

**COPENHAGEN
EDITION**

**Refugee
rights
threatened
as politi-
cians eye
convention**

**Residents
scramble
to protect
a historic
enclave in
Vesterbro**

**Overweight
and mid-
dle-aged
Icelander
dances into
our hearts**



ISSN 2246-6150

The burden of liberty

Jacob Mchangama's uncompromising defence of freedom and civil rights

THE MURMUR

THE IDEA was to make Denmark unattractive to refugees, not the international community. The new immigration law L 87 made global headlines for giving the police the right to take valuables from refugees, and delay the right of some to seek family reunification. The government has repeatedly stated the measures were needed to reduce the number of arriving refugees, but neither changes violate the UN refugee convention, nor are dissimilar from other new immigration laws being introduced across Europe.

But the law provoked former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to speak out against it and Chinese artist Ai Weiwei to close a major exhibition in Copenhagen. CNN even went so far as to live stream the parliamentary debate ahead of the vote.

On the one hand it seems odd that Denmark is receiving so much attention. Eurostat figures show that 13,000 refugees arrived in Denmark in the 12 months leading up to September 2015 – Ireland accepted 2,950. According to the Economist, Denmark had the fifth largest number of arrivals, judged per capita, in all of Europe. Even when Denmark reduces its foreign aid budget to 0.8 percent of GDP, it will still remain the fourth highest per capita contribution in the world. Ireland contributes 0.45 percent.

Why is no one asking Ireland to pick up the slack? Why is there no #shameonGermany hashtag on Twitter given they have similar valuables confiscation laws? Is the bar set that much higher for Denmark, and is that fair?

Writing for The Guardian, Danish refugee activist Michala Bendixen argued that Scandinavian countries face a difficult dilemma.

"We have always been proud of our human rights standards, equality and social welfare. But if too many people are coming from outside, the balance

of the tax-based welfare system is tipping, and our tribal-like culture feels threatened."

Few outside Denmark recognise the enormous compromises and costs that come along with a universal welfare state. Sure it's a happy and wealthy country, but you have to play by the rules. The government has to know where you live, you have to pay high taxes, learn the language and get an education recognised by the labour market.

Coming to Denmark as an outsider is difficult. So the worst part of the new law wasn't the valuables or family reunification regulations, it's the decision to keep refugees as far away from ordinary Danish life as possible. The former government introduced rules to let some asylum seekers to live and work outside centres. This has now been rolled back.

Many people that have arrived in Europe aren't entitled to protection. Returning those that don't is fair, just like it's fair to demand that foreigners without a visa leave the country once their time is up.

But the least Denmark can do is treat those are entitled to protection humanely. They should be allowed to live and work as close to Danish society as possible. Passive lives in asylum centres have conclusively been shown to increase the risk of mental health issues. Therefore, keeping asylum seekers in such a state is both punitive and inhumane.

Despite its flaws, Denmark is still a unique country, with low corruption and highly-developed institutions and public services. The rest of the world is not looking at Denmark now just because the laws are objectively bad. They are looking at us, because if Denmark won't treat its refugees humanely, who will?

THE MURMUR

If we don't
think we can
win a debate
against the
most extrem-
ist voices
then I fear
we have built
a very fragile
democracy.

JACOB
MCHANGAMA, P22

CONTRIBUTORS



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SPROG

MONTH IN REVIEW

Smugglers charged

Prosecutors charged seven people for helping refugees to travel through Denmark. Well-known Danish author and director Lisbeth Zornig, and her husband, are among the defendants. "We do not regret it," Zornig said. If charged, Zornig and the other six defendants will avoid a potential two-year prison sentence, but will face fines. The first Dane convicted for transporting asylum seekers through Denmark was fined 5,000 kroner by the court in Randers.

WIND POWER RECORD SHATTERED

A windy year allowed for Denmark to break the world record for wind power in 2015. The country produced 42% of its electricity from wind turbines, often producing surplus wind power, which was then exported abroad. Energy minister Lars Christian Lilleholt said: "Hopefully, Denmark can serve as an example to other countries that it is possible to have both ambitious green policies [...] and still have a high security of supply and competitive prices on electricity." If Denmark's success in generating wind power in 2015 is any indicator, the Danish government should be able to reach its goal of producing half of all electricity through wind power by 2050.



Martin Abegglen / flickr

BEST FOR WOMEN

According to rankings released by the US News & World Report, Denmark is the world's best country for women. The study praises Denmark's free education and health care systems for its success in promoting gender equality. Generous parental leave and an affordable day care system also contribute to increase women's happiness.

Natasha Jessen-Pedersen,
Peter Stanners & Lena
Rutkowski



Steen Brogaard

Scandal as Royals join trade delegation to Saudi Arabia

In February, the Queen and her husband Henrik, Prince Consort of Denmark, will accompany a Danish business delegation to Saudi Arabia. The planned visit has sparked criticism because of the country's notoriously poor human rights record. The trip was organised in conjunction with the Foreign Ministry and various business organisations.

Foreign minister Kristian Jensen defended the decision to include the Royals, arguing that it was possible to improve trade between the countries, while also having a critical dialogue about human rights, capital punishment and equality. Nick Hækkerup, foreign affairs spokesperson for the opposition Social Democrats (Socialdemokraterne) argued, however, that the Royal couple should not be involved in such a politically-charged situation.

"It is necessary to have a critical dialogue and discussion about respect for human rights, and the royal couple cannot do that, because they don't have a political function," he told DR.

Saudia Arabia executed 47 people in January on terrorism charges.



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NEW INTERNET SURVEILLANCE LAWS
All internet traffic will be registered under new guidelines from the Justice Ministry. So-called 'session logging' was abandoned under the former government after it was shown to be ineffective in crime fighting efforts. Whereas internet providers only registered a sample of internet activity under the old guidelines, the Justice Ministry now wants them to register all internet traffic by every individual user. Jacob Mchangama from think tank Justitia says the rules are problematic. "It will be a massive invasion of privacy, as well as possibly violating data protection laws. I doubt the rules are compatible with human rights legislation," he told Berlingske newspaper.



Andrew Hart / flickr

Snowden plane landed in Denmark
American authorities were granted permission to land a plane in Copenhagen Airport to transport the whistleblower Edward Snowden back to the US, reports Den Fri. The allegation was first made by investigative journalist Duncan Campbell in 2014, and has now been confirmed by surveillance journalist Peter Kofod.
In a freedom of information request, Kofod was given the landing request for the airplane between June 25 and June 26 2013, when Snowden had first arrived in Moscow. Snowden had flown to Moscow from Hong Kong after his first leaks about unchecked mass surveillance by the National Security Agency made headlines around the world.



Peter Stanners

Doubt over Denmark's refugee spending
While the debate raged over the new refugee laws, figures from The International Monetary Fund (IMF) appeared to show Denmark was spending generously on its asylum seekers. According to the report 'Refugee Surge in Europe: Economic Challenges', Denmark used 0.47% of its GDP to fund its asylum seekers in 2015. This was second only to Sweden in the EU, which spent 0.5% of its GDP. The figure was suspicious, however, given that Denmark only received around 21,000 refugees compared to Sweden's 160,000. Radio24Syv found that while the sum for Sweden only included expenses associated with asylum seekers, Denmark submitted figures that also included the cost of integration programmes. "These two budgets are not normally combined," Martin Lemberg-Petersen, from the University of Copenhagen's Centre for Advanced Migration Studies, told Radio24Syv.

DOGS NEED TO SWIM TOO
The EU's 'blue flag' will no longer fly over beaches in five Danish councils, despite the quality of the water being up to standards. The flag indicates that the waters are of adequate quality for bathers, but complying with the rules are considered both expensive and bureaucratic. The blue flag also forbids bathers from letting their dogs swim in the sea. All the councils are popular tourist destinations, and many tourists are reportedly disappointed that their dogs can't join them in the water.



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GET STUCK IN

Nordic Ramen



WHEN IT RAINS, it pours. And when one Ramen joint opens in Copenhagen, another follows soon after. Probably because a noodle broth from Japan is the best thing to eat on rainy days. Yes, last issue we

raved about Mikkeller's venture Ramen to Birru for its commitment to re-creating an authentic Japanese experience. But this month, we're fans of a new pop-up restaurant for doing precisely the opposite.

Hrimnir Ramen, founded by scientist David Qvist, studies food sustainability with its Nordic Ramen, which is created with local and seasonal ingredients.

"It's about telling the story of where our food comes from, supporting eating locally, and exploring ways to use food resources better," says Qvist. "We want to use ramen as a microcosm to explore regional food identities."

He says Ramen was the perfect blank canvas. "Ramen originally came to Japan from China, then really took off in the country after World War II. It's always had a tradition of regional innovation. So now we're about cooking ramen in a way that reflects a time and place – in this case the Nordic region."

There's more than a few allusions to Nordic history, starting with its signature dish, the wild boar ramen.

"When a Viking warrior died he would go to Valhalla and feast on a wild boar that regenerated every day, cooked by a magical god-like Viking chef. 'Hrimnir' is an Old Norse word for something that is covered in char, the way boar is grilled. In the future we plan to get Japanese fire grills in."

But can the place promise a magical god-like Viking chef?

Qvist laughs. "He comes from Japan where he worked as a head chef. I don't know if he's magic, he may be, he's certainly very good."

Hrimnir Ramen

Open Sundays and Mondays

*Spisehuset
Slagtehuset 5C
1715 KBH V*

hrimnir-ramen.dk

Sunshine Street Food

THERE ARE many harbingers of spring. The geese return, the tables outside restaurants swap snow for customers, and we gain 150 seconds of daylight each day. And, as the sun rises higher, its rays shine down on the city's prime location for tasty treats – Copenhagen Street Food.

Opened in 2014, it serves as a gathering spot for the best Copenhagen has to offer when it comes to fast food – or rather good food made fast! The selection is wide, with 35 food stalls housed beneath its roof on Paper Island. The stalls represent a journey across the globe. Tuck into Turkish, Korean, Italian, Thai or even Colombian food, while sitting by the harbour and gazing across the water at the Royal Palace.

Even though the quality and taste is top notch, the prices won't hurt your wallet. Included in its mandate is that street food should be available for the people. Therefore, each stall has to offer a dish priced between 50 and 75 kroner which, for a chicken satay, literally is peanuts.

So, it might not be spring quite yet, but as it fast approaches, there's no better way to enjoy the changing of the seasons than by taking a stroll to Copenhagen Street Food to gobble up dumplings, Korean BBQ, or a cheese-filled panini.



Maja Tini Jensen

**Lena Rutkowski
& Elias Thorsson**

Copenhagen Street Food

*Trangravsvej 14
1436 KBH K*

copenhagenstreetfood.dk

Opens February 4

*Thursday 12 - 21
Friday 12 - 22
Saturday 12 - 22
Sunday 12 - 21*

Some booths open from 10 on the weekend

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Q&A

Matt Orlando

CHEF AND OWNER OF AMASS RESTAURANT

Matt Orlando is one of Copenhagen's most celebrated green-fingered chefs and now he is on a mission to change how restaurants think and work. Orlando was born in San Diego, but moved to Denmark in 2010 where he became head chef at two-star Michelin restaurant noma. In 2013 he launched Amass in the post-industrial neighbourhood of Refshaleøen. Since then, he has turned it into one of the world's most forward-thinking restaurants.

Sustainability and doing away with as much waste as possible are the watchwords at Amass and at the heart of that philosophy lies its kitchen garden, built on a disused dry dock. Herbs, plants and tubers grow seasonally, while fruit and vegetables flourish within a poly-tunnel, thanks to a state-of-the-art aquaponics system. We caught up with Orlando recently and asked him about the future of food, how to reduce waste, and why running a kitchen is like live theatre.

What has growing your own produce taught you about being a chef?

