

COPENHAGEN
EDITION

**To liberals
the welfare
state looks
plump and
ready for
slaughter**

**Radio pio-
neers are
finding a
home on-
line, far
from DR**

**Kurds in
Denmark
talk about
life be-
tween ISIS
and Turkey**



ISSN 2246-6150

Giving voice to multiculturalism

Rushy Rashid Højbjerg is calling out stereotypes in the heated immigration debate

THE MURMUR

WATCH OUT! if you plan on applying for Danish citizenship, make sure you keep your bad ideas to yourself. Belal El-Khatib didn't and was removed from a list of over 6,500 Danes who were set to receive citizenship this October. His error was being a Muslim who openly admitted that he would have no problem replacing democracy with a caliphate, if a majority of Danes agreed to it.

El-Khatib, 25, has permanent residency in Denmark. He turned his back on his Muslim background as a teenager, but returned to the faith in his 20s, and now follows a rather strict interpretation of Islam.

Immigration minister Inger Støjberg was pleased that a majority of right wing parties agreed to remove him from the list of new citizens, and stated that "anti-democratic Islamists who work against Danish values should not be rewarded with Danish citizenship."

It's fascinating, scary and disappointing that the government is playing thought police and denying individuals their right to free expression, simply because their ideas are bad – a global caliphate is obviously the last thing our world needs.

The Danish government's worry, of course, is that Islamists not only want to practice their religion, but also want to force everyone else to follow it too. They fear a slow watering-down of Western liberal values and an eventual democratic overthrow of democracy.

At one point dismissed outright as paranoid, it is now relatively mainstream to believe that Islam is once again at the Gates of Vienna. Many believe that immigration from Muslim countries is a ploy to create a global caliphate. In an interview with Politiken in September, blogger Mikael Jalving argued that Europe is heading towards civil war, with Muslims on one side and Westerners on the other.

So what do Muslims really think? Jyllands-Posten set out to answer that by asking pollsters Wilke to conduct inter-

views within Denmark's Muslim community in October.

They found that 11.3% percent of Muslims think that Danish laws should be entirely based on the Koran, 26.5% percent that laws should at least consider sharia, while 53.9% think the Danish constitution is the best foundation for creating laws.

For perspective, a November 2012 YouGov poll found that 25% of Danes are in favour of capital punishment. A Megafon poll for Politiken in October found that 14% of Danes believe in supernatural beings, such as ghosts and spirits.

Danish society is full of weird, unscientific and bad ideas but, on the whole, we don't deny people their rights because of them. Unless, of course, you're a Muslim. The El-Khatib case demonstrates a continuing stereotyping of Muslims by the political class, which is implicitly supported by the media. Jyllands-Posten's survey ignorantly lumps all Muslims in one category, as though they were a homogenous mass.

While Støjberg and Jalving worry that Muslims will create a "them and us", it turns out that they're the ones forcing a dividing line, and making enemies of their fellow citizens.

The best way to overcome difference is through dialogue. This strengthens democratic values such as respect and tolerance, even when respective parties have fundamentally different world views. This is why we chose Rushy Rashid Højbjerg for our cover this month. Her radio show is a lonely platform in Danish media, unique for facilitating a nuanced debate on immigration – good and bad.

The mutual understanding that her debates facilitate is far more effective at protecting democracy and maintaining its legitimacy, than selectively denying citizenship to people with undemocratic beliefs. Because by excluding El-Khatib, we only reinforce his suspicion that our prized democratic system is a bit of a sham.

THE MURMUR

I knew
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shadow
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my own
husband
and my
own life.

RUSHY RASHID
HØJBJERG

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CONTRIBUTORS



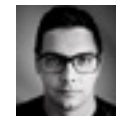
Elias Thorsson Assistant editor. He is pursuing his master's degree at the University of Copenhagen, studying American politics. In this issue he spoke to Denmark's Kurdish community.



Joshua Hollingdale Editorial intern. Joshua is as passionate about critical journalism as he is about his favourite football club, Arsenal. He interviewed super producer Signe Byrge Sørensen, and asks whether MPs are getting paid too much.



Lena Rutkowski Editorial intern. An Australian law graduate, Lena investigated whether the welfare state is too bureaucratic, and to what extent DR is crowding out the radio market.



Rasmus Degnbøl Photo editor. Rasmus is an award winning documentary photographer and filmmaker.



Peter Berke Copenhagen based freelance artist/illustrator graduated from the Hungarian University of Fine Arts, he provided illustrations for two articles this issue.



Lene Kristine Konrad A study counsellor at Roskilde University and a philosopher in her spare time, Lene wrote about her experience as a reality show-participant.



Steffen Stubager An investigative journalist for Jyllands-Posten newspaper since 2009, Steffen has lived and worked on five continents as a feature and portrait journalist. In this issue he went diving with the Miskito people off the coast of Central America.

MASTHEAD

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MONTH IN REVIEW

LEGO SELLING OUT
Global demand for the iconic Lego bricks is so high that the company predicts that it will be unable to keep up with the demand and fears running out before Christmas.

This has prompted the company to make plans to greatly expand its operations across the world, which includes hiring thousands of new employees.



Siemens

Industry condemns government cuts to green research
The government's decision to cut 300 million kroner from a green research programme has been met with staunch criticism from the private industry and experts alike.

"This is completely the wrong way to go about it. We find the cuts to be very inappropriate and it is no secret that we had hoped the government would prioritise differently," Troels Ranis, energy director of industry lobby group Dansk Industri, told Information. He added that the government should in fact do the opposite and invest even more. Among the programmes set to be cut is Videncenter for Energibesparelser (the Research centre for energy efficiency), which was founded in 2008 and offers instructions and guidance to the construction industry. A number of industry organisations, including Dansk Byggeri, have sent a request to energy minister Lars Christian Lilleholt pleading with him to keep the centre open.

Siemens, which has created 10,000 jobs in Denmark in green energy, is also threatening to leave over the new climate legislation and reduction in state investment.

Fighter jet crash

A Danish F16 fighter jet crashed into the North Sea off the west coast of Jutland. The landing gear had malfunctioned and when the pilot was unable to fix the issue he was forced to eject.

The pilot's company commander Anders Rex denies the accident was due to the age of the plane. "I don't see any correlation between the two. These are old jets, but we have seen this malfunction before," he told TV2 News.

Elias Thorsson

FEWER ASYLUM SEEKERS

Last month the Danish Immigration Service released updated figures for the number of refugees who have sought asylum in the country.

The numbers show a clear drop in the number of asylum seekers compared to 2014, when a record 15,000 applied. Last September the immigration service registered 2,761 asylum seekers compared to 3,147 the year before. All in all 9,793 refugees have applied for asylum in Denmark so far, compared to 11,044 at the same time last year.

Syrians continue to make up the majority of asylum seekers with 4,398 applicants between January and September. Eritreans came second with 1,428 over the same period.



Peter Stanners

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STUDENTS PROTEST EDUCATION CUTS
In late October, roughly 40,000 students took to the streets in Copenhagen and Aarhus to protest the government's proposed education cuts. The government wants to cut 8.7 billion kroner, forcing all education institutions to save two percent of their budget each year for the next four years. "The cuts will damage the quality of our education and will have catastrophic consequences," Yasmin Davali, head of the Danish Students Council, told TV2. Education minister Esben Lørdal Larsen doesn't think the students have anything to worry about. "We spend 36% more on education now than in 2008," he told Politiken newspaper.



Uddannelsesalliancen

Islamist denied citizenship
Belal El-khatib, a 25-year old fundamentalist Muslim, has been denied citizenship, following a vote by parliament's citizen committee. "An Islamist who wants to replace democracy with a Caliphate should of course not be allowed to become a Danish citizen, it's as simple as that," said the committee's chairman Christian Langballe (DF).
El-Khatib explained on Radio24syv that while he supports Denmark becoming a caliphate, he would want the transition to be managed democratically. He said that he found the decision to deny him citizenship "frightening" as he does not have a criminal record, just unpopular views.



Malaria research finds cancer breakthrough
Danish researchers have discovered a treatment that could potentially cure cancer in the future.
"We have found a way to attack all types of cancer," professor Ali Salanti, from the University of Copenhagen's Department of Immunology and Microbiology, told DR. "If this works on people, we will be able to offer treatment to people who are terminally ill."
Salanti's team of researchers discovered the treatment while trying to find a cure for 'pregnancy malaria'. They found that the malaria protein they were working with also attached itself to cancerous cells. By connecting the malaria protein to a toxin, they could kill cancerous cells. Tests have shown positive signs, with the treatment killing around 95% of all types of cancerous cells. The treatment will undergo human testing in four-years time, if animal testing continues to be positive.

LEARNING DANISH SEX NORMS
A majority of parliament want immigrants to be taught about Danish sexual norms along side their language education. The reason for this move is that immigrants are over-represented in rape statistics, with 34.5 percent of rapes between 2012 and 2014 being committed by immigrants and the descendants of immigrants.
The move is supported by Socialdemokraterne, Dansk Folkeparti, Konservative and Radikale Venstre.

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CITY

COPENHAGEN TO HAVE CAR-FREE DAY IN 2016

On the last Sunday of September 2016, all cars will be banned from Copenhagen streets. The car-free day will be held in connection with European Mobility Week and was agreed upon by a majority of left and centre-left parties in Copenhagen City Council.

Morten Kabell, deputy mayor for technical and environmental affairs, explained that a car-free day will not only help Copenhageners enjoy the abandoned urban space but also improve general health in the city.

"Every year hundreds of Copenhageners become ill and die prematurely because of pollution and noise. Traffic is one of the main sinners, so now we have the opportunity to show Copenhageners just how much we can improve their health if we have fewer cars in the city. The car-free day will also put pressure on parliament who, are currently refusing to give us the opportunity to introduce road pricing and clean air zones," said Kabell.

The car-free day is inspired by a similar concept introduced in Paris, where air pollution fell by 40 percent in certain areas on the car-free day. Rasmus Jarlov, traffic spokesperson from The Conservative Peoples Party (Konservative) – who he represented in Copenhagen City Council before his election to parliament this year – is sceptical of the concept, as he fears more car-free days will follow in the future.

"As Konservative traffic spokesperson I must demand a report on the extent of Copenhagen City Council's right to close the capital's roads. We can live with a single car-free day a year. But as far as I understand, the left wing wants to introduce a monthly car-free day. I must stress that Copenhagen is not only for the people living in the city – it is Denmark's capital and is used by hundreds of thousands of people who work in or enjoy the city, but do not live in Copen-



The now-closed Klatreskoven in the Carlsberg City is just one of several popular attractions to face closure as the district redevelops.

Copenhagen's roads must be held open.

RASMUS JARLOV

Joshua Hollingdale

hagen Council. Its roads must be held open regardless of how many of the City Council's members live in the city's districts."

CARLSBERG CLOSSES CULTURE OFFERINGS

Despite heavy criticism, vibrant and successful cultural offerings in Carlsberg City are closing to make way for the next phase of development begins in the new city district.

The new Carlsberg City has proven a huge success. Developed on the grounds of the old Carlsberg brewery, the ambition was to create a 'Nordic SoHo' – a vibrant neighbourhood full of culture, life and creative spaces. So far, this goal has been accomplished and the neighbourhood has been almost exclusively a success, with a vast array of art exhibitions, concerts, fashion shows and other events present in the trendy district.

Now, some of the most popular cultural offerings of the neighbourhood are being closed down in order to continue redeveloping the

new part of Copenhagen.

The company responsible for the development, Carlsberg Byen P/S, has closed dance stage Dansehallerne and venue TAP1. Now, the popular playground Klatreskoven has also been closed as redevelopment of the rest of the neighbourhood commences.

The closing of the cultural centres has been heavily criticised by Vesterbro-based architects Peter Holt and Sidsel Jakobsen in a commentary piece in Berlingske Newspaper. The pair claimed that closing down the creative spaces represents the disappearance of the once-great vision of a new, creative, vibrant part of Copenhagen.

"Now, TAP1 is being torn down, the dance stage has been closed and the art mediators in Vores By (Our City) have all been resigned. The Klatreskoven playground will be cut down as building begins. But what are we getting instead? As of now, it is obvious that the housing construction is racing along, while the cultural development has been

stopped in its tracks. In the outline for the project, 15 percent of the budget should be designated for cultural purposes. However, it seems that the new development will include very few culturally related buildings, if any."

General Director of Carlsberg Byen P/S Jens Nyhus does not recognise the criticism as he explains that the now-closed creative centres were always intended to be temporary projects.

"The institutions we are now closing were always part of a temporary plan for the area. The temporary phases of the plan have been incredibly successful, but it is now time to move on to a new phase of the project," he told Politiken newspaper.

"If life disappears from Carlsberg, then I have lost. That's why we have designated five buildings that will contain culture in the future. At the moment we are in negotiations with several cultural institutions about involving them in Carlsberg City, but I cannot go into details about it at this time." **M**

COMMUNITY

EATING THE WORLD TO DEATH – PANEL DEBATE

Most people buy organic food because it makes them feel better. Why not buy eggs from chickens that have had space to live, and vegetables that haven't been sprayed with pesticides that can sink into groundwater?

But conventionally-produced food still accounts for the majority of the food we eat. And with it comes a host of problems – soil depletion, biodiversity loss, groundwater contamination. The list goes on.

Heather Thomas opened the MadMad Mad Bodega earlier this year to address the problems of modern agriculture and, on November 12, will host a panel discussion about these issues. We spoke to Heather about her inspiration for starting the restaurant and for hosting the panel discussion.

Tell us a little about your background.

I was living in London where I worked in the creative industry, but I had long been interested in food. I had started to think a lot about how far we have come from a time when would buy food directly from farmers. Modern cities have moved a long way from that.

My interest really started to develop after I worked on a pop up restaurant with the Royal Academy, together with a high quality London restaurant. I started to think about the reality of food culture and dreamt about turning Battersea Power Station into the world's largest urban farm to demonstrate how different life could be. I started to do a lot of research about the Nordic food movement and emphasis on changing infrastructure to create a more resilient food culture.

