a lack of modesty. Danes are a bit more liberated than their American and British counterparts, but nudity is also more widely accepted here. It's built into the social structure."

All of my sample group confirmed that nudity, rather than being a bold statement, is actually more of an unconscious habit.

"I can see how it looks to foreigners – you go to the gym and the swimming pool showers and we are naked. But that's because of the rules. It's a habit, but we are not necessarily that comfortable," confirms Liva Hyttel.

"All the way through kindergarten and grade school, you take showers together, and that's just what you do. I don't remember feeling comfortable – especially as a kid. You just get used to it. I really think that habit is very strong. It's like when we all stop at red lights waiting to cross even when there are no cars. Maybe we just follow the rules. That's the particularly Danish thing, not the happy being naked part."

BODY FEARS

There are signs, though, that Danes are becoming increasingly uneasy about their bodies. Last year a record-breaking 11,712 people went under the knife, with breast enhancements or liposuction being two of the most sought-after procedures, according to the health research organisation Statens Serum Institute. The number of cosmetic surgical interventions is steadily rising, and increased 11% in the past year.

Body insecurity is also manifesting itself in a worrying rise in eating disorders, with 75,000 Danes suffering from either

anorexia or bulimia, and another 80,000 at risk, according to figures released by The National Association for Eating Disorders and Self-harm.

Reinforcing the theory that body confidence belongs to a former age and has not been passed down to today's youth, a recent study conducted by the University of Strathclyde established a connection between time spent on Facebook looking at other people's pictures and a surge in insecurity about physical appearance.

While the research, presented at a conference in Seattle last year, found no link to eating disorders, it did discover that the more time women spent on Facebook, the more they compared their bodies with those of their friends, and the more negatively they felt about their own appearance.

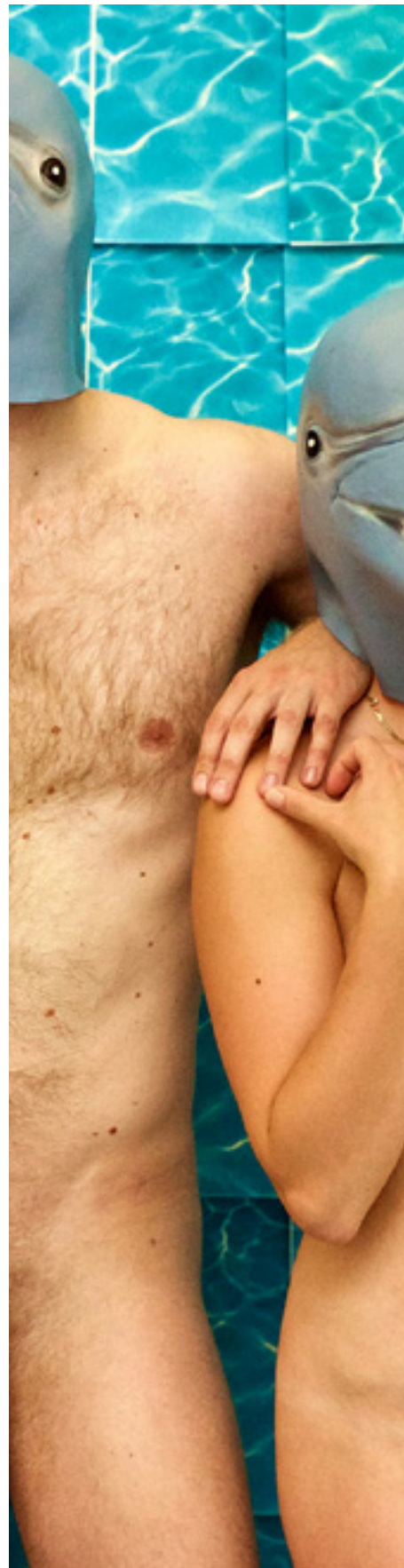
"Spending more time on Facebook is not connected to developing a bad relationship to food, but there is a connection to poor body image," said study researcher Petya Eckler. "The attention to physical attributes may be even more dangerous on social media because the participants are people we know."