It doesn't matter what you can grow – if it doesn't taste good, it doesn't matter. There's this romantic idea of the kitchen garden, but it takes incredible mental effort to manage it. This summer was a prime example. I sat down with my head gardener Jackie last March to plan the harvest. All the seeds we were expecting to sprout at the end of May did, but the June batch never sprouted. All of a sudden all this stuff you've planned, you can't do. But you have to accept chaos. You have to accept that not everything goes to plan.

So our menu has to be very flexible, which means we've gotten into a groove that means we've never repeated a dish. We've never gone back to a dish that we did

You see these chefs driving around in their Lamborghinis, their Ferraris, and I'm like, "What the fuck, how can you be so shallow?"

James Clasper



Tim Spreadbury

the year before. Now we've come to this weird masochistic way of thinking – that even if we can repeat a dish, we're not going to, because that's just what we've done for the past two years. Also, if you start falling back on dishes you've done before, your kitchen will never progress the way you want it to, or that I want it to.

Are there any dishes that have only come about because of what you're growing?

Crosnes, which we did lightly warmed with almond oil and dried plums on top. A crosne is a little tuber, very similar to a sun choke [Jerusalem artichoke], but a bit denser and nuttier. You can't see them growing, they don't sprout, so you just need to know you've scattered seeds, and then dig your hand in there. We had them for two days, and we only had it on the extended menu, so there were only 30 orders in total. It was a dish that happened in the moment. Jackie

just scattered some seeds. We created a dish that night, it kind of just happened.

It's those special moments that wouldn't happen unless you were able to cook in this spontaneous way. Also, we don't have a test kitchen and we don't really test dishes that much. I think if you try to test it, you beat the hell out of the idea. A lot of times, the first time we plate a dish is at the beginning of service that same night.

That's brave.

Right, but I also think that when you're in service your senses are heightened much more, because obviously there's all this information coming in.

It sounds like live theatre.

That's exactly what a kitchen's like. It's that sense of not being 100 percent confident in what you're about to deliver, but thriving off

that. I love it. Some of the guys in the kitchen are like: *sighs* "All right, chef..."

What are some of the clever ways you use to eliminate waste?

A lot of effort goes into [baking] bread, so you don't just want to throw it out. We've started to soak it overnight in leftover yoghurt whey, then we puree it, spread it out on a baking sheet, roast it and make chips out of it. All of our green kitchen-waste goes to the lady who does our eggs. Hens eat hay in winter, and the flavour changes. They eat grass from May to September. Every time she drops off eggs with us, twice a week, she collects bags of green kitchen waste.

Then there's excess water – from our ice baths, or the bottles of water on tables. There's usually half a bottle on each table at the end of a meal. The first night [we collected water] there were 80 litres. Five days a week, that's 5,500

litres a year, all now saved and used in the garden.

Could this be a sea change in how restaurants think and act? Perhaps it's time for a new Nordic manifesto.

For me, that's the goal. 100 percent.

How do we get there?

I'm still trying to figure that out! noma [re-opening as an urban farm in 2017] will definitely help this movement, if you want to call it that.

I think we need to lead by example. That's the best way to get anywhere, to do as much as you possibly can and not do it half-heartedly and really get behind what you're doing and show people you believe in what you're doing.

With regards to sustainability, I've found you need to be a bit careful of not sounding like you're preaching, because people hate that. It's more about feeding information, as opposed to doing it in this philosophical way – you know, the moon and the stars and all that.

It's about providing straight facts: "This is what we're doing and why we're doing it". Of course, it is about the environment and the grand scheme of things. But it's also about where you are right now and how you can affect things right here, right now, and hope that it spreads.

It is important to just keep that line of impact, because there are so many shallow materialistic things about this industry. I mean, you see these chefs driving around in their Lamborghinis, their Ferraris, and they post pictures on Instagram of the speedometer in the Mercedes, which they got sponsored by, and I'm like, "What the fuck, how can you be so shallow? You have a restaurant, which in itself is materialistic, and if you can't do anything around that restaurant that has a positive impact on your immediate environment, then you are in this for the wrong reasons."

I think if you have that responsible way of thinking, it will spread, and my ultimate goal is that it just kind of spreads and people start thinking like this. And try to improve the environment of their restaurant and the environment around them.

Care to share some of the secrets of running Amass?

I've learnt a whole new level of patience. I've also learnt how to pick battles well. Because you can pick them all day long, but I've learnt how to do it in constructive ways that are more about forcing my staff to deal with the problem themselves rather than me saying: "Do it like this". So managing people has been a huge part of it.

I love cooking even more now because, within a restaurant, cooking is an escape from all the other stuff you need to do. I love the process of getting from here to there, whether it's cooking or putting a new floor in the kitchen. But ultimately cooking is why I started. I come in early, a couple of hours before the guys, so I get everything done before 11, like answering my emails.

When you're head chef at noma you've got three jobs. First and foremost you're a psychiatrist, because you have 47 chefs and egos and opinions, and then you're a chef, and to a certain extent you're also a babysitter. So that was an amazing learning experience, and I think that taught me so much about the psychology of working with a large number of people.

Where do you like to eat out, and why?

If I'm going out to dinner, hands down my favourite meal in the city is Relae. Definitely. It's good and it's interesting, and for me it's my favourite meal in the city. If I'm going out to eat, super casual, I love Bror.

What would your final meal on Earth be?

Definitely Mexican food. But Mexican food from Baja California, not central Mexico. It's very different. Maybe I'm biased because I more or less grew up surfing down there. Central Mexico is really deep – like moles and braised meats. Baja California is very fresh, seafood-focused – lots of fresh tomatoes and jalapenos. A drink on the side? Horchata, a rice drink they make. They take raw rice and blend it with water, then they season it with a tiny bit of sugar, and then add cinnamon and cloves. **M**

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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 1.1 million kroner 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 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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CITY



The bike box keeps cyclists ahead of dangerous right-turning vehicles.

Bike boxes to prevent accidents

The brand new bike box is coming to road intersections in 13 councils around Denmark. The boxes are designed to prevent right-turning accidents by allowing cyclists to wait for lights to change ahead of vehicles, thereby limiting accident caused by lorries and busses turning right without seeing cyclists in their blindspot.

Preliminary tests of the bike boxes have already begun in Frederiksberg Council and, over the next few months, 57 bike boxes will be painted onto the tarmac at intersections in 13 different councils around Denmark. The Danish Road Directorate is funding the project.

"The bike boxes will make it safer for cyclists by creating more visibility, as well as more security and flexibility for cyclists in intersections," Marianne Foldberg Steffensen from the Road Directorate's safety Department (Vejdirektoratet) told DR.

In the past five years, the number of deaths caused by right-turning accidents have dropped from five fatalities and nine grave injuries in 2010 to one death and two injuries in 2015.

City Council to find solution for balcony blunder

In November, Copenhagen City Council released new rules that were supposed to make it easier to install balconies to apartments. But the rules had the opposite effect and made it almost impossible for balcony companies to build new balconies in the capital.

In response, the Department of Technical and Environmental affairs will announce a proposal on February 22 that will rectify the blunder and put an end to Copenhagen's 'balcony drought'.

While Neils E. Bjerrum, member of The Department of Technical and Environmental affairs for the Social Democrats (Socialdemokraterne)

is pleased that a solution has been found, he is disappointed by the bureaucratic tangle.

"It is unacceptable and unprofessional and it has created insecurity among citizens and balcony companies. We, the lawmakers, had a clear message of 'more balconies' and it made us look unprofessional when the proposal had the opposite effect and no balconies are installed," he told Børsen newspaper.

The problem with the first proposal was the department's so-called 'daylight calculator', which determines how large a balcony can be without blocking sunlight for other apartments. The faulty calculator resulted in demands that new balconies only have an average depth of 56 centimetres, which is far less than most people want. This has led to long delays in balcony applications.

In a press release, Deputy Mayor for Technical and Environmental Affairs, Morten Kabell from the Red-Green Alliance (Enhedslisten)

The bike boxes will make it safer for cyclists by creating more visibility.

MARIANNE FOLDBERG STEFFENSEN, VEJDIREKTORATET

Joshua Hollingdale

expressed his regrets at the unfortunate effect of the proposal.

"It is of course frustrating that the light calculator and the new guidelines have had the exact opposite of the desired effect. That is not good enough and the department must rectify the error as quickly as possible."

Hands off Værnedamsvej

For years, lawmakers have debated how best to revamp Værnedamsvej – and the solution is to change almost nothing.

The busy Copenhagen street is known for its vibrant mix of shops and restaurants, but is plagued by infrastructure issues and heavy traffic. Resolving these issues has long been the subject of debate among lawmakers in the two councils it straddles, Copenhagen and Frederiksberg.

"The decision has been made to hardly do anything," said Simon Aggeson, member of Frederiksberg Council for the Conservatives (Konservative), in a press release.

Debate in the councils focused on making the street more sustainable, and in 2013 three proposals to transform the street were put forward – either to make it a pedestrian street, a bike highway or a so-called 'trickle' street.

From the outset, the councils incorporated the views of the Værnedamsvej's inhabitants and business owners, which ultimately saw the plans abandoned.

"All along we have said that we would listen to the inhabitants and traders... and we have had a good dialogue with all of the interested parties. It is now completely clear that they do not want significant change. And we will listen to that," Aggeson told Politiken Newspaper. Mette Hannemann, who owns a gallery on Værnedamsvej, was pleased with the councils' willingness to respect the views of locals, she said in Frederiksberg Council's press release.

"We are very pleased with the outcome – the few proposed changes are certainly okay. This debate proves just how important the dialogue between citizens and politicians is." **M**

Demolishing history

Two proposed developments will demolish old buildings in Copenhagen's Vesterbro district dating back to the 1860s. Locals fear it will erase a unique historic area and uproot a bustling creative community

THE STUDIO is less than 20 square meters and has no clean running water. But it's enough space for multi-instrumentalist, producer, rapper and DJ Pato Siebenhaar.

Siebenhaar's creative corner is set amongst the historic low-rise buildings on Enghavevej, built in 1863 to house workshops, artisanal studios and abattoirs. Wedged between Enghavevej, Vesterbrogade and Sundevedsgade in Copenhagen's Vesterbro district, the buildings are some of the last that remain of an almost forgotten chapter of the city's history.

They risk being lost forever, however, as two new developments threaten to replace the buildings with flashy new apartments and shops.

"Why would you not want to save something made so long ago?" Siebenhaar asks as we walk through the alleyway connecting Vesterbrogade and Enghavevej, past the historic buildings that today house several artist and music studios.

"The most streamed single in Denmark by Topgunn was produced out here," he says pointing to one of the buildings. "This is a living, breathing creative area. People come to Vesterbro to consume culture, but if they tear down these buildings Vesterbro will no longer be a place where culture is also created."

BIG DEVELOPMENTS SLATED

The first of the two developments is scheduled for the last remaining low-rise building on Vesterbrogade 107c, which was built in 1867. The developer, CPHInvest, hopes to level the building and replace it with a five-storey new build with eight apartments and two shops. The low-rise buildings in the yard behind will also be levelled, to make way for parking.

Indie band The Kissaway Trail rehearses in one of the buildings in the yard. Band member Thomas Fagerlund was one of 345 concerned citizens to write to the council during the public consultation of the development.

"Danish music has been pro-



Vesterbrogade 107c, one of the remaining historic buildings on the street, which now faces demolition.

We are going to fight these politicians who want to take our history from us.

HANNE FABRICIUS, LOCAL HISTORIAN

Peter Stanners

duced in these buildings for many years. They are worth far more than new buildings and money. We hope you will consider letting our culture, studio and rehearsal space be!"

The second development involves a complete upheaval. Developer Ejendomsselskabet Eng-haven wants to demolish all of the low-rise buildings along Enghavevej, and several within the block, in order to make way for 83 new apartments as well as shops, cafes, restaurants and an open green area. The new develop-

ment will be called 'Toves Gaard' (Tove's Yard).