I was then invited to write about the Nordic Food Movement for a seminar on sustainability in a Scandinavian context at Copenhagen

What is at risk is our ability to live on the planet.

HEATHER THOMAS

Business School and I started to build a network here in the city. That, in turn, led to me creating a business plan for my restaurant, whose focus is creating consumer awareness about sustainable food and how to positively impact consumer behaviour.

What is wrong with modern agriculture?

After World War Two we witnessed an agricultural revolution that dramatically increased the yield of food we have produced. But it has come at a high cost on our biodiversity and soil quality. Modern agriculture also creates enormous carbon emissions – the food we buy accounts for about thirty percent of an individual's carbon footprint.

Climate change is a major issue, and the easiest way for individuals to reduce it is to be more careful about what they buy and eat. But this also links to food security. We know we are changing the climate, and while the planet will probably survive, our future is much less certain. What is at risk is our ability

to live on the planet, so we need to make sure we have healthy soil, water and seeds for a growing future population. It is a critical issue that most people simply aren't aware of.

How does your restaurant help in this process?

MadMad is trying to do multiple things. Firstly, we serve seasonal and organic food, 80 percent of which comes from within 200 kilometers, so guests know they are eating food that is a part of creating a more resilient food culture. But we also want to have an intimate relationship with our guests and consumers, because restaurants can be an important place for learning and exploring new foods, as well as to introduce new ways to make food.

We host events that introduce people to new ideas, and skills and tastes, which helps to raise awareness and change their habits about what and how they eat. Our vision is to be more transparent about how the food system works by bring-

ing together suppliers and end users so they have a more mutual understanding.

What is the ambition of the panel discussion?

The basic question we are asking is: What is a sustainable ecosystem? The solutions are complex, so it can be really difficult to understand what on earth one can do to make a difference during a trip to the supermarket! With the event, we want to bring together people from all parts of the food chain who are working creatively towards solutions to our problems, with the hope that we can inspire more people to take positive action towards change. After all, food is one of life's greatest joys – let's make sure it's something future generations can enjoy too!

'Eating the Planet to Death'

A panel conversation at
MadMad Mad Bodega
November 12, 19:00-20:30

Free, but seats must be reserved.
Email peter@murmur.dk



Heather Thomas outside her restaurant in Vesterbro.

Peter Stanners

Peter Stanners

Q&A

SOFIE MARIA BRAND – FAMILY ACTIVIST

Denmark is admired internationally for generous day care, maternity leave and the high labour participation rate of women, but Sofie Maria Brand thinks we're starting to lag behind our European neighbours. She argues that Danish families are still under too much stress, but it won't get any better unless politicians put improving family life back on the agenda.

Brand, a freelance journalist, is co-founder of *Familiepolitisk Netværk* (the Family Policy Network), an open Facebook debate platform for discussing family related policies. We spoke to her about what's going wrong and what needs to be done to make Denmark a better place to have a family.

What sparked your interest in the debate about families and the labour market?

It was becoming a parent and observing society through the lens of a parent. It's interesting that we work the hardest when we have small children, yet at the end of our lives find ourselves in retirement for 20-30 years with no obligations whatsoever. Why not work a little less when the kids are young and a little more during other stages of our lives?

I'm also interested in how we prioritise, both as parents and as a society. The pressures on families and the long hours children spend in day care are consequences of both personal choices and the structural frames enacted by society.

The mantra of growth and competitiveness in our society makes it hard to gain an understanding of the child's perspective and family politics in general. I see it as a necessary battle for care, togetherness and well-being.



Peter Stanners

Parents are already one of the most hard-work- ing groups.

Joshua Hollingdale

Why do you think families are under pressure?

It's probably because of the ever-rising tempo at which our society moves, with both parents working long hours. The combined working hours of a two-parent Danish family add up to 75 hours a week on average, which is one of the highest in Europe.

Also, parents with children under the age of 13 are some of Denmark's hardest workers. And according to Statistics Denmark they work more than Danes without children. Recently the Liberal Party (Venstre) government proclaimed that parents should work longer hours – but that is a terrible way to organise society as parents are already one of the most hard-working groups, while we have a large amount of unemployed people who desperately want a job.

What kind of support structures do you want to see for families with young children?

There are three key areas where we can improve – areas where our Nordic neighbours are ahead of us. Providing the option for parents to work less when their children are young – regardless of gender and industry.

Another is ensuring the right to stay home and take care of a child when it is sick, and introducing a form of taximeter-payment system in day care centres.

Furthermore, it's essential that we see a new attitude that embraces investing in young children. This is essential because we know that investing in the early development of children is one of the wisest, pre-emptive investments a society can make.

When it comes to families, how does Denmark stack up against its neighbours?

In Denmark, it's hard for many parents to reduce their working hours when their kids are young. In Sweden, parents have the right to work part-time until their child is eight years old. In Holland everyone has the right to work 32 hours a week, regardless of whether they have young children.

And there is no support for Danish parents who need to nurse a sick child. Most parents are allowed to take care of their child for 24 hours in order to 'find care' for them. In Norway and Germany parents are allocated 20 days per year to nurse their sick child – in Sweden it's 60 days! When it comes to day care, Danes typically pay for full-time care irrespec-

tive of how many hours their child spends there – in Sweden payment is determined solely on the hours the child is in day care. It goes without saying that this helps parents save money, making it easier for them to cut working hours.

How can policy ensure gender equality among parents?

The trick is to develop a modern, visionary family policy, which ensures equal maternity conditions for men and women, thereby making it possible for them to work a little less when the kids are young. In Holland a quarter of men work part-time and the term 'dad-day' has become normalised over the past few years – it's a day where the father has a weekly day off to focus on the family. That is progressive!

At the moment, the Danish labour market is far too rigid. In short – family-friendly support schemes, regardless of gender or industry will be solely positive for gender equality.

How can Denmark stay competitive if parents work less?

It's essential that both parents and children are healthy, robust and thriving to be able to stay competitive in the future. Right

now, stress and unhappiness among all sectors of the population are causing our society immense harm. Secondly, it is absolutely possible to work more at other times at one's life and a bit less when bringing up young children – over the course of a lifetime, that works out as the same contribution to society.

The head of the Max Planck Institute in Denmark, James Vaupel, has studied Danish demographical developments and suggested that our long life expectancy means that we ought to all work 20 hours per week until we are 80. According to Vaupel, that is financially viable for a society, as it would mean more people are employed and society would save a great deal on expenses produced by stress and unhappiness, as well as elder care costs.

But Danes still have much shorter work weeks compared to many other countries, so what's the problem?

It is correct that a 37 hour work week works out to be a little less than the hours in many other countries. However, our employment rate is very high, partly because so many women are employed in Denmark and families are pressured by the collective

I dream of a visionary family policy, one which understands the pressures face by two working parents and creates support structures which make it possible for both parents to work.



Find Familiepolitisk Netværk on Facebook, facebook.com/groups/familiepolitisknet

working hours of both parents.

Of course, I'm not at all nostalgic for past family structures, where domestic affairs were primarily a woman's domain. On the contrary, I dream of a visionary family policy, one which understands the pressures faced by two working parents and creates support structures which make it possible for both parents to work – all without making children the biggest losers in the equation.

Most children in Denmark start in day care when they are 10-12 months old and, on average, spend a little over seven hours a day in institutions. 13 percent spend more than 8 hours a day in care. We have to approach our thinking in this area more critically.

What's your ultimate manifesto?

Parents, politicians and unions all have a responsibility to improve the family balance for Danes, primarily to help out hard-working families. But also, because we know that people who have a thriving family life are actually better workers and they're less stressed. An incredible number of Danes are stressed and we must do something about that.

We should take inspiration from Sweden and experiment with shorter work days and more progressive policies. I hope that we can create a future with more open, thriving, caring families supported by a visionary family policy. In that way, we all win! **M**

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POLITICS



Parliament revisits "comically" absurd tax regulations

The Conservative People's Party (Konservative) have proposed a change to existing tax regulations to prevent homeowners from paying tax on the sale of property they will never profit from.

The issue is relevant to the owners of summerhouses that will inevitably be swallowed up by the encroaching shoreline. But it was a recent case in Nørrebro which has motivated parliamentary action.

A car repair shop was made to sell its property to Copenhagen City Council by 2020 for 50,730 kroner. The council forced the sale using expropriation laws, as it lies in an area slated for the expansion of Copenhagen University.

But because of the planned redevelopment, property prices in the area have shot up, including the value of the workshop. This has increased the owner's property tax to 500,000 kroner a year.

The tax authority SKAT initially said it would look into the matter, but later changed its position and said it would not consider the extenuating circumstances.

Brian Mikkelsen (above), tax spokesman for Konservative, has now proposed a law change that would make landowners subject to expropriation would only pay property tax based on the agreed sale price of their property. The move has broad cross-party support.

"It's utterly comical that we have

It's disappointing that the government's first agreement on the labour market, will reduce employment, when what we need is growth and higher employment.

JOACHIM B. OLSEN

Lena Rutkowski

a system where you pay an astronomical amount in property tax, before having to sell a property back for 50,000 kroner," Mikkelsen told Politiken newspaper.

"I have a good feeling that we will manage to get a majority," he added.

Lifeline reinstated ... with less money

Strong public backlash followed last month's announcement that the government was cutting funding for the suicide prevention hotline Livslinien.

The four million kroner cut in the proposed 2016 budget meant that the service would be unable to offer counselling support at night. According to Politiken newspaper, the organisation takes 5000 calls per year from people dealing with suicidal thoughts.

At the end of October the government revisited the issue during negotiations for *satspuljen*, a government fund that supports projects for marginalised and at-risk groups. Five million kroner have now been set aside from *satspuljen* to fund Livslinien through 2019.

While Livslinien's director Jeppe Kristen Toft is pleased that some funds have been cobbled together, he points out that the organisation must now survive on 83,330 kroner less per year than was assigned to them in the 2015 budget.

"Unfortunately, the five million aren't enough to cover the night service over the next four years, which means we'll have to pull the remaining funds out of our daily operating costs. The telephones have to stay open at night. That is crucial," Toft told Politiken.

Defending the original decision to pull funding, health minister Sophie Løhde pointed out that Livslinien is an independent organisation and could therefore seek additional funding from private sources. Livslinien's founder and Chairman Morten Thomsen resigned in response to the cuts.

"We chose to make a clear political statement when I stepped down, and I stand by that," Thomsen told Politiken.

The *satspuljen* fund amounts to 494 million kroner in 2016, and will support a wide range of projects, including a project to outline the social impact of Denmark's current drug policy.

Satspuljen has its critics, however, including professor Bjarne Ibsen, from the Centre for Sports, Health and Civil Society at the University of Southern Denmark. In an op-ed in Politiken, he argued that *Satspuljen's* remit was too vague to adequately address social issues.

"*Satspuljen* is used by politicians to make small attempts at rectifying the impact of their legislation and push their own agendas. The aim seems very vague. The goal should be clear: to test ideas out in the real world, instead of having them devised by commissions and ministers."



Government wants to keep EU grads

It's a waste of resources to offer free university places to EU students and pay them grants (SU), only to have them leave Denmark after graduating. That's the concern of science minister Esben Lunde Larsen, who wants industry and higher education institutions to develop strategies to keep more foreign graduates in Denmark.

Larsen has now earmarked three million kroner for projects aimed at encouraging international graduates to move to parts of Denmark suffering from a skilled labour.

"If you come here as an EU citizen and receive a free education and SU

before going home again, then Denmark doesn't get much out of its investment. We'd be using higher education funding on nothing," Larsen told Berlingske newspaper.

According to the latest ministry figures, the number of foreign students has nearly doubled since 2008 and today every tenth university student comes from abroad. In 2013 the EU ruled that all students from the EU were entitled to SU and last year

30,221 EU students claimed the 5,903 kroner monthly grant in 2014, according to Metroxpress.

DF's Morten Messerschmidt in hot water

The Danish People's Party's (DF) enormously popular European MP, Morten Messerschmidt (left), has become embroiled in a campaign funding controversy.

The saga began when fellow MEP Rikke Karlsson quit DF in protest over a lack of transparency in the party's finances. She claimed she had not been informed that a DF campaign video had been financed by the EU-sceptic European Parliament party Movement for a Europe of Liberties and Democracy (MELD).

Karlsson's concerns arose because the video urged Danish voters to vote 'No' on the December referendum on abandoning Denmark's opt-out on Justice and Home Affairs. EU Parliament funds may not be used on national election and referendum campaigns, but when she approached Messerschmidt for an explanation, she claims he brushed her off.

"It complied with regulations. There's nothing to go after," was Messerschmidt's immediate response to the controversy. But as the media storm intensified he made scathing comments about his ex-colleague:

"It seems to me that she's a confused little girl who came from Rebild to Brussels and can't work out what is happening around her," he told Berlingske. Karlsson was a councillor in Rebild before relocating to the EU Parliament in 2014.

Messerschmidt later took to Facebook to apologise for his "hasty" words, adding that the response was

provoked by anger and surprise. He also claimed he had invited Karlsson to a meeting regarding the party's accounts.

The case cannot be investigated until MELD delivers its end-of-year accounts for 2015, the European Parliament's spokesperson Marjory Van Den Broeke told DR.

The EU, has furthermore, now demanded that Messerschmidt hand over documents regarding the funding of a DF promotional boat tour around Denmark in 2013. The boat tour preceded local council elections, but Messerschmidt claims all rules were upheld.

In late October, Messerschmidt's reputation was dealt a final blow after MELD – which Messerschmidt chairs – repaid a million kroner to the EU. The money had been paid as compensation to a MELD MEP who failed to get reelected, which is an illegal use of MELD funds.

On Facebook, Messerschmidt denied any wrongdoing and said the misappropriation preceded his chairmanship of the group.