Somewhat tellingly, I had a hard time finding young women to talk to me on the record about body confidence in their age group.

"We are constantly bombarded with perfect-looking women who make us feel bad, even though we know that they've been edited on a computer," one fifteen-year-old told me. "It's rubbed off on me. When everyone around you talks about their faults, you can't help thinking there's something wrong with you, too. I never go to the swimming pool anymore because I feel uncomfortable in the changing rooms, even though it's just girls."

She pointed specifically to the photo-sharing social media platform Instagram as being a primary source of body envy. But women are not alone in feeling the pressure. Dilling-Hansen points to the rise of so-called 'spornosexuals' – coined by combining sport, porn and metrosexual. This hyper-sexualised and body-obsessed breed of new man sees his body as the ultimate accessory.

"Working out doesn't just improve my physique, it gives me a goal and keeps



me focused on how to get there, which makes me feel confident in the way that I look and feel," says one CrossFit fan, who would give me only his first name, Mads, 29. "Nothing's more rewarding than achieving my goal, and being fit in time for summer!"

NUDE REVIVAL

Some young people want to do something about their generation's body anxiety. Petruska Mieke-Renard is a 27-year-old fashion student who launched her latest swimwear collection online during Copenhagen Fashion Week this August. When the website went live, there were no clothes to be seen. Instead, there were portraits of fifty-nine models, nude except for a dolphin mask (left).

"I wanted to spark a reaction when people expected to see swimwear but instead were confronted by naked bodies," she says.

She got the idea while living in London. When reading Danish news online, she observed how much bodies and body image were being discussed. She had already considered making a swimwear line to earn some money, but realised that more clothes are the last thing we need.

"We should be better at taking our clothes off and showing what we really look like. The media generates these images of perfect bodies that are unattainable. It's ridiculous for most of us to even try. Most people aren't even beautiful, and instead rich people are buying themselves beauty. We are just going to end up with a beautiful rich upper class and an ugly underclass. It's a hierarchy we need to avoid. I even have friends who are saving money for fake boobs rather than their education. Something is wrong."

While the bodies in her swimwear presentation all appear rather young, they cover the spectrum from fat to thin, and from athletic to soft. What unites them is their lack of conformity to the idealised parallel world the media presents to us.

"The debate about body image is incredibly negative and reactionary," she says. "But what is interesting is that since the website went up, more and more people have been in touch, wanting to participate. So I think it's a much-needed positive contribution." **M**



SF Film

In *Guldkysten* Wulff Frederik Wulff is sent to West Africa to start a coffee plantation years only to encounter a thriving slave trade.

Soul searching on the Gold Coast

A new film is drawing attention to a time when Denmark's wealth was built on buying and selling human bodies

THE TRADE OF AFRICAN SLAVES was once legal in Denmark, though you'd be forgiven for not knowing. It started around 1650 and was formally banned in 1792, but it continued illegally for at least several more decades. Throughout this period, Danes contributed to the tearing away of hundreds of thousands of lives from the African continent to work in European colonies in the Caribbean, America and Europe.

Daniel Dencik's debut feature film *Guldkysten* (The Gold Coast) is an unpleasant reminder of an almost forgotten era of Danish history. Set in West Africa in 1836, it follows the journey of the idealistic and naïve newcomer Wulff Frederik Wulff, who is sent there to start a coffee plantation years after slavery had officially been abolished in Denmark – only to find that it has continued.

Script co-writer Sara Jønsson explains that we see through the eyes of this newcomer, who witnesses something foreign and shocking.

"It's important for the story that he is not morally depraved like his countrymen on the Gold Coast. He represents hope, even though he is not a traditional hero, with all his prejudices and Western civilisation's ingrained misunderstanding of the natives."