HISTORIC VALUE

Hanne Fabricius, a local writer and archaeologist, says the City Council is responsible for the ramshackle state of some of the buildings. While it considers the buildings worthy of conservation, none are protected, meaning the owners were under no obligation to renovate the buildings.

While this has kept rents down for the benefit of the creative community, their poor condition is

now being used to justify their demolition.

"These buildings are some of the the last area of historic Vesterbro that remain – an old area with butchers and bars going all the way back to 1577 when slaughtering animals was banned within city limits," Fabricius says, explaining that Enghavevej used to be a road through fields where animals would graze, while farms and houses could be found on each side of Vesterbrogade.

She adds that the area has long been vulnerable to developers and argues that the City Council should have ensured its protection. But she's not surprised that it didn't. The council has already green-lighted the demolition of far too many historically-important buildings.

"The City Council have no historic insight," she says.

COUNCIL SUPPORT

Fabricius set up a Facebook group to draw attention to the plight of the Enghavevej buildings, which caught the eye of Copenhagen's deputy mayor for Technical and Environmental Affairs, Morten Kabell, who wrote that he will seek to have Vesterbrogade 107c preserved.

"I hope other parties will support this proposal so we can preserve the marvellous buildings," he wrote.

Fellow member of the City Council, Niels Efferstigaard Bjerum, also announced his support. He wrote that he would investigate the possible models for both preserving the buildings and financing the process.

The development along Enghavevej is so extensive that it will require Copenhagen City Council to agree on a new local plan for the block, which is expected to be reached by June this year. Fabricius says that while Vesterbro will inevitably redevelop to remain in a fit state for new inhabitants, it is vital that the city preserve a little history for future generations.

"This is all that's left. We are going to fight those politicians who want to take our history from us." **M**



The proposed redevelopment Tove's Gaard, as shown in before (left) and after graphics. The historic low-rise houses on Enghavevej and in the back yard will be demolished to open up space for a new housing complex. A building will also be erected on Sundevedsgade. The proposed redevelopment of Vesterbrogade 107c (1) is not shown. Pato Siebenhaar's studio is marked (2).



POLITICS ROUNDUP

UN President under fire

He may now be President of the UN General Assembly, but **Mogens Lykketoft** (below) still bears a few grudges from his time in the Danish parliament (Folketing). At a private gathering for his 70th birthday, Lykketoft used the opportunity to lash out at political allies and adversaries alike.

Lykketoft – an MP for the Social Democrats (Socialdemokraterne) between 1981 and 2015 – first attacked the Liberal Party (Venstre) government.

"It's a painful experience that Denmark now has a government and a majority in parliament that prioritises pointless tax cuts for voters they consider stupid and selfish," he said, adding that it is the most "regressive and populist government in my lifetime."

Lykketoft led Socialdemokraterne between 2001 and 2005, before handing over the reigns to **Helle Thorning-Schmidt**, who was elected PM between 2011 and 2015. Later in the speech he blamed her administration for losing the election to Venstre last year.

"It's sad that the former government was so talentless and non-descript that they paved the way for the little hustler that is now prime minister," he added – the 'hustler' being the current PM and Venstre leader **Lars Løkke Rasmussen**.

While the speech was made in private to a group of 50 guests, he later emailed the text to the guests. It finally found its way to Berlingske newspaper, which decided to publish the speech in full.



It's sad that the former government was so talentless and non-descript that they paved the way for the little hustler that is now prime minister.

MOGENS LYKKETOFT, PRESIDENT OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Peter Stanners

The condemnations were swift. Lykketoft's replacement as Parliamentary speaker **Pia Kjaersgaard**, MP for the Danish People's Party (DF), wrote on Facebook that his statements speak for themselves.

"A man, more clever than most, is looking down on his little home country from his Ivory Tower in New York."

Liberal Alliance (LA) leader **Anders Samuelsen** also called the statements "undignified".

"Just because you are politically at odds, it's no way to talk to each other. It is sub par and says more about Mogens Lykketoft than those he is attacking."

Prime Minister Rasmussen opted for a different strategy. On Facebook he shared a video he originally released in the New Year, in which he called for a more civilised tone in the political debate.

"The message doesn't seem to have crossed the Atlantic," he wrote, followed by a smiley.

Lykketoft later apologised for the statements, but expressed disappointment that his comments had been published.

"I was under the safe assumption that everyone present was a friend of mine," he wrote in a statement. "What is said privately should remain private and not be published and commented upon out of context in the public sphere."

Controversial new job for ex-PM

While Lykketoft found a new career in the UN, former PM Helle Thorning-Schmidt (above right) has also found a job abroad. In January she was appointed Chief Executive of Save the Children International. The organisation works to improve the lives of 55 million children in around 120 countries, primarily by delivering targeted aid programmes.

Sir Alan Parker, Chairman of Save the Children International, said Thorning-Schmidt had a proven track record of international leadership and a passion to improve the world for children.

"In the 21st century, with all of the capabilities we now have, it is simply not right that so many children con-



Arbejderpartiet / flickr

tinue to suffer and die unnecessarily and to be held back from fulfilling their potential. Helle shares this conviction deeply and I believe that she can play a real role in helping to increase our impact and deliver real improvements for children," Parker wrote in a statement.

"There is a real opportunity to deliver further significant progress in the coming decade, particularly in the areas of child mortality, education and child protection. At the same time, we are being called on to respond to an increasing number of humanitarian crises affecting children all over the world."

Thorning-Schmidt, who will move to London to assume the role in April, says she is deeply honoured by the appointment.

"Children's protection, rights and development have always been close to my heart, and I look forward to doing everything I can to help us deliver on our bold but simple ambitions: that no child under five dies from preventable causes, all children get access to quality education and that no child should live with violence and abuse.

"Save the Children has been at the forefront of fighting for children's rights since its foundation and I am delighted to follow in that tradition by building on Jasmine's fine work. I couldn't imagine a better cause and I look forward to meeting and working with our dedicated staff around the world."

Many high-profile politicians and colleagues took the time to congratulate Thorning-Schmidt on the new

role. But others found the appointment odd, given that the Thorning-Schmidt government introduced an immigration regulation that imposed a one-year wait for refugees seeking family reunification – a law that was strongly criticised by the Danish division of Save the Children at the time.

"We think it is a completely unreasonable dilemma to put parents in, that they have to consider either leaving their children in war zones, where their lives are at risk, or taking them on the journey, which requires crossing the Mediterranean which we know costs lots of children's lives," Save the Children Denmark general secretary **Jonas Keiding Lindholm** told Politiken at the time.

Well, that's awkward.

Meatball-gate

Pork must be on the menu in publicly-owned institutions in the town of Randers. A narrow majority – 16 for, 15 against – in Randers Council, passed the decision.

The ambition is to "ensure that Danish food culture is a central part of the food on offer". No students or staff will be forced to eat pork, and public institutions must provide a flexible menu that satisfies the needs of religious groups and people with allergies or other health issues.

The new rules were introduced over concern that public institutions had completely stopped serving pork to make it easier to cater to all residents.

One was Børnehuset Jennumparken, whose manager **Bente Gråkjær** said they wouldn't serve pork for lunch because most of the children didn't eat it.

"There is no reason to create problems. Danish vegetables, fruit and bread are a major part of the diet. It doesn't have to be pork to be Danish," she told Jyllands-Posten newspaper.

But not everyone agreed, least of all council members for Venstre and DF, who joined forces to introduce the new dietary guidelines for public institutions.

"Many councils face the problem that Danish families have to adopt

norms dictated by public institutions that do not serve pork," **Frank Nørsgaard**, group chairman for DF in Randers, told TV2 Østjylland. "This proposal simply ensures that the Danes who want pork will in the future be served it."

Fatma Cetinkaya from Socialdemokraterne in Randers was disappointed by the new rules.

"You become thick-skinned as a Muslim. Randers Council has always been ahead of the game in terms of integration. There is no problem with crime or other issues, so it's incomprehensible that pork is suddenly raised as an issue. It's very disappointing," she told Aarhus Stifttidende.

The story was reported in the international media including The New York Times. They quoted Danish Radio24Syv host **Ayse Dudu Tepe**, who argued the proposal was simply speaking up for a highly disenfranchised group.

"In a country with more pigs than humans," she wrote on her Facebook page, "it makes perfect sense to have a political party talking on behalf of the pigs."



Cyclonebill / flickr

Refugee laws pass

International press retrained their focus on Denmark as the government passed a series of new restrictions on refugees, among them the right to confiscate valuables. The government argues that the valuables will be used to help cover the cost of accommodating the refugees, while restrictions to residency and family reunification are designed to make Denmark a less attractive country to seek asylum.

The confiscation of assets and three-year wait for family reunification were so controversial that the European Parliament summoned foreign minister **Kristian Jensen** and immigration minister **Inger Støjberg** to defend the proposal in front of the Committee for Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs.

During the heated debate Støjberg and Jensen defended the proposal against allegations that they violated the UN Refugee Convention. But many of the committee members, including MEP **Cecilie Wikstrøm**, disagreed.

"You will never convince me that they are responsible or productive. We are the richest region on the planet and if we don't take responsibility, tell me who will?" she said, adding: "It has become a race to the bottom."

Støjberg countered, saying that just as refugees are asked to contribute to the cost of their stay, Danes applying for unemployment benefits must first use up their own assets. But refugee activist **Michala Bendixen** argues this comparison is not fair.

"Danes can choose where to live, what to eat and where to work and study. Asylum seekers have to live in a centre dictated by the state, eat food served to them in a canteen, and aren't allowed to earn a penny."

Denmark is not alone in seizing assets to cover the costs of their stay. According to The Guardian, refugees in the Netherlands have paid more than five million kroner toward the cost of their living. Refugees must hand over 75% of their income to cover the cost of food and living expenses. Two German states plan to copy the Danish plan, while Switzerland already requires refugees to hand over cash possessions above 7,000 kroner.

The new regulations passed on February 26, thanks to a majority in the Parliament, composed of Venstre, Konservative, DF, LA as well as the opposition Socialdemokraterne. Three Socialdemokraterne MPs defected, however, and joined the Red-Green Alliance (Enhedslisten), Social Liberal Party (Radikale), The Alternative (Alternativet) and Socialist People's Party (SF) to vote against the law.



United States Mission Geneva / flickr

Twitter users around the world expressed their anger at the new laws with the hashtag #shameondenmark, while former **UN Secretary General Kofi Annan** (above) took to Facebook to express his own disappointment.

"While European states have to address the legitimate concerns of their citizens regarding the historic influx of migrants since last year, they cannot do so at the expense of their values, ideals and international law. By doing so, they offer violent movements a victory they could never have won on their own. I encourage the member states of the European Union to focus on forging the common migration policy the continent urgently needs."

Below are the new regulations that were passed last month in parliament (source: Refugees.dk)

1. Further delay of the right to family reunification. Refugees granted temporary, one-year protection will have to wait for three years before they can apply for family reunification, when they previously had to wait one year. The actual time of separation between the family members will be four or five years, when the processing time for the asylum case and the family reunification case is included.

2. Stricter rules for permanent residence permit. To be granted permanent residency, immigrants must first live in Denmark for 6 years. Criminal offenses will lead to penalty period and more types of crime will lead to permanent exclusion. Applicants must also pass the lan-

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KOFI ANNAN,
FORMER UN SECRETARY GENERAL

guage test 'Prøve i dansk 2' and have worked for a minimum 2.5 years out of the last 3 years – education and part time jobs will no longer count. Applicants must also pass two of the four following requirements: Passed a citizen test, proof of being an active citizen during one year, ordinary full time job during 4 years, a yearly, taxable income of minimum 270,000 DKR on average for the last two years.

3. Easier to withdraw residence permits from refugees. As a refugee you will be issued either a foreigner's passport or a convention passport, and in the passport is marked a ban on entry to the home country. In the future this can also be extended to other countries. A violation will lead to losing the residence permit in Denmark.