DF fined for fear-mongering campaign

DF found itself in more hot water after The City Court of Copenhagen found the anti-immigration party guilty of libel. Fifteen plaintiffs had sued the party for a highly controversial 2013 advertising campaign, in which they listed the names of 685 new citizens with the tagline "One person on the list is a danger to Denmark's security. Now he will become a Dane".

DF placed the advert (above) after the domestic intelligence agency PET confirmed that one of the people

due to receive citizenship at the time had been monitored for worrying and suspicious behaviour.

Last month, Copenhagen City Court ruled in favour of the plaintiffs who were all named in the advertisements. DF was ordered to pay over one hundred thousand kroner in compensation plus legal costs. The party was also forced to remove the ad from its website.

"We are very surprised by the verdict and therefore we will appeal the case to the High Court," DF's deputy chairman Søren Espersen told Ritzau.

"We never wanted to offend anyone," added Espersen of the advertisement, which was decisively denounced by several parties including the Social Democrats and Venstre.

Everyone's unhappy about unemployment insurance

Parliament has reached an agreement that will annually put a further 300 million kroner into the state-sponsored unemployment insurance, *dagpenge*. A deal was struck by the Liberal Party (Venstre) government together with the Social Democratic Party (Socialdemokraterne), DF and the Social Liberal Party (Radikale).

The new deal is supposed to remedy problems caused by a 2014 reform to the scheme that saw tens of thousands of people lose their unemployment benefits. To free up money within the system, students graduating from university from January 2017 will receive 71.5 percent of what normal unemployed received, down from 82 percent.

The major change to the scheme will make short-term employment more attractive. Currently, you have to pay into the scheme for a year in order to earn two years of *dagpenge*. Now, short-term periods of working can contribute to extending their coverage period an extra year.

The new reform still has its critics, however, including Konservativer who accused the government of breaking an election promise to not increase spending on *dagpenge*.

"Venstre have repeatedly promised not to make *dagpenge* more expensive. That promise has vanished with this agreement with the left wing.

We are naturally disappointed," the party's employment spokesperson Rasmus Jarlov told DR.

"We should not spend more money to have people on passive income support."

Liberal Alliance's (LA) employment spokesperson Joachim B. Olsen argues that the reform will only lead to more unemployed people.

"It's disappointing that the government's first agreement on the labour market, will reduce employment, when what we need is growth and higher employment," he told DR.

On the left wing, the Socialist People's Party (SF) are concerned that the government hasn't invested enough in supporting the unemployed. Speaking to DR, SF leader Pia Olsen Dyrhøj accused DF's leader Kristian Thulesen Dahl of backtracking on their prior funding agreement by supporting the changes.

"This is a clear breach of the agreement I made with Dahl. He has said again and again, that a minimum of 600 to 700 million kroner annually should go to improving the *dagpenge* system, and that this expense wouldn't come out of the pockets of the unemployed. But that is exactly what has happened."

"Shotgun tactics" polarise police budget talks

Several left wing opposition parties have been kicked out of budget negotiations for a new police bill, after refusing to accept annual cuts of half a billion kroner from youth education that would be used to fund the police budget. The government issued an ultimatum that parties must accept the cuts or be excluded from participating in writing the bill.

"It's a completely insane way of negotiating," SF's Lisbeth Bech Poulsen told Politiken, who also referred to the ultimatum as "shotgun tactics" and "undemocratic."

Enhedslisten MP Pernille Skipper was equally disappointed.

"We have been kicked out of the process, because they made it non-negotiable to cut very, very deep into youth education which we can of course not support."

Meanwhile, DF and Social-

It's utterly comical that we have a system where you pay an astronomical amount in property tax, before having to sell a property back for 50,000 kroner.

BRIAN MIKKELSEN



flickr / Dave Conner

demokraterne have accepted Venstre's terms.

"The reality is that the government needs to take money from one place, if it's going to be used somewhere else," Venstre's finance spokesman, Jakob Jensen told Politiken. "So we can't have parties welcoming increase funding for the police if they then criticise the source of that funding."

Tighter immigration rules imminent

The government has followed through on election promises to introduce tighter immigration rules. A number have already been introduced, such as tougher citizenship requirements. Applicants must now sit harder citizenship and Danish language tests, and also be financially self-sufficient for a longer period of time. Unemployed immigrants who have not lived in Denmark for at least seven of the last eight years are now only entitled to half of what a Dane would receive in benefits. The government also removed a shortcut to citizenship for children and young people born in Denmark to foreign parents, and limited access to housing benefits and state pensions.

As we go to print, the government is in the final stages of negotiating a number of other immigration rules. They include: higher requirements for attaining permanent residency, widening the net for immigrants who only qualify for the lower unemployment benefits, and tightening family reunification requirements. **M**



News Oresund

The Danish parliament, Folketinget. A commission will present a new system for MP pay and pensions in the new year.

Poor politicians padding their paychecks

Recent scandals have put the spotlight back on the remuneration and pensions that politicians receive. In the new year a commission will propose new rules, but can we really trust politicians not to write themselves a blank check?

POLITICIANS RECEIVE generous pensions and severance pay, so they might be sad to see it overhauled at the end of 2015. That's when a commission will propose a new system outlining pay and pensions for the country's MPs, ministers and mayors.

The commission was set up by the former government and is comprised of ex-politicians and former civil servants, but MP Pernille Skipper from left-wing party the Red-Green Alliance (Enhedslisten) is worried. Can former MPs and civil servants be relied upon to objectively shape the financial benefits of politicians?

To draw attention to the issue, Skipper's party has launched a campaign under the hashtag #pensionshyckleri (pension hypocrisy).

I am very sceptical of a pay-and-pension-commission.

PERNILLE SKIPPER

Joshua Hollingdale

She fears that rather than cutting into the hefty pensions and paychecks, the commission will propose even more "unfair" schemes to the advantage of politicians – especially because the government has promised to unquestioningly pass the commission's proposals at the end of the year.

"I have to admit that I am very sceptical of a pay-and-pension-commission made up of former politicians and government officials. I cannot help but think they will understand too well what life is like as an MP and too poorly what life is like as an average Dane. I am all for reviewing the rules, but it looks like political whitewashing when the politicians promise to pass whatever the commission proposes, even if the commission proposes

significant rises in pay and or pension rates."

HYPOCRISY

Currently, MPs can begin receiving their pensions while still working full-time as lawmakers. While the former government raised the pension age for ordinary Danes to 68, they were among five parties to vote "No" to an Enhedslisten proposal to raise the pension age for MPs to the same. The failed proposal means that MPs can still receive a pension at age 60, which Enhedslisten regards as hypocritical.

"Generally, conditions for politicians' pay and pension rates are remarkably unreasonable when compared to average Danish workers. This gives rise to

political alienation when lawmakers cut the unemployment benefits for the whole of society while providing excellent unemployment and pension rates for themselves. The disproportionately favourable rates also mean that politicians have a poorer understanding of what life is like on an average salary, with an average pension – and that is a problem. It is hypocritical when politicians make everyone else work harder, longer and for poorer pension rates while keeping their own rates unfairly high. We believe politicians should take responsibility and create fairer conditions for themselves."

In Skipper's eyes, fair conditions mean an MP pension age which is on par with normal Danes,

while setting the pension rates closer to that of an average Danish worker

"We are not trying to make politicians have the salary of a health care assistant – although I think some of them would benefit greatly from it – we have just proposed a series of changes to the rules in order to make them fairer. For example setting the pension age to that of a normal Dane and setting the pension rates of ministers to that of a top civil servant."

LOW PAY, POOR POLITICANS

In a column for the tabloid BT, journalist Peter Brüchmann argues that Danish politicians are actually not being paid enough. The "relatively low" salaries result in less qualified lawmakers and "career politicians" occupying the most important positions in society. He argues that qualified people are lured away from politics by the prospect of better pay in other industries.

"We see far too few directors coming in from the real world of business to take substantial part in the discussion when proposing changes to the labour market," he writes.

One of the few people to have made the transition from the business world to politics is Malou Aamund, who in 2007 was voted into parliament with the party Ny Alliance, the predecessor to Liberal Alliance. She has now left politics to work for Microsoft Denmark. She disagrees that pay rates explain why there are not more corporate backgrounds in Parliament.

"I do not think that the main motivation to become a politician is, or should be, a high salary. I think, and hope, that most politicians become politicians in order to make a positive difference to their country. When it comes to the small number of politicians with real business experience, I think that comes down to people fearing not being able to come back to their corporate careers after doing a stint in politics. However, that has a lot more to do with the pressure from the press and being in the public eye than the size of the pay check and the rate of the pension," explains Aamund.

VOTERS WANT CUTS

The timing of the proposals from the pay-and-pensions committee

couldn't be worse, suggests professor Jørgen Goul Andersen from the Department of Political Science at Aalborg University. He believes people's trust of politicians is currently very low, meaning they are unlikely to look favourably, upon any pay increases for politicians.

"The timing is bad because voter faith in politicians is currently very low. The trust was exceedingly high 10 years ago, but that has changed. It will be very hard for the politicians to pass the changes without heavy criticism."

In a study from 30 years ago, Andersen asked voters what they thought of the salaries of politicians and ministers.

"The voters' idea of a fair salary for lawmakers was much, much lower than what the politicians were actually being paid. I do not think that has changed in any significant way over the last 30 years. In a time where distrust is high, this matter is rather controversial," Andersen explains.

DOUBLE PAY

The commission's findings will arrive only months after the September resignation of former defence minister Carl Holst (V), whose short stint as minister were filled with scandal. Besides being accused of misusing public funds, Holst was heavily criticised for accepting a golden handshake of roughly 800,000 kroner after stepping down as Head of the Region of Southern Denmark to become defence minister – a job that pays over a million kroner a year. Following immense pressure from the media, Holst decided to decline around half of the sum.

Skipper calls the former minister's behaviour "appalling" and is critical of double pay situations where politicians receive remunerations, or pension, while receiving a full-time salary on top.

"I completely understand why people have perceived it as a type of double salary, because essentially it is. I do not think Carl Holst would approve of any Dane accepting unemployment benefits while working a full-time job, which is basically the same thing."

In addition to the 400,000 kroner Holst received after stepping down from Region of Southern Denmark, Holst will also receive another severance pay of roughly 1.8 million kroner following his resignation as defence minister. He held the post for 93 days. **M**



Carl Holst served as defence minister for 93 days before stepping down in September. He left with a severance pay of roughly 1.8 million kroner.

Venstre

I do not think that the main motivation to become a politician is, or should be, a high salary.

MALOU AAMUND

FACTS – RULES FOR PAY AND PENSION FOR LAWMAKERS

Annual salaries

MP: 685,000 kroner
Prime minister: 1,464,000 kroner.
Minister of finance, economy, interior, foreign affairs: 1,290,000 kroner.
Other ministers: 1,171,000 kroner.

Annual tax free housing allowance: 106,000 kroner.

Pensions

MPs:
A lifelong annual sum of 79,142 kroner after one year of service. After 20 years of service, they can claim 347,000 kroner.

Ministers:
A lifelong annual sum of 478,000 kroner per year after one year served as a minister.

Pensions for MPs and ministers can be claimed from age 60 and are not deducted for any other income.

Severance pay

MPs who leave parliament are entitled to 51,358 kroner per month for a period between one and two years, depending on how long they served in parliament. They must deduct other income from this sum, except in the first year when they are allowed to earn 134,596 kroner.

Ministers who step down receive severance pay equivalent to 18 to 36 months of their ministerial salary, depending on how long they served as minister. If they continue as an MP, their salary is deducted from this sum.

Playing with China

Lego refused to deliver blocks to Chinese artist Ai Weiwei. Danish police removed pro-Tibet protestors from Danish streets during a Chinese state visit to Denmark. Does a business relationship with China mean compromising human rights?

LEGO is the brand that can do no evil. The iconic plastic blocks inspire nostalgia in adults, while children today still enjoy lego in a world awash with digital distractions.

But Lego might have met their match: the Chinese artist Ai Weiwei. In October he took to Instagram to announce that the company had refused his studio's request for a bulk order of Lego, which he intended to use in an artwork for the National Gallery of Victoria, Australia.

Lego spokesperson Roar Rude Trangbaek told Agence France-Presse that Lego has a long-running policy of not actively engaging or endorsing the use of its bricks with a political agenda, which is why they declined their support.

"[But] we respect any individual's right to free creative expression, and we do not censor, prohibit or ban creative use of Lego bricks," Trangbaek said.

Ai Weiwei argues the decision was made to appease Chinese authorities and avoid reprisals.

"As a powerful corporation, Lego is an influential cultural and political actor in the globalized economy with questionable values," Ai Weiwei wrote. "Lego's refusal to sell its product to the artist is an act of censorship and discrimination."

SUPPRESSING EXPRESSION

Weiwei has a history of being silenced. In 2009 his massively popular blog was removed from the Chinese social media platform Sina Weibo due to its strong anti-government message. In 2011 Chinese authorities arrested Weiwei on suspicion of economic crimes and held him for almost three months before he was eventually released.

He was prevented from leaving China until June 2015, when the authorities finally returned his passport. Despite the official allegations against him, it's widely considered that Weiwei's arrest is linked to his criticism of the Chinese government.

In another Instagram post, Weiwei pointed out that Lego's de-



Pro-Tibet protestors in Copenhagen during the 2013 China state visit. Some protestors were removed from the street and had their flags removed by police.

cision to not honour a bulk order was followed by news in October that UK company Merlin Entertainment had signed an agreement with China Media Capital to open a Legoland park in Shanghai.

"Many politicians and big businesses enjoy the business opportunities and buying power that China offers, which could benefit both Western society and China," Weiwei wrote in an email to Berlingske newspaper. "But it's not good in the long term that they are not standing up for fundamental and hard-won Western values in order to please the Chinese authorities."

LOSING FACE

Businesses and states are wary of

angering China for good reason. Like Lego, Nordic countries have shied away from taking a stance on human rights when economic issues are at play.

Norway's relationship with China faced a major setback in 2010 when the Norwegian Nobel Prize Committee awarded the prize to Liu Xiaobo, an imprisoned human rights activist. China froze bilateral trade talks, while diplomatic and cultural exchanges were cancelled.