ON LOCATION

The film was created with the help of producer Kwame Boadi of the Ghanaian production company inGenious Africa, who explains that the film's goal was to cast a light on Denmark's history as a slave-trading nation.

"The film was meant to shock and awe, and inspire a dialogue," Boadi says, adding that it also succeeds in depicting how depraved humans can be.

"It shows you an ugly piece of history, which you can sadly still find going on around the world. As a producer, you work on solving practical problems, but everybody has a heart. I cringed when I entered those old cas-

It shows you an ugly piece of history, which you can sadly still find going on around the world.

KWAME BOADI OF THE GHANIAN PRODUCTION COMPANY INGENIOUS AFRICA

Nina Nørgaard

tles and dungeons where slaves were kept and treated under inhumane circumstances. To see the actors standing naked and in chains, that moved me."

Dencik, Jønsson and Danish producer Michael Haslund visited Ghana almost two years before they started filming and formed a close friendship with Boadi and his crew. Boadi's company navigated African bureaucracy, found locations, actors and extras for the parts of slaves and indigenous people in Ghana and Burkina Faso. After 15 months of preparation, the film took three months to shoot.

The schedule set by the Danish crew had to be abandoned, however, when the timetable was interrupted by unforeseen changes in circumstances. The creative process was ultimately more like that of making a documentary, with the filmmakers making use of opportunities as they arose.

"I think that we really learned a lot from each other – we arrived with our method of

production, and they with their experience of how to do things," says Jønsson. "It only worked if we combined the two and really tried to learn all we could."

SLAVE-ERA IDEALISM

One weakness of *Guldkysten* is that it requires the audience to already have some knowledge of the Danish slave trade in order to understand all the references in the film. Without a voiceover or introduction, the audience lacks some context for the events that unfold, explains Ulla Rahbek, professor of Postcolonialism at the University of Copenhagen.

"There is no sort of framing device; it is not at all pedagogical. I think it is very clear that it was made by an artist. It's a postmodern film. It's really playful."

One reference in the film that might elude viewers, is that the Danish fort used in the film is actually Elmina Castle – built in Ghana by the Portuguese in 1482 and later taken over by the Dutch then the British – which was a central stop in the Atlantic slave trade.

"It gives some authenticity," Rahbek says. "I think it is important to remember that Ghana was the starting point for both British and

Danish slavery – Elmina Castle is where it all began".

Rahbek adds that the narrative is reminiscent of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, which was later adapted by Frances Ford Coppola into the war epic *Apocalypse Now*.

"It is a complex idea, but we could think of Wulff as a Marlowe character, an idealist who comes to the heart of darkness in Africa but degenerates, and is ultimately destroyed. *Guldkysten* is a European film, and we only see the effect [the slave trade] has on the white people. The film isn't really interested in its black characters. As in *Heart of Darkness*, they are pieces of furniture – they are masses."

POWER OF SILENCE

Language plays a big part in the postcolonial understanding of oppression and cultural separation, and both Rahbek and Boadi would have liked the film to have conveyed more local dialects.

"It would have added some spice and colour to the people," Boadi says. Rahbek agrees, but adds that the actual lack of dialogue served a purpose toward the end of the film.

"Wulff talks endlessly throughout the film, but is silenced in the last third, where there

The brutality that the fictional Wulff encounters is the knowledge that it is his fellow countrymen who are barbaric, not the natives.

ULLA RAHBK, PROFESSOR OF POSTCOLONIALISM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN.

is no longer any need for language. And then there is Lumpa, Wulff's assistant, who is difficult to pin down because they communicate without words. It is as if their relationship transcends language."

Sara Jønsson agrees that Lumpa, a curious and open-minded child, is an essential character in the film.

"The hero of the film shifts towards the end, when Wulff is incarcerated. Lumpa takes over the moment he sets Wulff free. From then on, Lumpa carries Wulff's story and his idealism. Even though they do not speak, I think it is apparent that Wulff comes to many of his realisations in his meeting with Lumpa. It is his intuitive understanding of the world and of nature that inspires Wulff. The brutality that the fictional Wulff encounters is the knowledge that it is his fellow countrymen who are barbaric, not the natives."