4. New Fees. It will remain free to apply for asylum, appeal to the Refugee Appeals Board and apply for family reunification for refugees. For non refugees, a fee must be now paid before admitting applications for family reunification, extension of residence permit and appeals to the Immigration Board.

5. Withdrawal of asylum seekers funds and extended self-payment. The police will be granted the right to search asylum seekers and confiscate means to cover expenses for accommodation, food and health service. Asylum seekers will be allowed to keep valuables worth up to 10,000 kroner, including items of personal value.

6. Lowering cash allowances for asylum seekers. The allowances paid to asylum seekers will be cut by 10%. Currently, single asylum seekers receive 1,644,00 kroner per month.

7. Revoking the access to live outside the camps and work. The former Socialdemokraterne government introduced laws that allowed some asylum seekers to move out of the asylum centres and into individual accommodation. This will now be forbidden.

8. Changing the criteria for quota refugees. The government will select the 500 UN quota refugees based on their ability to integrate into the Danish society, rather than how at risk they are. **M**



The last stand of refugee rights

Last month, parliament passed a controversial law allowing police to confiscate valuables from refugees and delay family reunification to curb the refugee influx. With pressure mounting to pull out entirely from the UN refugee convention, detractors insist the crisis needs more, not less, international cooperation

HALF A CENTURY AGO, Denmark was the first country to sign the UN Refugee Convention. Its purpose is to ensure that no nation refuses sanctuary to groups escaping danger, as happened to millions of displaced people during the World War II.

But the convention is under threat. Europe's inability to manage the enormous number of refugees and migrants that have arrived this year has pushed the continent to its limits. The solution, according to political party Liberal Alliance (LA) is to scrap the convention and start again.

"We need to accept that we ex-

Lena Rutkowski

Additional reporting
by Peter Stanners

ist in a new reality. We have both a duty to help the victims of the war in Syria, but we also have a duty to take care of our own society," LA's group chairman Simon Emil Ammitzbøll told Berlingske newspaper in January.

His party wants Denmark to withdraw from the convention for two years and lead a group of nations in revising the agreement. In the mean time, Denmark will increase the number of UN quota refugees from 500 per year to 4,000, which is still far fewer than Denmark expects to receive at the current rate. The money saved, around six billion kroner, will go

to humanitarian aid in Syria and nearby areas.

REFUGEE THREAT

Rather than helping those in need, Ammitzbøll argues that the convention is placing undue pressure on countries such as Denmark. The convention requires that when a refugee arrives in a country – a so-called 'spontaneous arrival' – it is that country's responsibility to care and provide them with certain rights.

The expenses associated with refugees are high. In the 63 of 98 councils that replied to a TV2 survey, the costs of refugees increased from 300 million kroner in 2010 to 1.5 billion

kroner in 2015. The Immigration Ministry expects spend on caring for refugees and their families to reach around 4.4 billion kroner next year. To prevent these costs from spiraling out of control, the Danish government has introduced a series of laws to make Denmark a less attractive place to seek refuge.

But Denmark is far from the only country to tighten its immigration laws in the face of rising numbers of refugees. Sweden recently implemented border checks after receiving over 160,000 refugee applications last year, prompting Denmark to do the same across its German border.

Germany is also revisiting its refugee policy after a mob – reportedly of immigrant men – carried out mass assaults against women in Cologne on New Year's Eve. Amid talk of a clash of civilisations and growing domestic tensions over Chancellor Angela Merkel's open-door policy to refugees, the German leader conceded Europe's need to readdress an escalating situation.

"We are suddenly facing the challenge posed by refugees arriving in Europe and we are vulnerable because we do not yet have the order, the control, that we would like to have," German newspaper Die Welt reported Merkel saying in January.

While she called for the preservation of the Schengen zone, she advocated increased security of the EU's external borders. But her pledge to reduce refugee numbers in the wake of the assaults, combined with the tightening of borders across Europe, means Denmark might not be the only bloc member to call for a revision of international refugee commitments in the future.

Ammitzbøll echoed Merkel's fears.

"I fear that the international system with conventions will break down if we don't do something drastic now. We need to accept that European societies face real problems in protecting themselves and surviving as liberal humanistic democracies."

RACE TO THE BOTTOM

Immigration spokesperson for the governing Liberal Party (Venstre) Marcus Knuth rejected LA's proposal, but in December the Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen expressed a desire to scale back the convention in an interview with TV2.

"If you escape war and live in Turkey for two or three years, should you then be able to travel to Europe and file an asylum application? The current rules say you can, but that's something we want to discuss," Rasmussen said.

UN officials have taken note of growing hostility towards the convention, and in an interview with The Guardian, Melissa Fleming, spokesperson for the UN refugee

We are unfortunately witnessing a sort of 'race to the bottom' in Europe, where countries are trying to push refugees to seek shelter anywhere else but here.

ANDREAS KAMM, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE DANISH REFUGEE COUNCIL

agency UNHCR, rose to its defence.

"The refugee convention has saved millions of lives and is one of the greatest human rights instruments that has ever been put into effect. It is a milestone of humanity developed in the wake of massive population movements that exceeded even the magnitude of what we see today. At its core the convention embodies fundamental humanitarian values."

Andreas Kamm, secretary general of the Danish Refugee Council, does not support tinkering with the convention, and argues the refugee crisis demonstrates that the entire bloc is failing to pull its weight.

"We are unfortunately witnessing a sort of 'race to the bottom' in Europe, where countries are trying to push refugees to seek shelter anywhere else but here," he explains.

EUROPEAN SOLUTION

The Social Liberal Party (Radikale) are opposed to all talk of revising the conventions. Leader Morten Østergaard argues that commitment to international conventions and human rights is particularly important in times when those conventions may be inconvenient.

"The conventions were written for this exact situation, and I am distressed by the fact that this motivates the right wing to demand the conventions be changed. Bear in mind this is one of the most vulnerable groups of people in the world. One could also be concerned by the slippery slope nature of the PM's comments. Where does it end? What about human rights, the convention on the rights of children, rules of war, and so on."

He adds that the solution to the refugee situation is through international cooperation and accuses the government of avoiding any European commitments.

"We believe, along with the European Commission, that we need to strengthen the external borders. At the same time we must recognise that a sustainable solution requires a permanent mechanism to fairly distribute refugees among EU's Member States. Furthermore, we need to signifi-

cantly increase the funding of humanitarian aid. The UN recently announced that it needs around 15 billion dollars in humanitarian aid, which is why the Danish government's cutbacks on funding is very poorly timed."

The Danish Government's reluctance to participate in a joint European asylum policy might very well have increased the amount of people seeking asylum in Denmark, he argues, which might ultimately result in the closure internal borders and increases the possibility of a Schengen collapse.

"A combined European Policy would reduce the amount of refugees in Denmark, help distinguish between migrants and refugees, and get the influx of refugees under control. Since the Danish Government has shown no interest in solving the refugee situation along with the other EU member states, it has become clear that the government is more interested in performing symbolic policies than actually working towards a solution."

THE POLITICS OF 'CRISIS'

While EU states panic over the volume of new arrivals, its intake pales in comparison to the slack being picked up by the developing world. According to 2014 UNHCR figures, 86 percent of the world's refugees are hosted by developing countries in the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia.

The the social infrastructure of some nations is being pushed to the brink by the Syrian crisis. 1.3 million Syrian refugees now live in Lebanon, whose only population is 4.5 million.

When Rasmussen suggested sending some asylum seekers back to Turkey, he didn't mention that the Mediterranean country is housing around 1.6 million refugees – more than the entire EU took in last year.

Migration researcher Johannes Dragsbæk Schmidt, an associate professor of political science at Aalborg University, agrees with the PM that the convention is outdated, but thinks amendments should be geared in the opposite direction – to address the inequality between receiving countries.

"Lebanon has received very limited assistance from the international community, for instance. What is needed is a more fair, humane and legally binding convention which relieves the burden in the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia where more 86 percent of the world's 50 million refugees live."

In light of this, is the trending phrase 'European migrant crisis' even appropriate at all? Schmidt says the situation has been labelled a crisis in Denmark for political expediency.

"The main question is how you define 'crisis'. The Danish government, in a neo-classical fashion, has cast the so-called 'refugee crisis' in pure economic terms as a threat to the welfare state. It uses asylum seekers as a justification to not only cut into social entitlements, but also to justify the recent cuts to development aid, an area where Denmark was always traditionally at the forefront."

He also cites the growing influence of the anti-immigration Danish People's Party (DF), who are the second-largest party in parliament after they emerged from last June's election with a historic 21.1 percent of the vote.

"Among other reasons, the Prime Minister's proposal is a populist attempt to please DF and indirectly create growing anxiety among the population – especially the elderly – and implicitly build on the image of refugees as an economic threat."

Ultimately, Schmidt worries that the new laws are a huge blow to Denmark's reputation as a country committed to human rights.

"Our international image as a safe, green and hospitable country is rapidly declining," says Schmidt, adding that the new laws may also inspire other EU countries to water down refugee protections.

"With the latest proposal, Denmark may become a role-model for countries like Poland and Hungary who have already taken very tough measures against refugees and who may wish to follow in its footprints and demand radical changes in the protection of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants." **M**

Danes "split and confused" over refugees

Left-wing voters are abandoning the Social Democrats over their new hard line on immigration following the refugee crisis. Uffe Elbæk, leader of The Alternative, argues instead that Denmark and Europe is witnessing a crisis of leadership and values

SO SHOCKING was the result, that polling institute Megafon had to repeat the survey. But the result was real – the Social Democrats (Socialdemokraterne) are bleeding voters at an unprecedented rate. In the June 2015 election they received 26.3 percent of the vote. On January 28, the poll showed support had dropped to 19.3 percent.

The seven-percentage point drop in support is a blow for Socialdemokraterne, the traditional leaders of the left-wing 'red bloc' of parties. The culprit is the party's immigration position. In January they supported the Liberal Party (Venstre) government's controversial new refugee laws, even though the government had enough votes without their support.

The poll found that among Danes who voted for Socialdemokraterne in the June election, 55 percent think the party's immigration policies are too strict. This is unsurprising, given that the January deal with Venstre was a major departure from the immigration and refugee policies they pursued while in government between 2011 and 2015, when they improved the conditions for asylum seekers by allowing some to live and work outside asylum centres. This policy has now been withdrawn under the new set of immigration laws.

A LONG TIME COMING

Professor Christopher Green-Pedersen, from the Department of Political Science at Aarhus University, argues Socialdemokraterne are in a tight spot. On the one hand, they have to lead the left wing bloc, which generally opposes stricter immigration policies. On the other, they have been losing voters to the pro-welfare and anti-immigration Danish People's Party (DF) over the past two decades when they pursued a less hard line position.

"It took Socialdemokraterne far too long to move to the right on immigration. Their voters have long sought a tougher position," says Green-Pedersen.

In January, Socialdemokraterne leader Mette Frederiksen made a

very public departure from the party's traditional line on immigration. In an interview on the DR2 programme Deadline, Frederiksen said the party should have listened sooner to its mayors in deprived parts of the country, who had warned about the impact of immigration.

"When many immigrants arrive and have to be integrated into schools and housing, it becomes the responsibility of the public housing sector, which is already burdened with the most social problems," she said.

"It is important to get through this crisis with our values intact and end up with a cohesive society. We insist that, firstly, we help people fleeing war. And, secondly, that we treat them with dignity when they arrive. Integration must work. But there must be a balance so that we don't take in more than we can integrate. Our social model is so unique that it rests on an economic stability and balance, as well as a social cohesion."

TOUGH GUYS

Green-Pedersen explains that even with the tougher position on immigration, the new policies might have gone too far, hastening the party's decline in the polls.