As a gesture of appeasement, the Norwegian government then refused to meet the Dalai Lama in 2014. Beijing considers state receptions of the exiled Tibetan leader an acknowledgement of the

region's claim for independence, which is at odds with the Chinese stance.

The Norwegian government is not the only country to appease China rather than risk the diplomatic cold shoulder from the world's largest economy. Former Danish PM Helle Thorning-Schmidt also declined to meet with the Dalai Lama in February.

But the Danish authorities have gone even further to avoid offending China. During a visit by former Chinese President Hu Jintao in 2012, police removed protesters who carried the Tibetan flag through Copenhagen as they followed the route of Jintao's motorcade.

Peter Stanners

Six detained protestors then sued Copenhagen Police. In October, the Eastern High Court found that the police's actions were illegal, at least in one case. But who gave the call? We will have to wait two years to find out, the amount of time justice minister Søren Pind has given a newly-established commission to investigate where the order came from.

Jacob Mchangama, lawyer and CEO of judicial think tank Justitia, thinks their orders probably came straight from the top.

"It's unlikely that it was a unilateral decision by police to move against critical protestors waving Tibetan flags," he told TV2 News following the release of emails from the foreign ministry, where civil servants and politicians expressed fears that China might lose face during the President's visit.

CHINA MOVING FORWARD

Sune Skadegaard Thorsen, CEO of consultancy firm GLOBAL CSR, says Western businesses don't need to compromise on human rights to operate in China. His organisation promotes sustainable business practices that respect human rights. He has found that China is increasingly aware of its need to live up to UN human rights conventions.

"I have discussed human rights with many Chinese officials, you just have to go about it the right way," Thorsen says. "We are seeing a transformation where China is moving slowly but steadily toward being a valued part of the international community, and appreciating that human rights are the foundation of any state."

Thorsen says China is moving towards accepting international standards for human rights. They have signed and ratified both the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which means that businesses in China must provide its workers with particular rights – and they do.

DEVELOPMENT OVER EXPRESSION

China does lag behind the West with regards to political rights. The jailing of political dissidents and widespread surveillance and censorship of its citizens, draws ire from the West, where free expression is highly valued.

Professor Xing Li, from the department of Culture and Global Studies, at Aalborg University argues that this is the central difference between China and the West. Instead of privileging rights to freedom of expression, Chi-

na has spent the last 40 years focussing on its citizens right to live in a developed country, and has spectacularly transformed in the process – 500 million fewer Chinese live in poverty (under \$1.90 per day) today than in 1990, according to the World Bank.

"From the Chinese point of view, people's immediate needs are not free elections or free speech and expression, it's improving living conditions and developing china as a whole. The Communist Party has succeeded in raising living standards and now enjoys huge legitimacy among its people," says Li.

Li argues that with a country of 1.3 billion people, direct democracy and free expression wouldn't have brought about the same change. It is more efficient to vote locally, and allow local representatives to choose representatives above them, and so on. And while in the West freedom of expression means politicians spend lots of time convincing voters, they are more often than not better at arguing than actually bringing about change.

PUBLIC CRITICISM NECESSARY

While effective, the Chinese political system, and the changes it has brought about, are paid with restrictions on expression that its citizens must endure. That European citizens are also silenced when China visits, is definite grounds for criticism, argues Ole Hoff-Lund, Editor and Head of Press and Media Relations for Amnesty International.

"So-called critical dialogue with China has lost its substance when we see protestors in European countries being dragged away and silenced by police in order to not embarrass the visiting Chinese leaders by showing Tibetan flags. The very oppression of freedom of speech in China has been exported to some EU-countries whenever they host state visits from China as we have seen in the same Tibet scandals in Denmark, Belgium and Ireland".

He adds that public criticism is needed to encourage China to continue reforming.

"The current crackdown in China where more than 250 human rights lawyers and activists have been targeted and branded as a 'criminal gang' by the Chinese authorities serves to show that the critical dialogue on the top political level has not changed anything. There is a need for the political establishment as well as transnational companies and civil society to put more effort and pressure on China and to publicly criticise China's poor human rights record." ■

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The welfare state's greatest threat is middle management

Liberal Alliance's 'de-bureaucratisation' spokesperson Henrik Dahl wants to trim Denmark's administrative fat. He thinks its possible to reduce the size of the public sector without worsening education and frontline services, but opponents see it as a ruse to cut taxes

"KAFKAESQUE" is how Henrik Dahl describes the public sector. The former sociologist is now an MP for Liberal Alliance (LA), whose party has diagnosed the state administrations with extreme bloat – burdened by the weight of committees, rules and administrators. Radical surgery is the only remedy.

Dahl is the first 'de-bureaucratisation' spokesperson in Parliament, tasked with identifying areas of wanton or needless spending. It's a central mission for his libertarian and small government party, which imagines a lower tax and a wealthier Denmark.

Dahl's background in Sociology enables him to draw heavily on the-

Lena Rutkowski

ory to illustrate why public administration has, in his view, become unsustainably bloated. He says it all boils down to modern interpretations of Parkinson's Law, an adage originating from a 1950s essay by former British civil servant Cyril Northcote Parkinson, which holds that bureaucracy creates yet more bureaucracy.

"You see this mechanism in operation every day in Denmark – for example, 3,900 public sector jobs are being relocated," he says, referring to government plans to boost nationwide growth by pushing government jobs outside of the capital. "In response, local councils are setting up special branches to welcome the new recruits. Imagine that!"

He argues that excessive administration is a product of a flawed system that protects the interests of civil servants. Denmark's class of highly-educated individuals has created a class of bureaucrats who keep adding layers upon administrative layers to keep themselves occupied.

"The ruling class wants high wages, pleasant working conditions, to escape physical work – and it looks after itself. It demands that we educate more people."

LESS BUREAUCRACY, LESS TAX

LA have a plan – the '2025 plan'. They argue that it is possible to cut 10 percent of public spending without diminishing the quality of services. In exchange we would pay

less taxes, strengthen the economy and lower unemployment.

Opponents argue that cutting public spending would still disproportionately hit the most vulnerable, but LA have a trump card. The entire plan has been vetted by the Finance Ministry and follows the recommendations presented by the former centre-left government's Productivity Commission. By cutting bureaucracy, they argue, more resources are freed up for spending on core welfare such as elderly, child and home care.

But not everyone within the party agrees exactly where the fat should be trimmed. A 2014 reform to reduce the number of university places in humanities departments

– due to the lower employment prospects of graduates – was hotly debated. LA's education spokesperson Merete Rissager approved of the former government's move.

"It isn't fair to ask others to pay for an education, which functions as a sort of occupational therapy or a hobby for years, but which will never be used for anything," Riisager wrote in Ræson.

In contrast, Dahl's academic past means he doesn't take to the issue with the same degree of ruthlessness as the former Social Democrat (Socialdemokraterne) government behind the reform. "There is nothing wrong per se with humanities. The odyssey has to be translated into Danish once in a while – you need people who are capable of doing things like that, people with a deep understanding of languages."

Dahl, however, still thinks that savings can be made within the higher education sector.

"So many university structures are superfluous – HR departments, meaningless documentation and fairly meaningless outreach programs which are absolutely unimportant," he says, adding that he supports the government's plans to cut 3.3 billion from the higher education budget over the next three years.

"You have to make these cuts to avoid protecting the irrational production structures embedded in the universities. They won't be eliminated unless you put them under pressure – which you have to do."

ANTI-BUREAUCRACY ALTERNATIVE

LA isn't the only party demanding a scaling down of public administration to stimulate economic growth. Across the political spectrum, the new green and pro-entrepreneurial party The Alternative (Alternativet) have also made de-bureaucratisation a key policy issue.

"I think everybody agrees that we have to tackle bureaucracy, but we don't feel that enough has been done," says Josephine Fock, Alternativet's economy, justice and taxation spokesperson.

Their focus on de-bureaucratisation as a key policy concern was made clear in the party's opening speech to parliament in September:

"We agree that we need more entrepreneurs and the public sector needs to cut red tape [...] the public sector is tangled up in a straitjacket, which limits employ-

ees in carrying out their work," Fock said at the time.

But while LA want to use the savings from a streamlined public sector on tax cuts, Alternativet wants increased investment in environmental initiatives.

"We see the public sector as the engine behind the creation of environmental infrastructure," says Fock. "Our main goal is focussed on sustainable growth."

Like LA, Alternativet want to tackle bloated university structures. Carolina Maier, the party's education spokesperson, argues that the problem is overregulation of higher education.

"Copenhagen tops the list of bureaucratic universities in the Nordic countries. 50.4 percent of the staff are non-scientific staff, which is way too many," she says, adding that reducing university bureaucracy shouldn't involve draining funds out of higher education, but rather managing their existing budgets more effectively.

"We don't think that we should cut resources to the universities. On the contrary, we are very concerned that the present government is cutting research budgets. We just need to make sure that the resources are spent on research and education, instead of on administration."

Alternativet also want to cut ad-

ministration costs in public health care in order to rechannel funds toward the employees who work directly with patients. Hours now spent on paperwork could easily be freed up, argues Fock.

"But contrary to LA, we want to use the money that is liberated from cutting unnecessary bureaucracy in the public sector, to strengthen the delivery of services," says Fock, adding that renewed confidence in the public sector is vital.

"We don't want to over-document every process. Rather than seeing public servants endlessly fill out forms, we must have the confidence that public employees are using their time to carry out their professional abilities."

BUREAUCRATIC OR EFFECTIVE?

The clamour to shrink the public sector assumes that Denmark is too bureaucratic. But Peter Hummelgaard Thomsen, employment and taxation spokesperson for the Socialdemokraterne, argues that the issue is exaggerated and that the government already has mechanisms in place to uphold administrative efficiency.

"For over 10 years there has been a demand for efficiency performance within the public sector. The annual budget places a cap on

The ruling class wants high wages, pleasant working conditions, to escape physical work – and it looks after itself.

HENRIK DAHL

how much local authorities are allowed to spend, and then there's a demand to streamline efficiency by two percent each year."

He does acknowledge that it is problematic when an increasing share of government resources are spent on management positions, rather than staff who actually deliver services.

"On the one hand we cut down on the people delivering the public services, such as nurses and teachers, and on the other hand we keep hiring people to ensure that the work is done correctly. That's very asymmetrical – we have too little confidence in the welfare services we put out."

Research by KORA, the Danish Institute for Local and Regional Government Research, dispels the myth that public administration costs are spiralling out of control in the local councils.

According to their research, council spending has dropped over the past seven years, primarily because of the 2007 structural reform that reduced the total number of councils from 271 to 98.

"Since 2007, spending has declined in the merged councils, while spending among the others has remained quite stable," says KORA economic researcher Kurt Houlberg. "Overall, there has been



Henrik Dahl, MP for Liberal Alliance, argues that bureaucracies are self-perpetuating and should be restricted wherever possible.



Peter Hummelgaard Thomsen, the Social Democrats' employment and taxation spokesperson, says the government already has mechanisms in place to uphold administrative efficiency.

a decrease in expenditure."

"And besides the spending on public administration itself, since 2009 we've seen overall spending in services like culture, education and daycare decline," he says.

Similarly, the majority of the public sector is actually self-financing, according to *Danmark 2030*, a recent report released by the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) together with the Economic Council of the Labor Movement (AE). It defines 'self-financing' in terms of the public sector's cost versus how much it gives back in terms of a larger labour market, which then pays more in taxes.

"While the public sector is portrayed by certain parties as a bottomless box, into which money is poured, we find that's simply not true. Right-wing politicians and companies know full well that without a functioning and efficient public sector, no private business will function optimally," Per Christensen, chairman of the union 3F, told Information newspaper in April.

THE 'RULE STATE'

A recent book is also challenging the claim that the Danish public sector is tangled up in a complex web of overregulation.

In *The Rule State – growth in Danish laws and regulations 1989 – 2011*, political science researchers Mads Leth Felsager Jakobsen and Peter Bjerre Mortensen argue that there's no evidence to suggest

that rules are begetting yet more rules. After collating all national, primary and secondary legislation passed between 1989 and 2011, they found that the increase in rules and legislations has been far more modest than is often claimed.

"Analysts have gone so far as to say that we get up to 300 new laws per year, and several hundred executive orders," says Bjerre Mortensen. "The reality is that on average, laws have increased by nine or ten per year, and we get approximately 70 new executive orders per year."

They also argue that critics don't account for the fact that new laws and regulations are often introduced to replace existing ones, which doesn't lead to an overall increase in the number of laws.

The book does confirm the international trend that regulations increase under governments that invest heavily in the public sector. In Denmark, right wing governments have characteristically regulated less than centre-left governments.

But Mortensen also explains that LA's preferred strategy of privatising and liberalising public services, would actually result in a higher degree of regulation.

"LA forget that when you want to create a private market, that requires a lot of rules, which need to regulate every aspect of the market to ensure it functions. You can see it in the energy market – originally it functioned under a state monop-

oly and when it was liberalised in the 1990s the number of rules just exploded. Internationally this also tends to be the case."

The two authors offer a different account of Dahl's claim that bureaucracy begets bureaucracy.

"Deregulation activities have been seen as something apolitical, and our main point in the book is that it's actually a political question. Rules are inherently political, they give rights to some people and they distribute values," says Bjerre Mortensen.

"This idea that stupid regulations must be eliminated is an illusion, what's actually taking place in this deregulation discussion is a political battle."

TOO MUCH TINKERING?

When the surgical knife is applied to the public sector, there's inevitably a risk of botching the operation and undermining core welfare services. At what point can you ensure sufficient staff to maintain workloads, and guarantee that the money saved is worth the resources stripped? That's Thomsen's concern.

"We are at a point where we need to consider whether these proposed public cutbacks are actually good for the sector," says Thomsen.

He points to the fact that Denmark's welfare model is internationally praised and worries that an exaggerated anti-bureaucracy de-

This idea that stupid regulations must be eliminated is an illusion, what's actually taking place in this deregulation discussion is a political battle.