Rahbek says she feels conflicted about the film, but ultimately argues that it does a good job of creating a dialogue about the encounter with *the other*.

"Yes, it speaks from a postcolonial perspective, where *the other* is the African slave, but today it could just as well be the migrant, the refugee or the foreigner." **M**

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COLUMN

Dating in the 21st century: You won't believe what we found out!

It is getting increasingly difficult to escape the attention-deprived online world. And now even our lovelife has become a kind of clickbait romantics

ONE HEADACHE-RIDDEN Sunday last month, while bored and hungover, I decided to throw myself headfirst into the pit that is online dating. I had been binge-watching Peep Show, which despite its suggestive name is not a form of voyeur porn, but rather a show about two loser roommates living in South London. Their troubles often involve misadventures with the opposite sex, so I got inspired to try to get into some scrapes of my own.

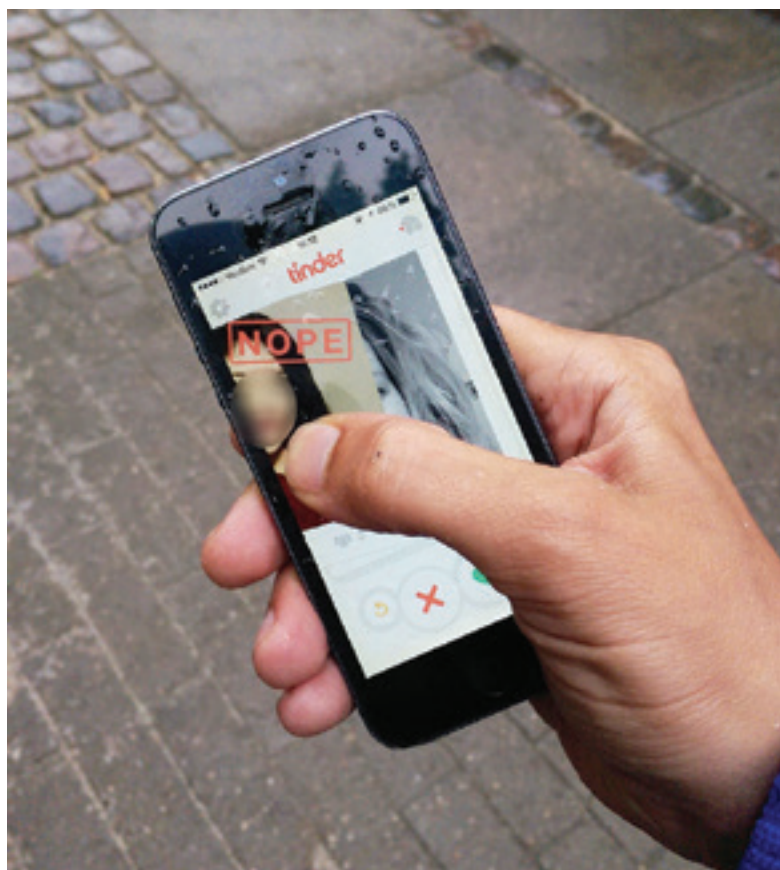
Back in 2010, during my last prolonged stint as an 'eligible' bachelor, online dating was a way for lonely fat men in basements to meet crazy purple-haired spinsters who lived in crooked houses with a ton of cats. But in 2015, online dating has become a game for hip young singles, played on overpriced, Chinese-made smartphones.

There are many different apps out there, and I was curious to explore what each of them had in store, so I downloaded every one mentioned in a BuzzFeed article entitled "You won't believe the success rate of these dating apps!!"*

Most of them had no users nearby, and one meant for 'quirky' dating had only three. So even before I had begun, I felt once again betrayed and abused by BuzzFeed's infernal click-baiting.