"The policies were very symbolic, such as the confiscation of valuables from refugees. Voters think that they have gone too far, which is why the voters have moved to parties with less strict immigration policies, such as The Alternative [Alternativet] and the Social Liberals [Radikale]."

Professor Jørgen Goul Andersen, from the Department of Political Science at Aalborg University, agrees.

"By tightening the rules so much – and by emphasising the most nasty elements – both Venstre and Socialdemokraterne have lost. Four years ago, the Liberals enjoyed support from about 35 per cent of the voters. Taken together, the Social Democrats and the Liberals have always commanded a very solid majority. By trying to compete with the Danish People's Party both parties combined have currently sup-



Uffe Elbæk's party Alternativet have stormed forward on the back of Socialdemokraterne's losses over refugee policies.

We are witnessing a crisis of values.

UFFE ELBÆK,
LEADER OF
ALTERNATIVET

Peter Stanners

port from some 37 per cent. DF is unaffected and has become the biggest party due to the two other parties' kamikaze course."

BUILDING BRIDGES

While Socialdemokraterne tumble, their former coalition partner Radikale surged from 4.6 percent to 8.5 percent.

But more impressive was Alternativet, who were elected into parliament for the first time last June with 4.6 percent of the vote, but would now secure 9.3 percent.

Formed by former culture minister and Radikale MP Uffe Elbæk, Alternativet supports entrepreneurialism and a green economy, but challenges the neo-Liberal paradigm. He argues that the Socialdemokraterne's new hard line attitude on immigration is a heartfelt and honest position by the leadership who want to protect the future of the welfare state.

But he warns that pursuing protectionist policies will be damaging to both Denmark and the EU in the long run.

"We in Alternativet are totally sceptical about what is happening in Europe in response to the refugee crisis. Countries like Denmark are reacting to the lack of EU leadership with policies that now mean we have to show our passport to go to Sweden and when we return from Germany. These are not merely symbolic actions, it is threatening the very core of the European project."

In September, Alternativet released a five-point plan for reacting to the large numbers of refugees and migrants. These include a Marshall Plan for North Africa and the Middle East, refugee reception centres on each side of the Mediterranean, as well as European quotas.

"We are witnessing a crisis of values. We are totally split and confused about what to do and there is rising frustration in Denmark about where we are heading as a society. What we need is leadership and to build bridges between the two political blocs, rather than erecting walls." **M**

Death by taxes

Divisions among supporting parties have forced the minority Venstre government to postpone a tax code reform. While a deal will likely be reached, it exposes the minority government's inevitably weak position

IT MIGHT COME AS A SURPRISE to non-Danes that the Liberal Party (Venstre) government doesn't command anything close to a majority in parliament. With 34 out of 179 seats, their power relies on a majority of parties in parliament that do not oppose their rule.

This means the minority Venstre government needs to keep their supporters in parliament – the so-called 'blue bloc' – happy, or risk facing a vote of no confidence. The risk of this threat has forced the government to delay a reform of the tax code, and demonstrates the sharp divisions within the bloc.

To the government's left is the Danish People's Party (DF), a populist and pro-welfare party who joined the blue bloc due to their position on immigration. To the right of the government is Liberal Alliance (LA), a small-government and free enterprise party. If there's anything they can't agree on, it's taxes.

This division is a problem for the government, which wants to reduce taxes on those with low-income work in order to bring down

the number on unemployment benefits. In addition, they want to reduce tax on the last earned kroner by five percentage points across the board.

Liberal Alliance has different priorities. Their central political objective is to cut the top tax bracket, *topskat*, which currently stands at 15 percent of income over 467,000 kroner. DF is opposed, however, and in December leader Kristian Thulesen-Dahl stated that the pressure on government finances resulting from the increase in refugees, means it is a bad time to reduce state revenue.

"We don't like the idea of cutting *topskat*," Dahl told TV 2 News, while LA leader Samuelsen told Politiken: "It's going to happen."

ULTIMATUM

With the battle lines drawn, finance minister Claus Hjort Frederiksen announced that the government would postpone the planned tax reform from the spring to the autumn. Instead, the government would first draw up an economic plan through to 2025

where they would find money for both welfare and tax cuts.

Samuelsen responded to the postponed reform by stating his party would not guarantee the survival of the government if they do not live up to their promises.

"Our promise to the government is that we support them as long as they live up to their [promises]," Samuelsen told Politiken. "[They promised] that there would be a tax reform in the spring."

Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen has taken the threat in his stride, and argued that the best possible tax reform would only be possible after drawing up their 2025 economic plan during the summer.

"There is a much bigger chance of an ambitious reform if we know beforehand how we will be tackling the refugee crisis, and what the economy is going to look like in that period," Rasmussen told Berlingske.

DO OR DIE

Hans Engell, a political analyst and former head of the Conservatives (Konservative), says Samuelsen's strong position represents

By threatening the government and by emphasizing LA's demand for tax cuts as forcefully as he has, Samuelsen has in reality risked all of his party's credibility.

HANS ENGELL

a "do or die" situation for his party, especially given that tax reform is a cornerstone of the PM's project.

"By threatening the government and by emphasizing LA's demand for tax cuts as forcefully as he has, Samuelsen has in reality risked all of his party's credibility. If LA succeed and the negotiations bring a significant lowering of tax for the highest earners, then the party will really have accomplished something and a large group of voters will be very thankful to LA. If, however, they do not succeed and there are no significant cuts, Samuelsen will have made empty threats and will lose all credibility. It really is a high-risk project," explains Engell, adding that making a deal won't be an impossible task.

"I think a deal will be struck with LA, Konservative and DF. I don't think it is possible to lower the rate of *topskat*, but it should be possible to raise the threshold for when one pays it. That means that some concessions will have to be made to please DF, concessions which could be in a number of areas," Engell concludes.

WEAK GOVERNMENT

Flemming Juul Christiansen, Associate Professor at Department of Social Sciences and Business at the University of Roskilde, is an expert on minority governments. He argues that the Venstre government is in a weak position.

"This is a situation where the government party has three supporting parties of which one party, DF, is actually larger than the party in power. That makes a weak government, as the government has to take many more interests into account when attempting to implement reform," he says, adding that the reform was postponed due to the complexity of funding a compromise.

"The negotiations have been postponed so that the Prime Minister can buy some time to take care of the different interests at play and find a lasting solution going into the negotiations." **M**

Joshua Hollingdale



Liberal Alliance leader Anders Samuelsen (left) and Dansk Folkeparti leader Kristian Thulesen-Dahl



Travel Greenland / flickr

Children in Greenland. Budget cuts might mean the end of the University of Copenhagen's Eskimology and Arctic Studies course.

Universities axe language educations

Academics and politicians condemn shutting language courses by the University of Copenhagen and Copenhagen Business School in response to government budget cuts

NICHE courses are being closed by universities in a bid to satisfy cuts to higher education. In January, The University of Copenhagen (KU) announced its Faculty of Humanities would stop the intake of students for 13 courses that are not profitable to run. The courses are primarily language and regional studies, including Classical Greece, Balkan Studies, Turkish, Polish and Eskimology and Arctic Studies.

Seven of the courses are not taught at any other Danish university, and while some courses may open again to students in 2017, some face permanent closure. Ulf Hedetoft, Director of the Faculty of Humanities, is concerned about Denmark's ability to produce graduates with a broad set of language skills.

"The government should make a strategy for ensuring that Denmark continues to teach a broad range of languages at universities," he says, calling for new national language strategy, which could support the courses through increased funding.

He highlights Turkish as an example. Turkey is a geopolitically important country which imports eight billion kroner of Danish goods every year. The course was selected for a reduced intake from 17 to 12 in 2018 because of its high dropout rate –

60 percent of the 2015 class. The course has now been slated for permanent closure, however, because despite the 760,000 kroner expense every semester, KU would only receive 415,000 kroner for the course.

SHRINKING BUDGETS

This is just one example of how KU needs to reprioritise its funding, after the government demanded universities cut spending by two percent per year for four years. KU's Faculty of Humanities alone has to reduce spending by 125 million kroner, or a fifth of its government funding.

"As education finances currently stand, we are only heading in one direction. Both small and medium-sized language educations are vulnerable and risk buckling under when finances are squeezed," says Hedetoft.

KU is not the only university to cut language courses due to pressures on their finances. In October, Copenhagen Business School (CBS) announced the closure of the German, French and Spanish lines in two Bachelor programmes, as well as the Japanese in the Asia Studies Programme (ASP).

"These courses have been waning in popularity for some years," CBS President Per Holten-Andersen told CBS Observer, adding that the school will be finding savings

Society is not best served when finances alone dictate which courses are offered.

CHARLOTTE RØNHOF, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF DANSK INDUSTRI

Peter Stanners

by consolidating students into larger classes.

"The classes were small and there was higher unemployment than other CBS courses. That is why we have chosen to cut them. But we are still maintaining the same total student intake."

Holten-Andersen added that students can still take language education at KU and the University of Aarhus, but that these universities don't have a business language focus.

LOSING KNOWLEDGE

Charlotte Rønhof, Deputy Director of industry lobby group Dansk Industri, says the decision to close small language courses might make economic sense, but supports Hedetoft's call for a national strategy to protect the courses.

"Society is not best served when finances alone dictate which courses are offered," Rønhof told Berlingske.

It's not just language abilities that might be lost among future graduates, however. KU's decision to stop admissions into its BA in Eskimology and Arctic Studies has provoked a strong reaction, as it is the only course in Denmark that examines the language, culture, history and society of Denmark's former colony, Greenland.

Aaja Chemnitz, one of two MPs

in the Danish parliament representing Greenland, argues it is a poor decision given the increasing global interest in the Arctic region and Greenland.

"We need to remember that the course is not the study of a far off Asian region [...] but a study of an important part of the Kingdom of Denmark, which means its closure would be a significant loss for both Greenland and Denmark," she says, calling for targeted investment in the study of the Arctic region and its people.

Frank Sejersen, associate professor at KU's Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional studies agrees.

"Denmark's historic relationship with Greenland means we have, over the centuries, developed a large knowledge base, especially about the Greenlandic language, culture, society and history. That is why it is deeply frustrating to see a course with such a long history and significance, judged against simple budget models," Sejersen told Information newspaper.

Of the 13 courses slated for closure at KU, six receive an extra 1.25 million kroner in funding a year due to their small size. Despite the additional funding, however, the courses are still not affordable.

The future of the 13 courses will be decided at a board meeting on February 1. **M**



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Several dozens protesters representing the For Frihed (For Freedom) movement march through central Copenhagen. The group is opposed to Islamic immigration and is connected to the German Pegida movement. Their numbers were vastly smaller than the crowd of counter-protestors. A large police presence kept the two groups separated.



In defence of JUSTICE

Jacob Mchangama is no moral relativist. Director of the think tank Justitia, he says Denmark must uphold its fundamental values and encourage open debate in order to fight extremism in the aftermath of incidents such as the Cologne attacks

"We need to discuss issues like the refugee crisis in a factual way, in order to acknowledge the extent of the problem. We need to know how many will commit crimes and how many will get work. We can't keep anything in the dark. Unless we, and the mainstream political parties, address these issues, then there are plenty of extremists waiting on the sidelines, ready to step in and do away with our liberty."

Casually dressed, chewing gum and sipping coffee, Jacob Mchangama could come across a little blasé, but there is nothing compromising about his stance on human rights and the fundamental values and liberties the world should be built on.

"We need to be assertive in our principles. Freedom of speech, women's rights and the freedom to criticise religions are vital rights. Europe has experienced terrible violence and wars due to religion and therefore it is vital that it remains outside of politics. We cannot escape the fact that many people are coming to Europe, many of whom have an entirely different approach to religion. But we should not compromise our values to appease. We shouldn't sacrifice for sake of a fundamentalist. He doesn't sacrifice anything – he makes us bow to his will."