**PETER BJERRE
MORTENSEN**

bate may dismantle an irreplaceable public good.

"Sanders gives Denmark a lot of credit for the fact that we've succeeded in creating a society with high equality and growth," says Thomsen, referring to US presidential candidate Bernie Sanders' praise of Denmark's welfare model in last month Democratic Party primaries. "It's proven to work."

Thomsen also disputes suggestions that public administration hinders the country's economic development.

"The Danish Council of Economic Advisors has said that the Danish economy is in good shape – while we're struggling in the aftermath of the financial crisis, we're still in a fairly good situation compared with most other countries in Europe."

For Thomsen, the debate ultimately serves to obscure the critical role played by civil administration in securing Denmark's high standards of living and welfare support.

"We have a tendency to forget the strengths of a strong public sector – what it does for a viable social safety net, how it helps to invest in future generations and the transition to a green economy. You also have to consider its economic effect – when we have a crisis, the public sector offers an airbag against financial relapse. I don't think that the public sector is too large, and I don't think that is the biggest concern at the moment." **M**

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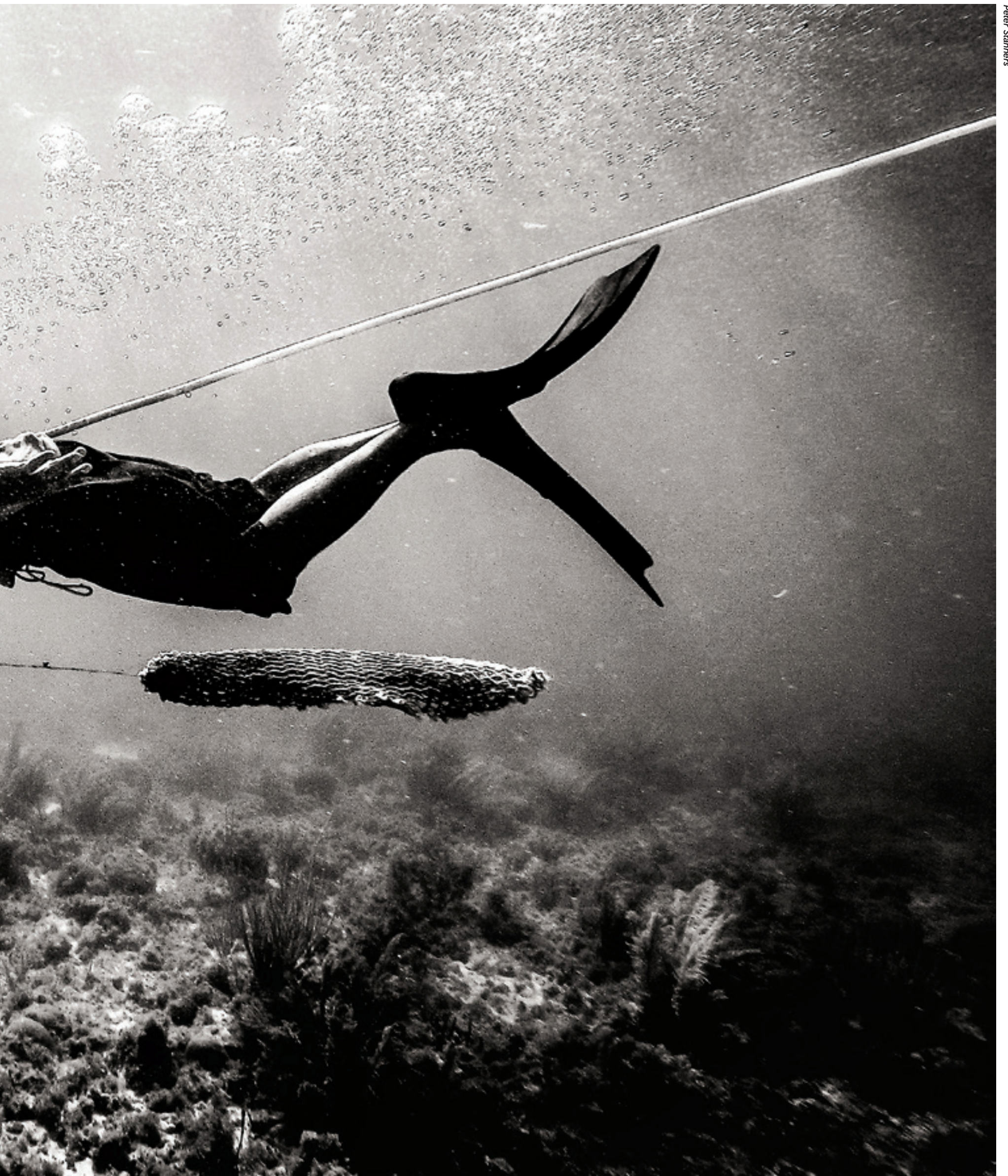
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CAPTURED

Steffen Stubager

Along the coast of Honduras and Nicaragua, thousands of Miskito people risk their lives catching lobsters for the US and European markets. They stay submerged for up to 90 minutes at a time, breathing air delivered through garden hoses. Over the years, some divers develop the bends, while others are killed by sharks or drown. There are 80,000 Miskito people and most are dependant on lobster fishing – one of the world's most dangerous occupations. This young diver was in dangerous waters, 20 meters beneath the surface and over 160 meters from shore. He knows he faces a bleak future but, as he says: "Diving is the only way for the Miskito people to survive. We have nothing else."



Muslims! Halal! Sharia! Just another day at the office for Rushy Rashid

The production studio is packed with spectators. On the other side of the soundproof glass, Rushy Rashid Højbjerg is interviewing historian Lars Hedegaard about his latest book. It recounts his thoughts following the assassination attempt on his life in 2013. The door is flanked by two agents from PET, the domestic intelligence agency, who follow Hedegaard wherever he goes.

The perpetrator has yet to be apprehended, but the suspected motive is Hedegaard's criticism of Islam and immigrants with Muslim backgrounds. Seated to his left on the debate panel is Tarek Ziad Hussein. A law student and practicing Muslim, Hussein suggests that Hedegaard's fundamentalist interpretation of Islam means the historian is actually the one who's an Islamic extremist.

Hedegaard replies that the Islamic State need look no further than Islam's holy book – the Koran is to blame for inspiring the ISIS reign of terror. The heated back-and-forth continues before Hedegaard bristles with irritation, and mutters "Oh, shut up!"

In the production studio, the onlookers respond to the exchange with hoots of satisfaction.

BLOOD SWEAT AND TEARS

These sorts of exchanges aren't uncommon on Rushy's Roulette, Højbjerg's weekly two-hour radio programme on Radio24syv, which addresses immigration, integration and identity. Do Muslims want to overthrow democracy and replace it with sharia law? How many refugees should Denmark accept? Can we differentiate between desirable and undesirable immigrants simply based on their passports?

"I put my blood, sweat and tears into my programme – literally. I had the Jyllands-Posten blogger Mikael Jalving on the show to talk about a column he wrote, where he had predicted an inevitable civil war between Muslims and Danes. My voice broke when I asked him, 'when you write things like that you tear me apart. Which bracket do you put me in? I am a Danish Muslim. Why don't we try to stick together and fight for the same thing?'"

The merits of multiculturalism are vigorously discussed in Denmark, but the debate can often be less than subtle. Immigration opponents argue that immigrants are overly represented in criminal statistics, and bring cultural and religious baggage from parts of the world with little understanding of liberal democracy. Then there's the other side, who argues that the world's most successful countries encourage immigration and that cultural differences can easily be overcome.

Højbjerg doesn't think it needs to be so polarised.

She wants to see a middle ground between naivety and prejudice

**My voice broke
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try to stick to-
gether and fight
for the same
thing?**

Peter Stanners

emerge from the national conversation, and uses her weekly show to add nuance, identify problems but also to explore solutions.

"My programme aims to show the diversity of a society – you can't just say 'all Muslims are like this'. Jyllands-Posten recently ran a series of stories about Muslims in Denmark, where they claimed that if there were an election tomorrow most would vote for left wing parties. But what is a Muslim voter? When you put people in a bucket with the tag Muslims, are you sure they are all the same type of Muslims?" she asks.

"That's why I bring in my people with their funny names who speak perfect Danish who argue and discuss values, everyone from [pro-caliphate] Hizb-ut-Tahrir to [national conservative] Danskernes Parti. I want to bring in as many voices as possible to show the variety and diversity of views – some of my brown guests are whiter than the white!"

PAKISTANI OR DANISH

Born in Pakistan, Højbjerg moved to Denmark with her parents in the 1970s and has faced the same struggles as many other immigrants who are torn between their parents' culture and the values of their new home. As a young woman, she wasn't allowed to have boy friends or play sports, and in later life she almost agreed to two different arranged marriages.

"I remember the crossroads where I had to decide whether to stick with my Pakistani cultural identity, or leave it behind. It was July 25, 1998. I was having lunch with my mother and afterwards I would go on television as the first ever news anchor with an immigrant background. I knew when I walked through the door that there was no going back to a life as a Pakistani woman living in the shadow of men. I would have to choose my own husband and my own life. But I decided – I live in Denmark, my life is Danish, my thoughts and feelings are Danish. I will never move to Pakistan to live the life they want me to live."

Højbjerg's parents didn't plan to stay in Denmark forever. But as the years passed and Højbjerg became increasingly integrated into Danish culture, her parents' views remained frozen in 1970s Pakistan. They weren't carried along by changing attitudes in their home country, nor did they try to join Danish society. They existed as an island, alienated by both the society that they lived in and the society they left behind.

"The logic and tools they used to navigate their lives were stuck in 1970s Pakistan while my brothers and I were always referring to modern Danish values. We were pulled in different directions."

Many immigrants who move to different parts of the world share this experience. It is an individual and complex ⁹ there is no simple way to help people navigate the different identities. Each experience is unique, says Højbjerg – she can't explain why she made the break for Danish society, where others can't or won't.

In 1998, Rushy Rashid Højbjerg became Denmark's first immigrant news anchor. Doing so meant breaking with her Pakistani roots and choosing her own future. Now a radio host, she doesn't hold back from asking hard questions about immigration. In the process she is helping form a more nuanced view about what it means to be a Dane in a multicultural society



Rushy Rashid Højbjerg

The host of the weekly radio show 'Rushy's Roulette' on Radio 24/7, Rushy Rashid Højbjerg is a journalist, author and key voice in the Danish multiculturalism debate. She moved to Denmark from Pakistan as a child, and in 1998 she became Denmark's first news anchor with an immigrant background. Rashid's radio program dissects multiculturalism in Denmark and doesn't hold back from tackling tough issues, from gangs to honour killings and extremism.



Left-right: VUC teacher Tore Lindvang, law student Tarek Ziad Hussein, Rushy Rashid Højbjerg and historian Lars Hedegaard.

THE NEW VOICES OF MULTICULTURALISM

In the late 1990s, Højbjerg belonged to a small grassroots group involved in the immigration debate. Everyone eventually moved on, and while she tried her hand at different jobs, the chance to host her own radio show saw her drawn back into the debate in 2012.

Højbjerg's platform is now helping to foster a new generation of voices. Prominent voices such as Geeti Amiri, Tarek Ziad Hussein and Khatareh Parwani all appeared on her show as they started their foray into the political debate. Each has thousands of followers on Facebook and their updates can garner hundreds of likes and comments.

"Their careers took off after appearing on my show, before they moved onto larger mainstream media. But their voices would have gotten out anyway, even without my help," she says, adding that Facebook has helped democratise the political debate. The public can use their 'likes' to endorse thinkers who resonate with them, and traditional media no longer calls the shots when it comes to which stories get told, and which get silenced.

The rise of non-white participants in the political debate has helped develop a more nuanced understanding of what it means to be a Dane with an immigrant background, says Højbjerg. Prejudice and stereotyping is still widespread, however, and often just having dark skin means having to defend Islam, even when you're not a Muslim.

One example is Poya Pakzad, political communication adviser for Action Aid Denmark, and frequent media commentator on the Middle East. In a Facebook update this October, he wrote: "I simply refuse to start a discussion by stating that I am not religious. It should be completely irrelevant."

On Højbjerg's show, guests are brought in to represent their own views, which might be political or religious. However, guests are never selected to act as representatives of specific ethnic, religious or political groups. This distinction is often confused in the Danish media, she argues.

"I choose people because of how qualified their views, abilities and professional talents are, not their backgrounds. It's what I do to try and make the debate more qualified. I don't give a damn about what people say, but how well they are able to justify their position."

TACKLING IMMIGRATION FEARS

The recent influx of refugees has sparked one of the most polarised debates in years. Thousands mobilised to support the new arrivals and many Danes broke the law to help refugees travelling via Denmark to Sweden, transporting them across the border.

But not everyone has reacted with open arms. *The Syrian peo-*



What I try to do is to put some grey shades into this debate to show that, as far as Muslims are concerned, there are many different shades.

ple are not my kin is the title of a column by Danish People's Party (DF) MP Marie Krarup. Published last month, Krarup argued that despite her Christian convictions, Syrian refugees are so foreign that, "it would be crazy to love them because I don't know them."

Krarup's party, DF, emerged from the June elections as Denmark's second largest party. The electoral surge has been interpreted as a strong public backlash against increased immigration, but Højbjerg is confident that Krarup's views don't define all the party's supporters.

"That's just the way Marie Krarup reads the Christian message, there are very few people like her in Danish society. When I give talks all over the country, I don't meet people who share this view, I meet people who are eager to know how they can help. I see a rising movement against the xenophobia that has been part of the Danish story for many years. It's good."

Højbjerg understands that Krarup and anti-immigration bloggers like Jalving are scared – she is too, of the radical and extreme groups populated by white and brown Danes alike. While a radicalised young Muslim man killed two people in Denmark earlier this year, a young white Swedish man walked into a school in Sweden in October and murdered two people in a racist and politically-motivated attack.