I had already heard of one of the apps, Happn, from a friend who had posted screen shots of messages from dozens of men, all of whom wanted to know if she was "enjoying her summer". I'm still confused by that opening line. The answer can either be "yes, obviously," or "No my dog died / I contracted lupus". Either way, it's not a conversation starter.

Happn is confusing, and I'm still not sure what to do with it. For those of you that don't know,



Nope.

it basically allows you to see pictures of other people with the app whose paths you have crossed. It's a kind of meta-gawking, probably most useful for hitting on the cute girl in the building across the street who never pulls the drapes when coming out of the shower. My naked neighbours are all quite unattractive, so I couldn't find any use for Happn.

There is, however, an undisputed king of the dating apps. It is so mainstream that last Christmas I even heard my mom talking to her friends about it. Tinder. I have a dear friend who met his boyfriend through Tinder, and as a statement of their seriousness, they decided to delete the app from their phones together. Love in the 21st century.

For my own profile, I started by

finding pictures in which I thought I looked most handsome, settling on four that I felt best showcased the person I believe myself to be: good-looking from a certain angle and in a certain light, enjoys coffee, has friends and is somewhat offbeat. I then made sure to 'like' the pages of my favourite cultural icons on Facebook – The Smiths, Kylie Minogue and Wes Anderson movies. If women were equally culturally astute, I would see it on their profile.

Tinder is simple. You're presented with the profiles of potential matches one at a time. You can examine more of their photos if you wish, and if you like them, you swipe their profile to the right. If they also swipe your profile to the right, you are informed of the match, and you can start chatting.

Little is more fitting for the slacker generation than being able to flirt with strangers with the TV on, unpresentable and hung over.

Rejects are swiped to the left, and there were many. Automatic left swipes for me include boxy fake eyebrows, bathroom selfies, gym pictures, mentions of Cross-Fit, inspirational quotes, and most importantly, posing with drugged-out tigers on trips of self discovery to Southeast Asia.

My aesthetic and moral requirements eliminated large swathes of the Tinder population, but I did manage to get a few matches. I invited the most appealing on dates, and proceeded to go on three over the span of five days. It was exhausting – like a series of job interviews where you are also trying to maintain sexual tension with a prospective employer.

I thought the dates went quite well, but the women didn't seem to agree, as there were no second dates. Maybe I'm just terribly boring. Maybe my Tinder profile was just too good, and my real self couldn't compete. Or maybe treating your love life in the same way you select movies on Netflix – rapidly flicking through short descriptions and trailers – promotes a fast-paced gratification culture of short attention spans and disposable enjoyment. Who knows?

Despite my lack of success, I did learn a lot. Little is more fitting for the slacker generation than being able to flirt with strangers with the TV on, unpresentable and hung over. I learned that constructing an online dating alter ego is quite fun, and even provides interesting quasi-psychological insight into your own ego. But most importantly, I learned that despite the fun, at least for now I'll just stick to the tried-and-tested method of awkwardly approaching girls at bars while safely drunk. Swipes left.

**Ok, not an actual BuzzFeed article, but could you really tell?!*

Elias Thorsson

COLUMN

I get treated better when I speak English

Like most immigrants, I realised the importance of learning Danish after arriving in this country. But because of how I look, speaking the native language can have its drawbacks

I WAS SITTING in my car in Copenhagen's Vesterbro district waiting for my friend to grab a shawarma when a patrolling police car pulled up right next to me. They asked if I realised I was parked illegally, but I was quick to reply in English rather than in Danish. As if by magic, the police officer's tone became friendlier, and I got the assistance I needed to find my way.

As a foreigner living in Denmark, you are expected to both learn and speak Danish. But my experience as an Arab-looking person living in Copenhagen is that when I speak Danish, I am treated differently than when I speak English.