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRINCIPLES

Mchangama is the founder and director of the judicial think tank Justitia. The organisation fittingly shares a name with the Roman goddess of justice, who blindly holds her scales over courthouses across the world. It is fitting because Justitia's mandate is to be an independent judicial watchdog.

"I started Justitia because I wanted to create a non partisan organisation that strictly focused on judicial issues, such as due process and human rights, but left alone questions of economics."

The think tank was founded in 2014 after Mchangama left libertarian think tank CEPOS. Justitia is the first of its kind in Denmark, but in a relatively short time has become an active and important part of the political debate. In recent years Mchangama has become the go-to commentator on issues re-

We shouldn't sacrifice for sake of a fundamentalist. He doesn't sacrifice anything – he makes us bow to his will.

garding the rule of law, the constitution and human rights.

Its mandate includes conveying and communicating difficult legal questions to the public. Mchangama uses social media to break down complicated and convoluted debates for his thousands of followers, answering questions and urging steadfastness on principle rights and values.

MORALITY FOR SALE

Early in the New Year, disturbing news broke that ignited a heated debate about a new reality facing Europe. In several cities across the continent, most notably Germany's fourth largest city Cologne, upwards of 1,000 men sexually abused, raped, and robbed numerous women celebrating New Year's Eve.

The violence was met with violence, as far-right groups across Germany carried out reprisal attacks. In Leipzig, around 150 men from the football hooligan milieu attacked and vandalised shops and businesses.

The shameful violence masked a debate in the middle. The men were largely of North African descent and the attacks mirrored similar incidents witnessed during the Arab Spring, most notoriously in Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt.

In Denmark, however, several feminist and left-wing commentators argued that the discussion was coloured by racism and hypocrisy. Comedian Sanne Søndergaard wrote on her Facebook page that the uproar was just a case of "white men" being upset over "brown men groping white women", and that the events in Cologne were just similar to what women experience every summer at the Roskilde Music Festival.

Ulla Tornemand, former vice director of Danish Women's Society (Dansk Kvindesamfund), echoed the point in an op-ed for Politiken newspaper entitled "The sexually abusive white man has his glory days".

Mchangama hit out at those claims in an op-ed for Berlingske newspaper, entitled "Cologne and the clearance sale of values". He argued that people who saw themselves as progressive were, in fact, downplaying the most brutal attack on women's rights in years.

"To some, it was more important to point out that white men also commit attacks on women, rather than discussing the incident and the attackers, because the men who had committed the attacks had different coloured skin."

Words: Elias Thorsson

Photos: Rasmus Degnbol



In the op-ed he drew parallels to the reaction following the 2005 Mohammed cartoon crisis. At the time, Denmark found itself facing a serious dilemma over its stance on free speech and anti-discrimination. Some Danes took the stance that it was better to moderate free speech to avoid inflaming tensions with the Muslim world.

But then, like now, Mchangama argues that the cost of abandoning our fundamental principles is a price too high to pay.

"In 2005 we suddenly woke up to a Denmark where journalists and editors had to be protected by bodyguards and live under constant death threats, something that would only have existed in our imagination a few years earlier. Then, as now, I was astonished by the reaction of the progressive wing, those who had in previous decades talked most about freedom of speech were suddenly not interested in defending that right."

There remains, in Europe, a clear discomfort in pointing the finger at minorities, given Europe's colonial past and horrifying history of mistreatment and genocide of minorities. But Mchangama argues this discomfort is now preventing us from acknowledging the facts.

"The emphasis on anti-discrimination has become so extensive that we have lost focus. Anti-discrimination does not mean that the West and white people are always the bad guys. It seems that many are more interested in taking pot shots at political opponents, than discussing why a significant minority of people, who have arrived from certain parts of the world, can act in such an inconceivable and organised way. This is a reality we have to talk about, no matter how uncomfortable it is."

ERODING TRUST

This discomfort was clear in the immediate aftermath of the attacks in Cologne. Initially, the local police department stated that the New Year's Eve celebrations had been "playful" and "largely peaceful". The German media, by large, ignored or failed to report on the attacks until several days later.

Last month, news broke of an alleged cover up by the Stockholm police department, which failed to report numerous sexual assaults at the We Are Sthlm youth festival last summer. Swedish newspaper Dagens Nyheter (DN) first reported the story, and criticised the police for withholding information about the incidents. The newspaper claimed to have seen a police memo about the incident, in which it was alleged that the "attackers were mostly migrants, including from Afghanistan".

In the article, police chief Peter Ågren claimed that the decision to withhold information was, in fact, due to the growing influence of Sweden's far-right Sverigedemokraterna party – releasing the news would only strengthen them.

"We sometimes dare not to say how it is because we think it might play into the hands of the Sweden Democrats," he told the newspaper.

Following the article, the Norwegian Union of Journalists wrote in its periodical, Journalisten, that DN editor Hanne Kjöllner had been tipped off about the assaults last summer and, while initially interested, had decided to drop the story when finding out that they had been carried out by refugee and migrant youths.

The case demonstrates self-censorship on behalf of the authorities and the police in the interest of preserving the peace. But Mchangama argues that those kinds of actions are both counter-productive and dangerous to democracy.

"When authorities lie and conceal issues, it erodes the vital public trust that is required for a legal state to function. I think many Swedes and Germans lost some of that trust after these news stories



broke. It is incomprehensible that the police would withhold information to hinder a legal political party. It is even downright dangerous if the police start making decisions based on politics. Just imagine if the police in Denmark decided to withhold information because it might benefit the Social Democrats."

THE SWEDISH PARADOX

Last year, Jacob Aasland Rayndal and Johannes Due Enstad from the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment wrote an op-ed in Norwegian newspaper Aftenposten. The duo had been doing extensive research on right wing political violence in West Europe and their findings showed that Sweden had the highest rate of politically-motivated violence per-capita. They suggested that one of the reasons could be the country's restricted debate on immigration issues.

"The Swedish consensus culture is strongly represented in the immigration debate. Factual criticism and legitimate concerns are suppressed and stigmatised," they wrote.

The researchers pointed out that the Danish People's Party (DF) could even have diminished political violence in Denmark by opening up the debate and giving voice to disillusioned individuals who might otherwise be forced to turn towards more extremist elements to get their views across.

This is a point that Mchangama is keen to stress. He believes that an open and unhindered debate is key to undermining and fighting political extremism.

"Denmark has a more clear and open debate than Sweden. As DF has moved from its more extremist roots and has become a more normal party that engages in politics as usual, the debate became de-radicalised."

He points out that when the authorities refuse to disclose information or address concerns and issues relating to immigration, the debate risks being taken over by online blogs and forums with extremist right wing views. In doing so the focus moves away from factual discussions and toward conspiracy theories and paranoia.

Ultimately he worries that the very existence of a country, governed by rule of law, is at stake if we get to a point where people don't trust the police and turn to vigilantism. He says that when countries like Germany and Sweden both fail to protect women, and also cover up sexual assaults, re-establishing the trust between citizens and the state becomes a monumental task.

"I believe that when the authorities and the public have a radically different view of how things stand, then we lose the ability to face the enormous challenge of creating the necessary togetherness and integration we need in a society with people from different backgrounds. If we don't think we can win a debate against the most extremist voices then I fear we have built a very fragile democracy."

THE DIM BEACON

European politicians have been unable to form a coherent and effective strategy for dealing with the refugee crisis. The European Un-

Denmark has a more clear and open debate than Sweden. As DF has moved from its more extremist roots and has become a more normal party that engages in politics as usual, the debate became de-radicalised.

ion has failed to adequately assist countries at its periphery, such as Greece, that have borne the brunt of receiving refugees. Individual member states have responded in disjointed and counter-productive ways, with countries often shifting responsibility to their neighbours. This, Mchangama argues, stems from a serious lack of competent leaders across the continent.

"You see it everywhere. We are standing at a point in Europe where we are experiencing an extreme leadership crisis. Politicians have not had to face such a serious challenge over the last twenty or thirty years. For them, it is more important to maintain their political positions than to tackle problems. And if nothing is done, and the migrant and refugee crisis continues, then the population in Europe will become more radicalised."

As the economic and political power migrates towards emerging economies to the South and East, the West has found itself having to re-evaluate its position and influence on human rights. In order to placate autocratic governments and maintain valuable business interests, Western nations forgo their principled stance on fundamental human rights in exchange for pragmatism.

This reality became uncomfortably clear when Saudi Arabia, a country Freedom House called "one of the worst human rights abusers in the world", was voted head of the UN's Human Rights Council in 2013.

"It is completely absurd, we have never had a more undemocratic Human Rights Council since its founding in 2006," says Mchangama.

The position allows Saudi Arabia, on behalf of the UN, to interview and appoint experts to investigate and report on human rights violations and the status of issues such as the rights of women, migrants, religious freedom and minorities across the world.

"It is clear that the West has less power than before and bows out of many fights. You see that the Royal Family and our foreign minister are making an official visit to Saudi Arabia, and here at home we bend to the demands of China to remove protesters from the streets."

These are politically calculated moves that allow countries to compromise on values they otherwise claim to stand firmly behind. Ultimately, it demonstrates that the West has abandoned its defence of human rights, he argues. Still, despite the West's waning hegemony, even small nations like Denmark could make steps towards counter-ing violations and standing up for human rights.

"What we can do may be limited, but at the very least we could stop voting for countries like Saudi Arabia to be in charge of creating and enforcing official policy. We need to be principled and resolved when it comes to fundamental human rights." ■



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Refugees and migrants sleep beside a road in South Denmark as police watch over them, soon after arriving in September 2015.

"Migrants and smugglers are the same people"

Tackling the migrant influx means dismantling the myth of the 'evil smuggler' says migration researcher Line Richter. Instead, we must address the conflict and poverty fuelling the demand for human smuggling

LAST SEPTEMBER saw a large number of refugees and migrants arrive in Denmark. Many were en route to Sweden, meaning they had to avoid being registered by Danish police on the final stretch of their journey. Moved to help, some Danes picked up the arrivals and drove them across the bridge to Sweden.

Transporting undocumented arrivals is illegal, and over 100 Danes have since been charged with *menneskesmugling*, or human smuggling. They face a fine of up to two years, far less than the ten-year sentence available for those found guilty of *menneskehandel*, or human trafficking.

Line Richter, a PHD student

at the department of anthropology at the University of Copenhagen, has found the two terms are often used interchangeably in the debate about migration. But there is a clear difference between the two – smuggling is a contractual relationship whereas trafficking is a criminal exploitation of vulnerable people.

"They facilitate border crossing for payments, while trafficking is about non-voluntary movement. That is the big difference – the voluntary decision to move."

Richter is one of four researchers working on a project which traces migrant routes from Africa into Europe. She focuses on emigrants from West Africa, espe-

cially Mali, who travel through to Algeria, Morocco, and ultimately France. An estimated four million Malians live outside their home country, which has a population of 14 million, spurned to leave by conflict and poverty. Most of these emigrants live in neighbouring African countries and only a minority go onwards to Europe. But as regional tensions increase, more people will attempt the journey to the continent. Smugglers respond to this demand, helping people move between countries, and often financing their own journey in the process.

"There is this illusion that if you stop smuggling, you stop the influx of migrants. But you cannot

stop smuggling. You can make it a lot harder, you can crack down on certain people, but new people will definitely come, and the risks will go up – meaning that more people will lose their lives in the attempt to cross the Mediterranean sea."

Not that smuggling isn't lucrative. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), two of the main smuggling routes – one that leads from East, North and West Africa to Europe and the second from South America to North America – generate an estimated 46 billion kroner annually.

Richter says the stereotype that smugglers are exploitative and profiteering does not always ring

Natasha Jessen-Petersen

true. During her year of field research, she worked closely with numerous people involved in the border-crossing business. Many were also trying to escape conflict, economic or political turmoil and used the business of facilitating border crossings both to earn money to pay for their own journey, and discover less risky journeys than they would otherwise take.