"Me and Michael [Jalving] and Marie [Krarup] have the same challenges to fight. But won't get anywhere if we just fight amongst ourselves. What I try to do is to put some grey shades in this debate to show that, as far as Muslims are concerned, there are many different shades."

DENMARK USED TO BE OPEN

With arson attacks against asylum centres in Sweden, the rise of anti-immigration movement Pegida in Germany, concerns are mounting that Denmark might also balk on its commitment to help refugees.

But Højbjerg is hopeful.

"When my father arrived in Denmark in the 1970s, he was taken in by a Danish family who had a spare room where their deceased son used to live. He was treated with kindness, and taught Danish traditions such as how to celebrate Christmas. I thought maybe we had lost that kindness over the years, but over the past six months I have seen the kindness of that generation return – even while some people support groups like Germany's Pegida," she says.

"You can see that there is a movement of people who want to help, who acknowledge that we are part of a global world. We are a part of the problem that brought Syrians here. So we should be finding the solutions together." **M**

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A call for partners

We launched The Murmur in June 2014 with the mission of providing high-quality English-language journalism to the international and Danish communities in Denmark. In November 2014 our work was rewarded with a DKK 1,101,000 grant from the Ministry of Culture. We are now distributed in over 350 locations across Denmark and continue to add new locations every month.

English-language media is important for Denmark. It brings together Danes and internationals and invites debate and dialogue far beyond Denmark's borders. In-depth reporting about Denmark helps new arrivals find their feet by providing context and nuance to the daily news stream. Danes benefit too, by learning about their country from an alternative perspective. In short, we believe we can make Denmark richer.

But to maximise our potential we need to grow. We want to make podcasts and videos. We want to send reporters to all corners of the country to uncover the true state of Denmark. We want to stay free. All this costs money.

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The sad state of RADIO

Independent radio producers are left in the dust, unable to compete with cashed-up state broadcaster DR. No wonder music radio in Denmark is so beige, says former DR host Le Gammeltoft

It's seven in the morning and DR's alternative channel P6 is rolling out tunes to early risers under the tagline "the best and broadest soundtrack for the morning hours". 'Broadest' is generous – glitchy indie pop is followed by sad men with guitars and an uninspired electronic track. It's a familiar setlist, the kind churned out by interchangeable radio programmes across the country, easily digestible for any

sleepy listener fumbling their way through the morning.

For Le Gammeltoft, it's a sign of despair.

"It's so beige," was how the former DR presenter described Denmark's music radio scene to Politiken in March.

"Pop stars like Medina, Marie Key, Lukas Graham and Rasmus Seebach dominate newspapers and magazine covers, while on radio it's their hits on high rotation, alongside the international commercial stuff."

I get in touch with Gammeltoft, to find out if she remains critical of DR's musical direction. The answer is a resounding "yes". Gammeltoft left DR in 2014 to create the radio platform Heartbeats, where she presents the kind of alternative music she claims has disappeared from Danish radio altogether. She argues that DR is pandering to commercial interests and mainstream tastes, rather than fulfilling its public service duties. The result? A bland radio landscape.

"DR gets millions of kroner to play music. Instead, they use the funds to compete with commercial radio and end up sounding just like it. So every radio station in Denmark sounds the same," she says.

However, she's not the only one to point out the slim musical pickings of public service radio.

"Why is half the music on DR's P3 station by the same 200 artists?" says Kasper Vang, co-creator of the web radio The Lake.

"Why would you want to listen to new music that mostly explores the same western pop song structure that we've heard a million times before?"

That's the question posed by the radio producers dedicated to curating diverse music outside of the commercial and public radio arena.

UNALTERNATIVE ALTERNATIVES

In the Politiken article, DR responded to criticism that P3 is too commercial by pointing listeners towards its alternative music channel P6. But Gammeltoft doesn't think the radio station deserves the title 'alternative' at all.

"Alternative' means playing old Cure and Foo Fighters tracks – I can find that on Spotify, I don't need radio for that."

Tor Arnbjørn, Head of Radio at DR, disagrees. He believes DR still maintains a diverse setlist in comparison with commercial stations.

"I can understand how a real music aficionado might feel the music profile could be improved, but compared to the rest of the market, the music that we play is still far more challenging, with more space for new music than anywhere else."

He also explains that P6's profile shift was a response to low audience ratings. For all of the station's alternative promise, not enough people were listening when it launched.

"When we launched P6 four years ago, we had a very alternative, very strongly-branded – but ultimately not very enjoyed – radio

When we launched P6 four years ago, we had a very alternative, very strongly-branded – but ultimately not very enjoyed – radio station for the first couple of years.

TOR ARNBJØRN

Lena Rutkowski

station for the first couple of years. Then we tried to develop the profile and saw listenership pick up, while sticking to the strong brand and high quality."

Gammeltoft, however, disagrees that they've upheld P6's original mandate. Worse, she believes there's something more sinister going on than just a boring setlist: DR deliberately dumbs down its content.

"As a presenter, I was told not to show that I knew too much about music," says Gammeltoft, who quit DR after it axed her P6 show *Unga Bunga*. She adds that when shows don't communicate a passion for new music, they become shallow.

"Especially on P3, the experts are being pushed out to make way for a new generation of presenters who just care about being famous," she says. "And they're shit hosts."

THE RISE AND FALL OF ALBUM

Unga Bunga isn't the only alternative program to part ways with the statebroadcaster due to creative differences, the same happened to former P6 program *Album*.

"Ever have one of those nights with a friend where you get hammered, listen to a record, and shout in each other's faces about how great it is?" asks Ralf Christensen when describing his cult radio show. "This is the sober, well-researched version of that."

When Christensen set out to make *Album* with his pal Kristian Leth, the premise was simple: play a record through and chat about it. Fusing friendly rapport with music know-how, the presenters drop endless cultural and historical trivia wrapped up in a yak about one album.

"We're friends, we don't do scripts, we just put on an album and freak out about it. Of course, we also both do research before the show and hope that we'll dig up different

information," says Christensen, who is also the music editor for Information newspaper.

Despite its popularity on P6, the off-the-cuff show ended after two seasons. In a show dedicated to talking about music, DR said the hosts talked too much.

"They wanted us to put a five-minute cap on conversations between songs," says Christensen, adding that the pair left DR amicably because the restrictions would have compromised the spirit of the show.

Fortunately, *Album* found a home on The Lake and has just wrapped up a third season. The pair used fundraising site Kickstarter to finance the show, making it the first crowd-funded radio program in Denmark.

TALK AIN'T CHEAP

The Danish Agency for Culture (Kulturstyrelsen) allocates 43.8 million kroner to cover operational costs of non-commercial radio every year. But Vang says it is hard for radio initiatives to promote themselves as a worthy investment to Kulturstyrelsen.

"It seems that a lot of cultural funding goes towards events and festivals, because it is somehow easier to see a 'measurable' outcome. Continuous projects seem to find it more difficult, even if they could have a much larger impact in the long run."

New radio platforms can easily find a home on the internet, but they still need to pay royalties to KODA and Gramex to play music. KODA represents the rights of composers, while Gramex collects fees for recording artists and record companies when music is broadcast.

The cost depends on the type of broadcast. For KODA, it involves calculating the amount of music used annually, with an additional fixed minimum fee per hour, based on the number of potential listeners. For non-

As a presenter, I was told not to show that I knew too much about music.

LE GAMMELTOFT





When Ralf Christensen (middle) and Kristian Leth made the third season of their show 'Album', it was the first crowd-funded programme in Denmark ever.

Ever have one of those nights with a friend where you get hammered, listen to a record, and shout in each other's faces about how great it is? This is the sober, well-researched version of that.

RALF CHRISTENSEN

commercial radio, Gramex charges at a rate of 0.46 kroner per minute.

The royalties system is good news for musicians and their rights, but can be tough for radio to cough up.

"DR and big media houses pay large, fixed amounts every year, which is fine and fair – it supports musicians for their work. But that doesn't mean that they can't be an obstacle for small radio stations," says Christensen, adding that more public funding for smaller radio ventures is critical to ensure fair wages for creatives and freelancers.

"Otherwise people are vulnerable to a media elite exploiting the fact that people are hungry for exposure and will work for free. You can get away with that in Denmark because of welfare system, but it's inherently unfair."

Gammeltoft believes the limited options available to new independent radio projects leaves them with little room to become financially self sufficient

"There are really only two options for small, independent radio: a) get enough listeners to make money on advertising as commercial radio or b) be supported by a big media-house to get public funding."

However, she believes the option of cooperating with DR isn't going to happen anytime soon.

"DR are arrogant – they will not listen to anybody. They are not open to criticism."

Arnbjørn disputes this, arguing that the criticisms haven't fallen on deaf ears.

"Yes, we have listened, but we would have proceeded in this way anyway. Our aim is certainly to have a dialogue about the future of the Danish music scene," says Arnbjørn.

"We need high quality Danish music, and we're interested in taking on initiatives which strengthen the scene."

DR'S DUTY

While independent radio struggles, last year DR received 4.3 billion kroner in public funding, far more than any other media in Denmark. Most of DR's funding comes from the 2,460 kroner annual licence fee that is paid by any household with a television or internet device. Being publicly funded, it's im-

RADIO

Heartbeats

A web radio platform for offbeat and electronic music. Launched by DJ and former DR presenter Le Gammeltoft in 2014, it streams music 24/7 and hosts culture podcasts. Musicians and DJs are invited to curate playlists for every niche in the electronic scene. Heartbeats.dk

The Lake

Experimental music radio aiming to curate new and unknown sounds via the web. It's a 24/7 stream of music across genres, usually without presenters. The Lake is the brainchild of Danish band Efferklang, Radio journalist Jan Høgh Stricker and artist Kasper Vang. thelakeradio.com

Album

In each episode, presenters Kristian Leth and Ralf Christensen pick an album, play it through and "freak out about it." The show's off-the-cuff style quickly made it a cult hit. When it was dropped by DR's P6 channel, fans crowdfunded a third season, which was broadcast on The Lake. album.podbean.com

plied that the state broadcaster needs to cater to as many people as possible.

"It [DR] is about social cohesion," DR's Secretary General Maria Rørbye Rønn told Berlingske. "Having a place where we can meet, discuss, disagree and get to know each other."

DR's public service role is detailed in its contract with the state, which demands that DR strives towards "quality, versatility, and diversity in its range of programs". The license fee and other forms of public funding are therefore meant to ensure that DR can fulfill its duties without having to pander to commercial interests.

Yet with all that funding and leeway DR receives, the richness and diversity of music has been leaking from the airwaves. And as it does the criticism that DR is failing its public service mandate gets louder.

From DR's perspective, however, it's a matter of balancing interests and ensuring that resources aren't wasted on channels nobody is listening to.

"As a public service broadcaster, we need to make sure that there is something relevant for everyone, but we can't play everything," says Arnbjørn.

"Of course we shouldn't be driven exclusively by ratings, but we also need to produce programming which resonates with an audience. Since everybody is paying for programming via licences, we need people to feel that there is a channel that they like and find relevant, and doesn't just play very challenging music, which nobody really listens to."

For Vang and Gammeltoft, however, that balance is tipped too far in terms of mainstream music, and doesn't give listeners enough of a chance to experiment.

"I think something is fundamentally wrong with the concept of public service if the institutions only creates a middle-of-the-road product for the broad masses," says Vang.

"I think you should be able to demand just a little bit out of people. Have some ambition. Also on behalf of the listener."

Gammeltoft agrees, arguing that DR's approach entirely misses the point of music radio.

"We've got a market pushing for new music all the time and what you need is a curator, to curate everything out there. I don't have two hours per day to research new music releases, I need someone to curate it for me. That's what radio is supposed to do, and it isn't."

But the state broadcaster may be doing more than just unravelling its own mission statement. Gammeltoft argues that DR's narrow vision is influencing the music industry and musicians.

"There's a 'mafioso' attitude in the music industry. Record labels also don't want to piss off DR or their artist won't be played, so they bow to the broadcaster's whims."

It's also tough on musicians in Denmark. There's the cyclical problem posed by music royalties: if musicians get paychecks from the royalties, they're losing out if their music isn't played on a major broadcaster. It might also push them to produce more mainstream music.

The second problem for musicians is getting their music out there. "If you're not a pop star like Medina, or part of one of the few genres favoured by radio, then you have zero exposure," says Gammeltoft.

SOUND SMART

New digital platforms like Heartbeats and The Lake are trying to plug the gap and give expression to a more nuanced music culture in Denmark.

Heartbeats invites guest presenters to curate a show in their genre of expertise, while Gammeltoft herself has created different episodes dedicated to every single subgenre of electronica.

The ethos is about discovery and hidden musical gems:

"Heartbeats is about sharing music and discovering the album tracks that haven't been played to death. If you have a major Cure single – they've played it 2,000 times on mainstream radio – it's more fun for me to dig out the hidden album track."

One problem for niche radio – the kind that divides electronica into subgenres – is that it risks alienating audiences if they are

The Lake is an attempt to say: here is a rather large pool of sounds that we like, let us organise it and share it with whomever finds it interesting too.

KASPER VANG

seen as solely the domain of hipper-than-thou music aficionados. Indie radio must ensure that it does not exclude, or undermine its ambitions by forcing an 'us and them' binary between the alternative and mainstream.

With The Lake, Vang isn't concerned about classifying tastes. He just wants to be a starting point for curious listeners:

"Music streaming services all start with an empty search field. You have to know what to look for. The Lake is an attempt to say: here is a rather large pool of sounds that we like, let us organise it and share it with whomever finds it interesting too," says Vang.

Producing on a smaller scale may better connect radio with its listeners, and as Christensen considers his funding options for a fourth season, he adds that scaling down actually improved the show.

"On P6, *Album* was created through a byzantine network of decision making and editorial staff. We are now making the program because people paid us because they love the show. It gives us a different kind of responsibility."

A more diverse set of voices are articulated by these new radio platforms, including non-western musicians without a footing in Danish music culture. Christensen points out that over the past few years, there hasn't been any sign of music from the developing world on DR.