While I admit that it is a great advantage to speak the language of one's host country, I choose to speak English on a daily basis. I have lived in Denmark for over twenty years and I speak, write and read fluent Danish. I am even a Danish citizen, and proud of it. I arrived in Denmark as a Syrian-Palestinian refugee in the early

When I speak English, I am no longer seen as a troublemaker and an irredeemable criminal.

Sausan Berg

1990s, having grown up in Cyprus. There I attended an international school, and at home we spoke English more than my parents' native Arabic.

After living in Denmark for a few years, it became clear to me that speaking the Danish language and being accepted as 'Danish' are two different things. Denmark changed after the 9/11 terror attacks in New York. A general election soon after saw right-wing parties take power after adopting fearful rhetoric about foreigners and Islam.

This political rhetoric – negative spin about foreigners and their impact on Denmark and Danish identity – has become the norm for any political party wishing to advance in government. I cannot help but notice the damage this rhetoric has had on both ethnic and non-ethnic Danes. One of the most damaging effects that I have noticed is the enlarged intolerance gap between these two groups. It

has created a stronger sense of 'us' against 'them'.

So when I speak English at shops or cafés, I am no longer identified with the unwanted and dangerous 'other'. When I speak English, I am no longer seen as a troublemaker and an irredeemable criminal. I am no longer a 'perker', the offensive word of choice to describe immigrants from the Middle East.

As soon as I speak English, I am perceived as an exotic tourist. The shop assistants become over-eager to help me, and I am nearly carried through the shop as if I were royalty. The exact opposite happens when I speak Danish. It is as though there is an automatic reflex that makes some Danes see me in a different light just because of the language I speak.

While I don't want to generalise or overstate the situation, this has been my honest experience in the many years I have lived in Denmark. I still choose to speak Dan-

ish at work, when dealing with the municipality, or when I can see an advantage in speaking and knowing Danish. But in my everyday life, speaking English is what carries me through and makes all my interactions with Danes smooth and sweet.

The fact is that Danish people are lovely when they do not perceive you as a threat. Sadly, there exists a mistrust towards 'perker' and foreigners. We need to do a better job of bringing together Danes and 'the others' because, despite what politicians tell us to feel and think about each other, our lives would be enriched by each other's cultures and perspectives on life.

I am so happy that my friends are used to my switching between English and Danish when I speak. I fancy a spot of shopping, but as usual I will only speak English. So those of you that would like to give it a try, by all means, do speak English: you are guaranteed great service. **M**

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We are looking for two aspiring journalists with a passion for reporting and feature writing, to join us for a six-month internship starting in February, 2016. You need to be curious, self-motivated, and willing to learn. Most importantly, you must be interested in seeking out the human angle behind the headlines.

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COLUMNISTS

Do you have a unique insight into our mundane daily lives, or a new perspective on the important issues of the day? We are looking for new columnists to share their thoughts and experiences, regardless how big or small the topic.

CONTRIBUTORS

Over the past 16 issues, The Murmur has worked with dozens of writers, photographers, editors and columnists. We love collaborations and fresh points of view, no matter how obscure or niche. Even if you just have a seed of an idea, you are welcome to pitch it to us.

Payment is negotiated, and depends on the candidate's qualifications and level of experience. If you are interested, please get in touch by emailing our Editor-in-Chief Peter Stanners – **PETER@MURMUR.DK**

WHAT'S ON • SEPTEMBER



INSIDE OUT ISTDGAGE
Video projections, large-scale drawing and music installations make up the art project designed to mark the recent changes the iconic Copenhagen street.

Istedgade, CPH
insideout2015.dk
Ends September 30

ALL MONTH

TIVOLI FESTIVAL
The largest classical musical festival in Scandinavia, with musicians such as pianist Sir Andrés Schiff and tenor Lauren Brownlee.

Tivoli
Vesterbrogade 3, CPH
Tivoli.dk
Ends September 22



ODENSE CAROUSEL
The 3-day festival takes a night-club feeling onto the streets of the city. Featuring Cyril Hahn, Fritz Kalkbrenner, Trentemøller, Slvas, Ukendt Kunstner and Eloq.