She remembers an informant she met in Paris who had spent a long time moving through the sub-Saharan Maghreb region on his path toward Europe.

"I asked him how long he had stayed in the Maghreb and he said, 'seven years. That's not too long is it?' And I thought, 'wow, my flight here only took seven hours.'"

CORRUPTION

Before arriving in Paris, Richter says the man had been a small-time smuggler, or 'broker' as she prefers to term it. He became increasingly involved in the trade, but abandoned it for his dream of Europe.

"He could have continued if he wanted. He was moving up the hierarchies and then one day, without telling his so-called colleagues, he just left. Many migrants are trapped in transit, and want to leave. Being a broker is not a career as such, and life is not luxurious in the European borderlands, where racism, and a lack of freedom is everyday life. The dream of a better life will motivate them to attempt to cross the border multiple times."

To be a broker, you need the right connections in the local community, which take time to develop. But just as important, is finding cooperative members of local police forces or government workers. Brokering is really about being connected.

Richter says most migrants find their facilitator through friends and family, using networks to ensure that the person they are hiring and entrusting with their lives is reliable – a good reputation is important.

"A broker with a bad reputation will have a hard time actually finding enough people to fill the boat," Richter says, adding that she had spoken to a former broker who proudly boasted that he had transported around 3,000 people, while only losing a few.

"For him, it was like his CV."

THE EVIL SMUGGLER

Richter points out that the Danish smugglers were portrayed as humanitarians by the media, in contrast with the negative associations attached to other types of smugglers. She says it's because there was no exchange of money involved in the Danish cases.

"We need to dismantle the 'evil smuggler narrative' and look at the actual circumstances. I'm not saying that all smugglers are just getting by, and some people are probably really nasty, but many are just responding to a demand created by market capitalism and work with people who voluntarily want to move across borders despite not

The debate is very much framed in terms of the 'poor refugee' and the 'bad smugglers'. But it's a lot more complex than that.

having the right documentation. The debate is very much framed in terms of the 'poor refugee' and the 'bad smugglers'. But it's a lot more complex than that. Migrants and brokers are the same people. And how can we have this narrative when the categories are not so distinct? We need to rethink our politics."

The implementation of increased border controls in Sweden means that travellers moving between Sweden and Denmark must now show their IDs at the border. A similar policy was adopted at the Danish-German border. Within the first 24 hours of this new policy, 11, 000 people were checked. Of those, 18 people were rejected or refused entry to Denmark from Germany.

The Swedish authorities have also introduced a 'carrier-liability', which makes Danish train and ferry companies responsible for monitoring and preventing illegal entry into Sweden. DSB must now verify that all passengers travelling from Sweden have shown a valid photo ID.

But Richter argues that closing borders is not the solution to curbing migration. If anything, these restrictive policies are creating more human smugglers, meaning more Danish citizens looking to help will face criminal charges.

"If you really want to diminish migration, then you need to look at the root causes which are conflict, and of course, poverty. It is really important to note that we are also creating the circumstances and we have a heritage and a responsibility.

The more borders that we create, the more business there is."

NO GOING BACK

Not all migrants are happy with their new lives. Many recent arrivals to Europe have decided to return home, including Denmark where at least 60 have reportedly cancelled their asylum applications after the conditions they faced didn't live up to expectations.

When asked if she thought that any of the migrants would return to Mali, Richter says that for many it is not an option, unless they have something to show for themselves.

"One guy said to me, 'We cannot go back, only forward' in the European borderlands. You can't go back to Mali without anything in your pockets," she says, adding that many are under pressure to earn income to send home to their family, who may be stuck in a conflict area or under extreme poverty.

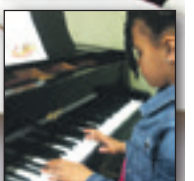
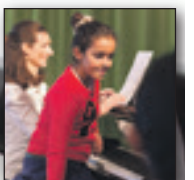
"Remittances are such a big part of the Malian economy. Some people say that it accounts for up to 70 percent of the country's development aid, or 11 percent of the GDP. Only a fraction of Malian emigrants reside in Europe, the majority live in neighbouring African countries. There are a lot of successful migrant stories in Mali."

Richter predicts that even if some people return home, the numbers of new arrivals will continue to grow. As long as there is poverty and conflict, we will continue to see people seeking safer places, and people making money by facilitating their travels. **M**

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Is feminism a dirty word in Denmark?

When it comes to Swedish initiatives like a gender-free kindergarten, Danes often scoff at their neighbours for taking political correctness too far. But with gender-neutral language taking off in the Anglosphere, some say it's Denmark who is falling behind

"YET ANOTHER reason I'm glad I don't live in Sweden."

Thus wrote Denmark's foreign minister Kristian Jensen on Twitter last August. He was weighing in on a Swedish radio debate about whether beige-coloured band-aids are implicitly racist, an allegation the minister found ridiculous.

Danes often joke Swedes are hypersensitive about inequality to the point of absurdity. Centuries of military aggression between Sweden and Denmark has today whittled down into a sibling rivalry, punctuated by light-hearted jibes. After all, the two countries find common ground in strong social policies, egalitarian values and mutually intelligible languages.

Lena Rutkowski

But simmering beneath the banter is a major cultural divide over gender politics and its influence on the language we use. In 2011, the Swedish preschool 'Egalia' caught international attention by abandoning the gender specific pronouns 'him' and 'her'. Instead, all the children were referred to as 'hen'.

Hen is quickly becoming a normalised term in the Swedish language and was included in the Swedish dictionary last year. The Anglosphere is following suit, with the use of the genderless pronoun 'they' taking off across US universities and major English-language media. In contrast, Danish doesn't have different terms

for 'gender' and 'sex' like many other languages, relying on the all-encompassing '*køn*' to discuss both biological sex and the social assumptions attached to it.

Unsurprisingly, the controversial school invited mockery from its snickering neighbours across the Øresund. Only 27 percent of Danes identify as feminists versus 52 percent of Swedes, according to a recent poll by DR program Debatten.

A 2014 EU study revealed that Denmark had the highest reported rate of violence against women among member states, indicating that Danish derision might have less to do with its relationship with Sweden and more about

its own uneasy relationship with feminism.

SWEDISH NAIVETÉ

Amalie Lhyne, a communications lecturer at the University of Copenhagen and senior advisor to parliament, counts herself among the Danes who believe that Swedish political correctness is spinning out of control. She says it's pushing the country towards censorship.

"When the police fail to mention serious crimes because the offenders are immigrants, when there are demands to take down old paintings and statues, because they offend people, and replace them with modern multicult-

tural art, and when artists are sent to jail because their work offends people, then political correctness has turned into a moral tyranny. And that is a threat to democracy, diversity and free speech."

Lhyne argues that the gender-neutral pronoun is ultimately an empty gesture.

"It's ridiculous. You cannot and should not remove genders from the public space. Naturally, your gender should not prohibit you from doing whatever you like, but you can have freedom without having to deny your sex. If you truly believe that women and men are worth the same, you don't have to use the language to cover up the differences."

Egalia also raised eyebrows within Sweden. Speaking to the BBC, Philip Hwang, professor of psychology and child development specialist at the University of Gothenburg, said the school represented a kind of Swedish naiveté.

"It's very Swedish in a sense. Swedes have a tendency to think that if they institutionalise something, it will automatically change – it's the Swedish way. But when it comes to issues embedded in our culture – that takes generations."

CHALLENGING ASSUMPTIONS

But the very fact that Swedes are willing to experiment with language in this way means they're better equipped to tackle sexism, say Hanna and Kajsa, the team behind the Swedish feminist website Supersnippan, in a joint statement.

"We have lots of ideas about what it means to be a man or woman based on a stereotypical and normative view of gender and using a gender-neutral pronoun means we don't reproduce the old ideas. Why should we assume that the person driving slowly in front of us is an old woman, or that the plumber coming Tuesday is a dude?"

Every time
I say I'm
a feminist
I have to
spend 45
minutes
repeating,
'I do not
hate men'.

EMMA HOLTEN,
FEMINIST WRITER
AND ACTIVIST



They also stress the pronoun's significance for people who don't subscribe to a specific gender.

"Also, it is extremely important to have a gender-neutral pronouns because there are people who do not identify as neither male nor female. A gender-neutral pronoun enables us to acknowledge their existence."

Meanwhile feminist writer and activist Emma Holten, from Denmark, believes there's a broader issue buried beneath the jibes about Swedish political correctness – 'feminism' has become a dirty word in Denmark.

"Every time I say I'm a feminist I have to spend 45 minutes repeating, 'I do not hate men'. I don't know where this idea comes from. Feminists have never committed violence against men. As I see it, there are far more men that hate women than feminists who hate men. Just look at the violence statistics."

She argues that there's an entrenched belief in Denmark that feminism is an outdated concept given the country's status as a world leader on women's rights. Indeed, Danish journalist and author Leny Malacinski argues that the feminist movement is doing women a disservice by victimising them.

For Holten, the inherent suspicion of feminism as a concept means Danes aren't willing to discuss gender to the same degree of nuance as Swedes. That means more latent forms of sexism – such as the double standards faced by women – get ignored by the national conversation.

"Denmark is suffering greatly under the burden of its own arrogance. Our idea that everything is great and fine in terms of human rights and respectful discourse is actively combating our ability to progress in these areas."

POLITICALLY INCORRECT

But it's more than just a divergence

with Sweden. In a recent interview with Information newspaper, Danish comedian Sofie Hagen described why she preferred performing her brand of feminist stand-up in her adopted home, London. On stage in the UK, discussing body positivity elicits cries of "you go girl!" whereas in Denmark, it just prompts laughs.

"It's one of the reasons I could never move back," she said, adding that London helped her 'come out' as a feminist, something she did not feel comfortable doing in her homeland.

"Feminism is a dirty word in Denmark...political-correctness is often seen as a bad thing in Denmark. But in London it's celebrated as something positive," said Hagen.

Lhyne agrees that Denmark is far more skeptical of political correctness, but says it's because Swedes have pushed the concept to the extreme.

"The horrible examples of political correctness gone crazy, constantly provided by Sweden, actually pull us in the other direction – towards less of it."

She also says that the average Swede probably doesn't differ too much from a Dane on the subject.

"You have to separate the regular Swede from the Swedish media and the political class. I think that there is a silent majority in Sweden, who do not support this extreme political correctness. But it is hard point that out, when the elite unite to uphold everything as politically correct."

Hanna and Kajsa agree that the initiative doesn't speak for all Swedes, but insists that gender-neutral pronouns have been widely accepted by a large section of society, even in unexpected places.

"Transphobia and racism are unfortunately widespread, also in Sweden. But it is worth mentioning that back in 2012, one of Sweden's biggest newspapers, Dagens Nyheter, forbade their employees

from using gender-neutral pronouns, except in exceptional cases. Today they accept its use."

THE RISE OF 'THEY'

The Anglosphere also seems to be on par with Sweden's approach. In January, linguist Gretchen McCulloch, writing for Quartz magazine, reported a surge in the use of the gender-neutral pronoun 'they' across media last year. In North America, it's been endorsed for usage by the Canadian government and many US colleges.

McCulloch also pointed out that language is a reflection of shifting cultural attitudes, suggesting that it's Denmark who is late to embrace more fluid ideas about gender.

"Ultimately, it's popular support that really matters. Language is changing constantly...it's a grassroots, open source, democratic process – and in this case, it's clear that people are voting for singular "they."

Lhyne disagrees, however.

"I honestly don't believe that the rest of the world will follow the politically-correct example set by Sweden and parts of the US."

REBUILDING BRIDGES

Gender politics is yet another battlefield where Sweden and Denmark play out their age-old rivalry, and it could be holding back their ability to cooperate. Holten believes Sweden and Denmark need to move past their bickering relationship to tackle the challenges posed by traditional gender roles.