"That is to me a very clear sign of an unhealthy mainstreaming process, which has gotten out of hand," he says.

It's something The Lake hopes to rectify, by providing a space filled with "a random mix of sounds, voices and music from all genres, all parts of the world, all times, and in all languages."

In a landscape aching for colour, these radio producers hope their digital platforms will push the boundaries of music radio. That's why Gammeltoft thinks it's crucial to support these new initiatives. Denmark's musical mindset is at stake.

"If you make dumb content, listeners get dumber." **M**



A fighter for the People's Protection Units (YPG), the armed service in Syrian Kurdistan.

The enemy of my friend is my friend

The Kurds have emerged as the West's strongest ally in the fight against ISIS, but the explosive political situation in Turkey could affect Denmark's largest minority and the Danes fighting with Kurds in Syria

Elias Thorsson



Above: Women carry imitations of dead children on a march through Copenhagen a year last October while Kobani in Syria was under attack from ISIS. The march was organised by Kurdisk Forum together with left wing parties the Red-Green Alliance (Enhedslisten) and the Socialist People's Party (SF)



Peter Stanners

Ibrahim Benli, the editor-in-chief of the Danish-Kurdish news website nudem.dk.

I just want
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KAWA LASSEN

just want my wife here with me and I'm not going to leave until she is allowed to come, so we can start a life where we can be free."

After 12 days on hunger strike outside the Immigration Office in Østerbro, Kawa Lassen's voice has retreated deep into his throat. He is sitting on the pavement beneath an umbrella. Beside him is a poster with a written plea to let him bring his wife to Denmark. It is covered in pictures

of the couple together during happier times in Syria.

"I have to go back to work in just over a week, but I don't think I can. She comes first. I can find a new job, but I can't get a new wife."

Lassen belongs to a growing number of Kurdish refugees who have fled the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) for Europe. He has spent the last six months trying to get his wife into Denmark on a family reunification visa. She currently lives in the ISIS-occupied

town Jarabulus in the far north of Syria, 32 kilometres south of the border-town Kobani.

Kobani was one of the first targets of the US-lead airstrikes against ISIS. With the West unwilling to commit land troops, the fighting in Syria has been left to local militia groups. Many of these are made up of Kurds, most of whom belong to the Popular Protection Units, the Kurdish YPG.

A HOMELESS NATION

There are over 30 million Kurds, making them the largest nation without a designated homeland. Post-WWI negotiations over the modern borders of Turkey saw the western allies abandon ambitions for a Kurdish homeland.

Today, the Kurdish population is primarily spread across Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, but a large diaspora also lives outside the Middle East. 30,000 Kurds live in Denmark, making them Denmark's largest minority population. But before the assault on Kobani, few Danes were aware of the Kurdish people and their role in the conflict.

"The fight against ISIS has definitely changed the West's perception of the Kurds," explains Ibrahim Benli, the editor-in-chief of

the Danish-Kurdish news website nudem.dk.

"I am active in the Danish-Kurdish Culture Centre, where I am responsible for dealing with the press. Just a couple of years ago we would send out press releases to the Danish media and never hear anything back. But around the time of ISIS' siege of Kobani there were at least twenty live broadcasts from the cultural centre."

Benli says that the international media wasn't interested in the story just because the Kurdish militias were willing to attack ISIS. Their attention was drawn to the presence of a relatively democratic and secular force located within a territory often dominated by religion and despotism.

"One of the things that I think was an eye opener in the West was seeing how free the women were. A lot of the attention was focused on pictures of Kurdish women in military uniforms fighting alongside the men, but Kurdish societies embrace many democratic values," Benli says, adding that Kurdish secularism stems from several different factors.

"One of the reasons is that we converted to Islam a lot later than the Turks or the Arabs. We generally have a more relaxed attitude ►

Flickr / Kurdish struggle



Above: Fighters for the People's Protection Units (YPG), the armed service in Syrian Kurdistan, training.

Left: Fighters for the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK). Considered a terror organisation by the West, they remain an important ally in the fight against Isis

Flickr / Kurdish struggle



towards religion and the same is true here in Denmark, although in recent years young boys have been radicalised, but that is not because of their parents."

KURDISH SOLIDARITY

Benli is quick to point out that no Kurdish monoculture or unified religion exists. The spread of Kurds across national borders has meant that different cultural, political and religious variations have emerged. For instance, Lassen is an Iraqi Kurd and his wife is a Syrian Kurd while Benli, like most Danish Kurds, descends from Turkey. But now events in Syria and Iraq have begun to change that and give rise to a new brand of Kurdish nationalism.

"Kobani became a common cause for all Kurds. Not only have we been geographically divided since World War I, but we have also been divided mentally – a Kurd from Turkey could not have completely identified with a Kurd from Syria. But during the battle for Kobani an understanding emerged that we have things in common, a common cause to fight for."

This solidarity has spread throughout the Kurdish diaspora. As Syrian and Iraqi refugees like Lassen arrive, the predominantly Turkish community in Denmark is faced with a new challenge – how to help Kurds from other parts of the world.

"Many of the refugees seek out the existing Kurdish society for help. And the same goes the other way around. For instance the Dan-

ish-Kurdish Culture Centre has been down in Rødby and Sandholm to let Kurdish refugees know that we are here to help them."

THE SHADOW OF THE KURDISH – TURKISH CONFLICT

While many strands of the Kurdish diaspora thrives peacefully around the world, the Kurdish presence in Turkey remains checkered by conflict. In modern Turkey they enjoy far greater freedoms than they did during the 20th century – when their language, names and customs were banned. But a festering military conflict between the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) and the Turkish government is still firmly entrenched, and prone to outbreaks of violence.

The PKK, formed in 1978, launched an armed rebellion in 1984 which saw the deaths of tens of thousands of soldiers and civilians until a ceasefire was called in 2013 by the jailed PKK leader and founder Abdullah Öcalan, following negotiations with then-Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

It was short-lived, however, and the ISIS conflict has only facilitated further tensions between the displaced Kurds and the Turkish state.

The ceasefire began to falter in 2014 as ISIS laid siege to Kobani, only three kilometres from the Turkish border. When the Turkish government refused to intervene, riots erupted across the country, costing 37 lives.

Tensions continued to mount. In July, 33 youth political activists were killed by an ISIS

Turkey has either directly helped ISIS, or actively looked the other way. This is a government that denies people basic human rights and we know for a fact that ISIS fighters have been across the border to be treated in local hospitals.

LARS ASLAN RASMUSSEN



Lars Aslan Rasmussen is a member of the Copenhagen City Council for the Social Democrats and is of Kurdish descent.

suicide bomber in Southern Turkey, while traveling to Kobani to help rebuild the border down. Another attack killed 102 people in Ankara in October, during protests against the escalating conflict between the PKK and the government.

In Denmark, opinions are divided on where to point the finger.

"Turkey has either directly helped ISIS, or actively looked the other way," claims Copenhagen City councillor Lars Aslan Rasmussen (Socialdemokraterne). "This is a government that denies people basic human rights and we know for a fact that ISIS fighters have been across the border to be treated in local hospitals."

Rasmussen is of Kurdish decent and is an open critic of the government in Ankara. In October he published a Facebook post in which he openly rejected a formal invitation to attend an event at the Turkish embassy.

Despite Rasmussen's criticism, Mehmet Ümit Necef, associate professor at the Centre for Contemporary Middle East Studies at the University of Southern Denmark, directs blame at the PKK.

"The agreement was that the PKK would lay down its weapons, which they failed to do," says Necef. "Instead they continued making threats of violence against the government and then right after the Ankara bombings, Selahattin Demirtaş, the leader of HDP (the pro Kurdish People's Democratic Party) came out and blamed the government for the attack,



Kawa Lassen is a Kurdish refugee from northern Syria. He went on hunger strike last month to urge the government to allow his wife to join him. She remains in Syria.

which is absolute nonsense."

Necef claims that as the PKK grew increasingly confident in their significance as the West's main ally in the fight against ISIS, they over-estimated the level of global political support they could count on sought open conflict.

"I believe the fight against ISIS made them think 'why do we need peace with Turkey? We have the West supporting us'", he says. "But they failed to grasp the importance of Turkey to NATO and the Syrian Civil War. This importance then increased considerably after Russia became actively involved on the side of Assad's Syrian government."

GOOD GUYS, BAD GUYS

Kurds are still pressed on both sides and lack adequate international support. Denmark and its NATO allies have actively supported the Syrian YPG and the Iraqi Peshmerga with weapons and supplies, whereas the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) remains classified as a terrorist organization. Allegations that the Kurdish paramilitary YPG are working together with the counter-government PKK means that both groups have been targeted by Turkish shelling operations, undermining the Kurdish efforts against ISIS.

This convoluted political reality also complicates matters for Danes who wish to offer military support to Kuridsh forces by traveling to Syria. Under Danish law it is not illegal to join a foreign militia, as long as the group is not classified as a terrorist organization.

Danes can fight for the Peshmerga, the official security forces of Iraqi Kurdistan, which is also fighting in Syria. But through its close association with the controversial PKK, fighting for the Kurdish YPG could lead Danes to face criminal charges.

Joanna Palani, a Dane with Kurdish roots, is affected by new legislation targeting foreign fighters. The law allows police to revoke passports of individuals who potentially threaten national security because of their participation in external conflicts. Palani, who had her passport confiscated in October, has fought alongside the Peshmerga since November 2014, which received Danish military training in early 2015. The police, however, has accused Palani of travelling to and from the conflict-ridden region to fight alongside the YPG.

"That the police are taking such a drastic decision to revoke my passport, based on false information, is simply shocking," Palani told Berlingske newspaper. "They know I present no threat to national security, and that Denmark is training and supporting the Peshmerga."

SPILOVER

The new legislation belies a fear that returning fighters present a risk to Danish security, although of the hundreds of Danes who have travelled to fight with IS, none have committed terrorism in Denmark.

But there are reasons to be concerned that the Kurdish conflict could spill over into Eu-

I present no threat to national security [...] Denmark is training and supporting the Peshmerga.

JOANNA PALANI

rope. In September, German broadcaster Deutsche Welle reported that arson attacks had been carried out against the Berlin offices of Turkish left wing political party HDP, and the Hamm office of UETD, a lobby group for the Turkish government.

Community leaders on both sides are preaching caution, but acknowledge the volatility of the situation. The German interior ministry called the situation a "cause for concern" of which "security agencies are aware" in a press announcement.

City Councillor Rasmussen doubts that similar tensions will manifest in Denmark, while Benli fears disputes between the groups may erupt on Danish soil.

"Things in Turkey do spill over into Denmark, you notice that very clearly on social media," he says and points to a recent incident:

"I was at the Turkish embassy this month to receive HDP voters for the Turkish Parliamentary elections. 400-500 people were waiting to vote, when a man drove up and made a hand gesture used by supporters of the Turkish nationalist party. I noticed he had young children in the car so I went up to him and told him to drive away - I could see that a group of young Kurds were walking towards the car because they felt he was insulting them."

Between the West's alliances with Turkey, support for Kurdish efforts against ISIS, and the sizeable Kuridish diasporas dispersed across the continent, Europeans may soon find that the Turkish elections affect them, too. **M**

'I am not intimidated by the strangeness of the human condition'

The documentaries 'The Act of Killing' and 'The Look of Silence' uncover Indonesia's horrific past and reshaped a country's take on genocide. We spoke to producer Signe Byrge Sørensen about giving screentime to perpetrators and victims alike

AS THE credits glide over the screen in Sheffield's ITV Showroom Cinema, the audience is frozen in silence. Entranced, they wait for the end of the credits to roll before erupting into deafening applause while three figures take to the stage. One of them is director Joshua Oppenheimer, who commences his speech with the following words:

"Thank you, to my humble, amazing, patient friend and Danish producer Signe Byrge Sørensen."

Along with Oppenheimer, Sørensen is the strategist behind the two acclaimed documentary films *The Act of Killing* and *The Look of Silence*, films which dig deep into Indonesia's genocidal past.

In an interview after the June screening, Sørensen says her main focus is on supporting the director and their vision. But what she brings to their collaborations is a fearlessness and willingness to take on bold and provocative projects.

"I am very good at not being intimidated by the strangeness of the human condition. I think that is a pretty useful skill to have when producing documentary films."

DOCUMENTARY OF THE IMAGINATION

Oppenheimer's two films document the Indonesian genocides of the 1960s. It's a period of Indonesian history many would rather forget and Sørensen was aware the films might provoke a political backlash in the country. Despite this, the producer believed the project was too important to turn down.

"Joshua had a great vision of how to portray the theme – in a way I believe he invented a new genre, which I like to call 'documentary of the imagination.' The way that he worked with the perpetrators when they re-enacted their horrific actions, while also documenting their conversations with each other, was cen-

tral to the project. The film as a whole is a portrayal of the current Indonesian political system, and provides an opposing voice to the dominant discourse which existed in the country at the time."

The risky approach generated critical claim for both films. *The Act of Killing* has been screened at more than 200 festivals, has won 62 awards globally and was nominated for an Oscar for Best Documentary in 2014. Similarly, *The Look of Silence* has been screened at more than 100 festivals, won 36 awards and could be shortlisted for the 2016 Academy Awards.

REACTION IN INDONESIA

Oppenheimer's two documentaries zero in on a society scarred by atrocities that were committed 50 years ago by a military dictatorship. *The Act of Killing* shows perpetrators of the genocide re-enact their killings, while the *Look of Silence* records conversations between one of the surviving victims and several perpetrators. The unique approaches and resonated deeply with a country which, even today, doesn't openly talk about the atrocities, while former perpetrators and survivors live side-by-side.

Following the release of *The Act of Killing*, the media evolved its way of describing the killings. Where historically, the events have been depicted as the 'heroic extermination of vile communists' – a recognised term for the killings over the past 50 years – they are now increasingly referred to as atrocities or acts of genocide.