Locations across Odense
Karrusel.dk
September 3-5

3

CYCLING TOUR
Hobro and Aalborg have been chosen as hosts of the UCI Amateur Cycling World Champion. The competition will consist of roughly 2500 amateur cyclists.

Hobro and Aalborg City
Ny.cyklingdanmark.dk
Ends September 6

4

Golden Days Festival
Each year Golden Days arranges a large cultural festival in the centre of Copenhagen. This year, the festival is focusing on Denmark's Cultural Heritage.

Locations across CPH
Goldendays.dk
Ends September 20



AARHUS FOOD FESTIVAL
The largest food festival in Scandinavia, you can learn about classic and modern Nordic cuisine. The festival will undoubtedly open up your eyes to Denmark's vast culinary resources.

Tangkrogen, Aarhus
Foodfestival.dk
September 4-6

11

ALT_CPH
Alt_Cph is Copenhagen's experimental art fair, focusing on artist-run initiatives. Hosted by The Factory of Art & Design.

The Factory of Art & Design
Sundholmsvej 46
Altcpd.dk
Ends September 13



A SECRET PLAY
Director Jeremy Thomas-Poulsen takes short texts written by Serbian playwright Tatjana Mastilo and weaves them together with the team's own secrets.

Secret location in Carlsberg
Whynottheatre.dk/secrets
September 11-26



RISING ARCHITECTURE
Copenhagen and Aarhus host an ambitious international architecture week. RISING is a week of events and hands-on activities, with more than 500 participants.

Aarhus and Copenhagen
Rising-architecture.com
September 14-18

15

LOUISIANA LIVE
Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, Anders Elstrup and Maria Gerhardt (AKA DJ Djuna Barnes) talk about what it means to hit the wall – and have since seen life through different eyes.

Louisiana
Gammel Strandvej 13, 3050
Louisiana.dk



FEMINIST FESTIVAL
Newly-founded feminist festival FLAB is taking over VerdensKulturCentret this month. The festival will consist of music, art, workshops, performance and loads more.

VerdensKulturCentret
Nørre Allé 7, CPH
Flabfestival.dk
September 18-20

Joshua Hollingdale

23

DOSTOYEVSKY IN THE CHAPEL
Fyodor Dostoyevsky's ever-relevant *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man* is performed by Theatre Company TELL to JOY in the iconic surroundings of the chapel in Assistens Cemetery.

Assistens Cemetery Chapel
Kapelvej 4, CPH
Assistens.dk

WHAT'S ON • SEPTEMBER

23

GOT THE BLUES

The five-day-long Copenhagen Blues Festival spans 20 venues and 60 concerts with Danish, Scandinavian and international artists.

Locations across CPH
Copenhagenbluesfestival.dk
 Ends September 27



WAR MOVIE

Kajaki has been dubbed "The British Hurt Locker". Director Katis and producer Andrew de Lotbinière visit Cinemateket for a viewing and panel debate.

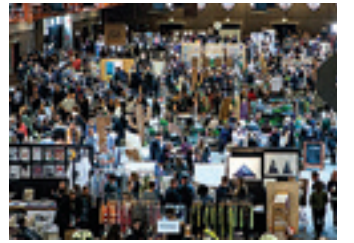
Cinemateket
Dfi.dk/cinemateket
 Panel debate on Sep 24
 'Kajaki' shows Sep 26-30

25

REVERSE POETRY

Copenhagen International Poetry Festival, REVERSE, wants to show that poetry is play, music and experimentation.

LiteraturHaus
 Møllegade 7, CPH
reversecph.dk
 Ends September 27



CULTURE IN THE NORTH

The Meatpacking District's Food And Market team with Finders Keepers to create Finders-Eaters. Buy unique design products while eating scrumptious delicacies.

TAP 1
 Ny Carlsberg Vej 91, CPH
 September 26-27

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