"In connection with the Indonesian premiere of *The Act of Killing*, the Indonesian political magazine Tempo published a special edition of the magazine focused on the film, and the atrocities of 1965-66. Journalists were sent across Indonesia to see if they could locate people like Anwar Congo, a former death squad leader, and get him to re-



Peter Berke

Identification through art is important.

Joshua Hollingdale

peat his statements from the film. And they could," says Sørensen. She believes Indonesia has made great strides as a result of this collaborative effort:

"The Tempo articles together with the film meant that other parts of the Indonesian press then dared to write about the events of 1965-66, not as heroic actions but as atrocities. That was a huge step for Indonesia," says Sørensen.

RECOGNITION

Sørensen was personally awarded for her work on the film, and took home the prestigious Roos-

prize in 2014. The Danish Film Institute awards the prize each year for "particularly notable work in Danish documentary." Sørensen says it was one of the greatest moments of her career.

"It was fantastic and truly surprising to be given the Roosprize. The words that Ane Mandrup from the Film Institute wrote in my nomination – well they were just overwhelming," she says.

Mandrup, who sits on the Roosprize committee and works for the Danish Film Institute, believes Sørensen is at the height of her producing game:

"At first you can be fooled by Signe's modesty, but that is a mistake. She knows what she wants and exactly how to accomplish it. She has shown that she is a world-class producer with a vision. That's why I nominated her," Mandrup wrote.

For Sørensen, the key to lifting the overall documentary scene in Denmark is through collaboration:

"In the Danish documentary industry we are very generous with each other. I definitely believe that if we just drop the idea of competition and are simply generous with each other we can all become even better."

POLITICAL STORYTELLING

Sørensen's stories are characterised by depth, detail and objectivity. But Sørensen is also driven to unpick the reality of the world and its power structures.

"I think film is a fantastic medium for showing both political processes at work and revealing to us as citizens the dominant discourse of the day. Through film we can highlight issues which are otherwise overlooked or forgotten. We can ask difficult and unpopular questions and we can expose the power play behind events."

Crucially, she believes that through the medium, audiences can connect with voices which would otherwise go unheard:

"We can also give prominence to ordinary people who have important stories to tell, and whom we as members of an audience can identify with. Identification through art is important, as art can show each person that he or she is not alone with his or her feelings and struggles." **M**



Anwar Congo, right, was head of a death squad in 1960s Indonesia and is responsible for the deaths of hundreds of people. In this still from 'The Act of Killing' he reenacts his favoured form of execution.

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December 11, 19:00



CLOSE TO
ØSTERPORT STATION

COLUMN

Our worst addicts are in parliament

Bad habits drive us to do things that are counterproductive and unhealthy, when a better way of living is staring us in the face. This repetitive behaviour is frustratingly prevalent in the minds of lawmakers who overlook society's real problems while fighting over the next quick fix

HUMANS thrive on routines, it makes days more manageable and easier to understand. Structure is enormously satisfying, like a good pop song — verse, chorus, verse (optional bridge), chorus, verse, etc. You know what's coming, and it feels good.

Repetitive behaviour can still be downright harmful. People develop harmful routines all the time. Whether that be watching *Real Housewives* instead of reading a book, or developing a sizeable affinity for heroin. Both are somewhat unfortunate.

It is frighteningly easy for routines to become addictions and repetitive obsessions, and politics seem to be especially susceptible. It isn't just that it is tedious when politics seem to be unable to let go off an issue that has been discussed ad absurdum, but also that more often than not our politicians are circle jerking the wrong thing.

During this year's election we beat to death the topic of immigration and refugees. It seemed to be the only thing the parties wanted to talk about, even though a YouGov study from last year found that only 17 percent of Danes found immigration to be the most important issue. Our politicians were stuck in a loop that only they, and a vocal minority, wanted to be in.

The same goes for the discussion about unemployment benefits, a seemingly inexhaustible debate about a marginal adjustment of something everyone agrees should exist. An agreement was finally reached last month, which mainly involved whipping the newly graduated and putting an extra 300 million kroner a year into the unemployment insurance, *dagpenge* scheme.

That's a miniscule amount in an economy with a nominal GDP of 2.2 trillion kroner. For you and

I, and the unemployed, 300 million kroner is a lot of money. But for the state it correlates to something like my monthly cheese budget. It would be interesting to see how much the process of arriving at this conclusion cost us.

It wouldn't matter if people waste their time discussing peanuts, if not for the fact that we rightly expect these particular people to talk, and in fact try to rectify, really crucial problems.

Last month two separate, yet similarly, worrying reports were released by two very different authors. One was by multinational financial service corporation Credit Suisse, which found that 0.7 percent of the global adult population owned 45 percent of the global wealth. The second report found that Denmark too was not immune from rising inequality. Since 1985, the top 10 percent have seen their share of total post-tax income rise from 17.9 percent to 22.5 percent, while the bottom 80 percent have seen their share of the pie shrink. These numbers correlate with figures from Eurostat, which show that between 2008 and 2012 Denmark, along with Iceland, saw the largest increase in inequality in Europe, 12 percent.

Before the Great Recession of 2008 it was not encouraged to discuss inequality in polite society. The Soviet Union was dead and with it all 'left-wing' economical measurements. This was despite warnings by notable economists such as John Kenneth Galbraith who, in the mid-twentieth century, noted that high levels of inequality played an influential role in the Great Depression.

Several books have been published on inequality in recent years, most notably *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* by French economist Thomas Piketty. His



flickr / euweb

Thomas Piketty has grave concerns about rising inequality, but our politicians are happily ignoring him.

book became such a hip bestseller that it is doubtful any single person has been more influential than he has in raising the issue.

Piketty argues that rising income inequality and wealth distribution threatens both social and economical stability, bringing the world back to the age of aristocrats and robber barons. This line of thinking has now been adopted by the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that cites equal distribution of wealth as one of its key issues.

So while inequality sky-rockets and the world is getting worried, Danish politicians are not just busy talking about something else, they are in fact taking active steps to decrease equality. Cutting unemployment benefits harms the

300 million kroner is a lot of money. But for the state it correlates to something like my monthly cheese budget.

Elias Thorsson

poorest, while cutting the top income tax rate, as the government manifesto calls for, benefits the richest. How many times do we need to hear that inequality – or even climate change – is the greatest threat to Western civilization before they take time out of their busy schedule, tinkering with unemployment insurance or citizenship rules, and actually make some legislation to prevent society getting severed in half through a growing disparity between the rich and poor.

Now I'm not saying that our politicians are heroin addicts who can't get off the sofa because they're hooked on binge watching *Real Housewives*. But like addicts, they're stuck making bad decisions over and over and over again. **M**

COLUMN

It just takes a little courage

It might seem stupid and naive, even reckless. But I got married to a stranger for a TV show because I was willing to take a risk to get what I wanted

IN THE SUMMER of 2015 I married a stranger. A group of experts matched me with a man I had never met before. The first time I met my husband-to-be was at City Hall about three minutes before we said: JA (I do). It was broadcast on national TV in a reality show called *Gift ved første blik* ("married at first sight").

"How brave of you! You are truly courageous!"

That's the most common reaction when people find out about what I did.

And sure, it feeds my hungry ego when people say that. Who doesn't like the idea of being brave? But I'm not sure that I am so brave. Is it brave to throw yourself blindly into something without knowing all the factors? Isn't it stupid and naïve to entrust strangers to such an important decision?

I never expected the thing to actually happen. After I signed up, I was put through a lot of tests and meetings where the experts tried to figure out what kind of a person I was. At the time, I treated it like an interesting, narcissistic hobby, with no actual goal. I didn't think for a second that I might be exchanging vows with a man I had never met before.

But a week before the wedding I got a call from the caster. They had found me a match. And not just some stupid, superficial Tinder-match – a match with someone they actually thought I would have a lot in common with. Someone I could have a crazy experience with. Someone who actually wanted to do something, who'd be willing to work at getting to know me and try it out. Yes, finding a man who embodied these things had so far proven difficult.

I knew that I had to meet this person. My curiosity was far too great to not go through with it. It

The first time I met my husband-to-be was at City Hall about three minutes before we said: JA.

Lene Konrad



Peter Berke

did not feel like an act of courage, more like taking advantage of a new opportunity (and a free wedding dress). I was far more excited and curious, than anxious.

Maybe I should have been more scared of being publicly judged. Last season, the show garnered more than 800,000 viewers. That's a lot of people silently, and not so silently, picking apart everything about me, from my decisions, to my personality and looks.

But I soon stopped worrying about how viewers saw me. I'm my own biggest critic anyway. I didn't sign up to have nice things said about me.

I did it to finally admit to myself

the dreams I actually had. I dreamt of finding someone to complement me, to challenge me and to share the hopes, fears, and joys of human existence. A partner to start a family with.

Admitting that out loud is scary. What if it doesn't work out? But once I admitted it to myself, it stopped being so hard to say. The dream of a life companion is not so strange after all.

And what was the harm in doing it publicly? Would it actually make a difficult situation any more difficult?

All you can do is be honest and try your best. I did it and I survived. We always do. Because taking that first step is always the

hardest – admitting to yourself what you want. To dare to look into your future and reach for the simple things that will make you happy. It's easier not to, to learn to be satisfied with your lot in life and not to take any risks.

But that's not happiness. We owe it to ourselves to reach out for the simple things, the ones which make us truly happy. Once you do it, and survive, you soon begin to realise all the things you might miss out on if you give into fear. All you need is a little courage. **M**

'Gift Ved Første Blik' is showing on Tuesday nights on DR3. Tune in to find out how it turns out for Lene.

WHAT'S ON • NOVEMBER



STEVE MCCURRY
Experience principal works by one of today's most distinguished documentary photographers, photographer Steve McCurry.

Museum of Natural History
dnm.dk
All Month

1

HUBERTUS HUNT
The Hubertus Hunt is an annual event held in the Deer Park in Klampenborg, north of Copenhagen. It usually attracts up to 40,000 spectators and 160 riders.

Dyrhavsbakken
Dyrehavevej 62, 2930
hubertusjagt.dk



GAVIN DEGRAW
Experience the American singer-songwriter Gavin DeGraw, when he visits Musikkens Hus in Aalborg.

Musikkens hus
Musikkens Pl., Aalborg
musikkenshus.dk
November 4

4

Hillerød Music and Theatre
Cultural festival, Hillerød Music & Theatre Festival, opens with a great programme covering 12 major theatre and music acts in seven days.

Locations across Hillerød
frederiksborgcentret.dk
Ends November 11

5

DOCUMENTARY FESTIVAL
CPH:DOX is the third largest documentary film festival in the world, filling Copenhagen's cinemas with more than 200 films from around the world.

Locations across Copenhagen
cphdox.dk
Ends November 15



flickr / Karl Baron

J DAY
The Christmas brew is first sold on the first Friday in November – a day traditionally-known as J-Day. The beer hits bars and clubs at 20:59.

Locations across Denmark
tuborg.dk
November 6

7

Whiskey tasting
After attending this event, you will be well versed in how to nose, taste, distinguish and characterize whiskeys – it is also probable that you will get hammered.

Glyptoteket
Dantes Plads 7, KBH
ground-floor-productions.com

8

THRILLER LIVE
Go on a fabulous musical journey through Michael Jackson's impressive repertoire of songs.

Musikhuset Aarhus
Thomas Jensens Alle 2, 8000
musikhusetaarhus.dk



flickr / leweb

ART, TECHNOLOGY & CHANGE
The conference connects creatives from the worlds of film, media, art, design, technology and communication to explore the current state of art and creative businesses.

King's Garden
KBH, Gothersgade 11
CPHDOX.DK
NOVEMBER 10

12

FRESH DRESSED PARTY
CPH:DOX, Bitchslap Magazine and CPH Fashion Festival invites you to the most fresh and funkadelic party of the year at Bremen Theatre.

Bremen theatre
Nyropsgade 39-41, KBH
brementeater.dk



EATING THE PLANET TO DEATH
The Murmur teams up with the restaurant MadMad MadBodega for a panel discussion about the problems facing food production and what realistic alternatives are on the table. Limited tickets! Email peter@murmur.dk
bit.ly/madmurmur
November 12

Joshua Hollingdale

14

CHRISTMAS IN DEN GAMLE BY
Experience how Danes have celebrated the holidays for centuries. Exciting activities await the entire family with historical shops, Living History, a market and traditional Danish treats

The Old Town
Viborgvej 2, Aarhus
dengambleby.dk
Ends December 30

WHAT'S ON • NOVEMBER

19

CURLING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Esbjerg will host the Le Gruyère European Curling Championships 2015, and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Frederik of Denmark will be part of the opening ceremony. Party time.

Esbjerg Curling Hall
 Gl. Vardevej 82, Esbjerg
esbjergcurling.dk
 Ends November 29



MASTA ACE & EMC

Masta Ace's Copenhagen shows sell out fast. He still knows how to deliver a proper record and, as always, EMC, will accompany him on stage.

Loppen, Christiania
 1., Sydområdet 4B, KBH
loppen.dk
 November 22

26

TRAMPOLINE AND TUMBLING

The World Championships present a high-flying and fast paced experience for all ages. witness the fight for titles, medals and especially qualification for The Olympics.

Odense Congress Centre
 Ørbækvej 350, Odense
gymdanmark.dk
 Ends November 29



flickr / Susanne Nilsson

ROYAL CHRISTMAS MARKET

At the old Renaissance castle, Christmas is celebrated with fairy tales, Christmas decorations, homemade goods, theatre, gift workshops and a great Christmas market.

Kronborg Castle
kronborg.dk
 November 28-29

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WONDERFUL
COPENHAGEN



A woman with dark hair in a ponytail, wearing a pink and white plaid shirt, is looking towards a whiteboard. The whiteboard has the Danish words "Stumt d" and "Hund" written on it. The word "Hund" has a double underline under the 'd'.

DANISH. CONCENTRATED.

INTENSIVE DANISH COURSES
IN HELLERUP AND LYNGBY



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HELLERUP

sprogcenterhellerup.dk