"While I don't agree with all Swedish people on the uses of the pronoun, portraying them as losers for attempting to expand our understanding of gender is such a sad, sad thing. We should be working together towards a world with equity across the gender spectrum, not competing like two kids fighting in the schoolyard about who's the coolest." **M**

Dance, fat boy, dance

A middle-aged, overweight Icelandic man is following his dream of being a dancer and inspiring others to take on new challenges. But despite a grueling ten-show tour scheduled for Denmark, he's got no plans to get fit and put down the cheeseburgers



Pétur Ármannsson

Ármann Einarsson (left) dreamed of becoming a professional dancer for ten years before his son's girlfriend, choreographer Brogan Davison (right), finally decided to help him put together a routine.

For over a decade, Ármann Einarsson dreamed of becoming a professional dancer. 50-years old, 170 centimeters tall and bereft of prominent muscles, he looks more at home at the local bar than on stage performing a contemporary dance piece.

But his dream has come true. In ten shows over two weeks, the overweight and middle-aged man will be spinning his prominent belly around stages across Denmark, and into the audience's hearts.

"This is a dream I've walked around with for a long time. I've always enjoyed a challenge and felt that in order to feel alive you had to push yourself," he says.

A DANCE WITH DESTINY

The dream to dance was ignited 15 years ago when Einarsson, on holiday in Copenhagen, walked into a contemporary art museum by chance.

"A video piece was playing in a tiny room on the top floor. It showed an old man dancing on the street. It was so beautiful, he float-

ed around this square and I thought to myself 'I can do this'."

His dream remained dormant until 2012, when his son brought home his new girlfriend, Brogan Davison, who happened to be a trained choreographer.

"My son Pétur and his girlfriend Brogan came and stayed with me the summer after they had finished their studies. Then one day as we sat at the kitchen table I asked Brogan if she would help me create a three-minute video piece of me dancing. They both just laughed at me. That following winter they moved to Ber-

Elias Thorsson

lin, but I couldn't stop thinking about it and I was getting very impatient. So I decided to send her a long Facebook post telling her this needed to happen."

Davison realised that Einarsson was serious about his ambitions – the message opened with "This is a formal request" – and travelled to his home in the north of Iceland to create a dance routine. At first, Davison worked on teaching the fifty year old, with no prior training, moves he could take to the stage. Einarsson's son, Pétur Ármannsson, a theatre director, later decided to direct the piece and together they developed the show *Dance For Me*.

THE SON, THE DIRECTOR

"I remember when he first mentioned it and how we just laughed it off. Dad is short and fat and nothing like a dancer," explains Pétur Ármannsson, Einarsson's son.

They originally planned to perform one small show in a community centre outside of Einarsson's hometown Akureyri. They were all shocked when the show turned out to be a huge success. Over 200 people came to the little venue, and many had to be turned away at the door.

Following the crowd-pulling opening night they were invited to attend an international theatre festival in Reykjavik where the show caught the eye of promoters from around the world. They have since performed in front of 1,500 people on two continents, and now have ten shows coming up across Denmark.

"We just planned to have one small show for dad's friends. But this little dream has now become way bigger than we ever planned. Dad is getting more ambitious, and says he wants to perform in ten different countries before he stops."

CHALLENGING CONVENTIONS

While the show challenges the stereotypes of what a dancer should be, it is also about our ability to push beyond our apparent limitations. And it seems that Einarsson's untraditional appearance and age has touched, even inspired, audiences.

"What has surprised me most are people's reactions. People have stopped me on the street and told me, 'I saw your show and I put on an art exhibition I've been wanting to do all my life'. I've even heard about people who have quit their job to pursue their dreams. There are a lot of people who feel that because they have a high status job, like lawyers or doctors, they aren't allowed to just be themselves and to express that. People seem to relate to seeing me, as old and fat as I am, following my



Brogan Davison (left) and Ármann Einarsson.

Finnbogi Sigurður Marínsson

dream and doing something I've always wanted to do."

He explains that dancing is a particularly poignant art form for conveying to people that they should stop worrying and just follow their dreams.

"Many people have a hard time dancing in front of others. Men in particular seem to require downing a case of beer before they can take to the dance floor. But dancing is something that is in our nature – even the cave men danced."

Following the demanding ten-show tour in Denmark, the three will head to Norway for two more shows, and have plans for even more in the near future.

But as Ármannsson explains, the future hing-

es on more than just popular demand – his dad's middle-aged and overweight body needs to keep up.

"Dad is a self proclaimed rock star, so he refuses to stretch or warm up at all. We have been trying to put together a program for him and to explain that you need to be in good shape to be a professional dancer. But even though he always gives it 100 percent on stage, he doesn't listen and insists on only eating cheeseburgers. But that is just a part of the show. If either he or Brogan are hungover then that is a part of the show. So when we have done a long sequence of shows, he is usually quite battered, but that just makes each performance unique." **M**



One **dead dog**, please, but easy on the **loose teeth**

Learners of the Danish language are said to be doing very well if they have mastered the pronunciation of the wretched silent 'd'. But pølsevognsslang – jargon used at the hot dog stand – provides a whole new level of linguistic challenges and insight into Danish culture, provided you can stomach the racism and vulgarity

In the just under 100 years of mobile hot dog stands in Denmark, an incredible array of slang has developed that make ordering the classic Danish takeaway snack a unique insight into the Danish psyche – from the regular **død hund** (dead dog) to the red **Stalinpik** (Stalin's penis).

'Pølsevognsslang' – jargon used at a hot dog stand – makes use of metaphors and obscenities and sometimes even racial slurs (see page 35). If you find yourself ordering a **nis-searm** from a **tampusher** at the **natguffen**, you're on the right track. You have literally ordered an 'elf's arm' from an 'intestine pusher' at the place where you 'gobble' at night. The *pølse-mand* (hot dog vendor) will know what you mean, just be careful with that last part – it can easily be misconstrued as a sexual act, and probably will be, depending on how much your mates have had to drink. As for many Danes, the pølsevojn is the last stop on the way home from a big night out.

WATERLILLIES AND PLACENTA

In the 22 years that Michael Christensen has been carting his hot dog stand around Helsingør he's seen it all. On this barely warm summer Sunday, Christensen services the packed car park at the hardware store Silvan as the wind whips up the hill from the Øresund. He tries to take a break to speak to The Murmur, but hungry DIY-types interrupt our interview with orders and requests.

Christensen says that on his watch, certain slang trends have developed.

"Some are more popular than others," he says. "For older people, there's something called a **Karl Stegger i lædervest** [Karl Stegger in a leather vest]. You know the old Danish ac-

tor? Well that's a sausage wrapped in bacon."

"Can I just help myself to the ketchup and remoulade?" someone calls out. Christensen waves a friendly hand in their direction and explains, "each ingredient has its own slang too."

And then he rattles off his favourites, all crude, as is tradition: roasted onion is **sårskorper**, or scabs, while raw onion look a bit like **løse tænder** – loose teeth.

A simple bread roll placed to the side of your sausage might be referred to as a **bind** (a sanitary pad or a **tampon**), despite the obviously more apt **sidevojn** – side-car.

He can only think of one ingredient that's been spared repulsive slang. Gherkin slices are **åkander**, or waterlilies, a reference to the green pads that keep the flowers afloat.

Christensen says the most vulgar one he can think of turns a stock-standard red sausage with ketchup and mustard into **øgle med slam og moderkage**. That's a lizard with sludge and placenta.

"To say something like that is a bit disgusting, but that's part of it," says Christensen.

The slang term **hele svineriet** – another crafty one meaning "the whole mess", but including the word for pork – means different things depending on who's making the order.

"For young people, it means everything possible: ketchup, mustard, remoulade, raw onion, roasted onion and gherkin slices. But if an older person says the same thing, they only want ketchup, mustard and raw onion on their hot dog."

COME BACK DOGS

Christensen says he has been pleased to see an uptick in the number of young people stopping by in recent years, after waning demand that hit a low point at the beginning of the 2000s. In

You just don't have that same tradition of slang in a kebab shop.

MICHAEL CHRISTENSEN, HOT DOG VENDOR

Vanessa Ellingham

1950, there were 400 hot dog stands in Copenhagen alone, but this had dropped off to only 63 in 2010 in response to patrons going elsewhere.

That number is on the rise again, according to city historian Allan Mylius Thomsen, author of the only book ever published on Danish hot dog history, *Café Fodkold: the tale of the Danish hot dog stand*.

Thomsen, who has been hosting pølsevojn history tours for 20 years and is a member of Copenhagen City Council, says this is because the younger generation really wants something different to the generation before.

"Many of them have grown up with Burger King and McDonalds, things like that, and they're now beginning to rediscover pølsevojn as something very funny and very Danish" he says.

"This is true, especially now that we're seeing organic hot dog stands. That's a new interest, particularly for young people who are getting back into eating sausages."

Pølsemand Christensen thinks slang might play a part in the renewed interest.

"Young guys often use slang here that is ridiculously funny, because they think it's great that something so simple can be transformed into something vulgar and disgusting," he says.

"You just don't have that same tradition of slang in a kebab shop."

Christensen says he has seen hot dogs stands not only cross generational divides, but social ones as well.

"I was once working at a party for one of Denmark's richest people, with 550 guests and 100 service staff. I, myself, had six helpers, as well as my dad running the pølsevojn. It was really fun to see all the famous people there: lawyers, actors and politicians."



A 'pølsemænd' is just like a bartender or a barber. You can talk with him freely, because you'll probably never see him again. So you stand there and have a chat, and then you wander off.

MICHAEL CHRISTENSEN



Københavns Stadsarkiv



Andreas Nielsen

On the left is a hot dog stand on Kongens Nytorv, central Copenhagen, in 1961. To the right, Michael Christensen's stand in Helsingør. While the design has changed, the basic setup remains the same.

But after consuming seven courses, and once they were drunk, what the guests really craved was a hot dog.

"I'm used to having drunk youth queue up at my pølsevojn at night, but that night it was adults in their finest clothes, people I only ever see on TV, having a hard time pronouncing what they wanted, because they were so drunk."

"These fancy people also use the slang, because at some time in their lives, they've all been to a pølsevojn."

Thomsen agrees, describing a visit to the pølsevojn as "very democratic". He says Crown Prince Frederik was known to frequent a pølsevojn as a student. Tabloids also reported that his wedding to Princess Mary had a hot dog stand. Danish shipping magnate Arnold Mærsk McKinney Møller was also a big hot dog aficionado.

"Old Mærsk had a pølsevojn just outside his big company down at the harbour. Normally he was over there eating a red sausage before he drove home to Hellerup after work."

"It goes across social barriers – anyone can stand at a pølsevojn."

"A pølsemænd is just like a bartender or a barber," says Thomsen. "You can talk with him freely, because you'll probably never see him again. So you stand there and have a chat, and then you wander off."

In the experience of pølsemænd veteran Christensen, getting the humour right goes a long way towards keeping customers.

"If you tell a joke, people may or may not get it. But when you use pølsevojnsslang, it's almost a guaranteed laugh."

"I think it's up to me to add something they may not have heard before. But I also have to be careful, because when I ask, 'how would you like it?', they might just say, 'quickly'." **M**

FACTS

On March 4, 1920, Copenhagen City Council gave permission to sell warm hot dogs on the street – the first council to do so in Denmark.

In early 1921, six hot dog stands were operating on the streets of Copenhagen. The number of hot dog stands peaked in the seventies at around 700 across the country.

Hot dog stands have been on the decline. There were around 400 in Copenhagen in 1950. By 2007 the number had dropped to 93. In 2010 there were only 63.

Traditionally, opening a hot dog stand was mainly available to people barred from the job market due to an illness or handicap.

Copenhagen and several other councils still have clauses in place that prioritise hot dog stand ownership for people with disabilities.

Bodily fluids and derogatory slurs

While often playful and entertaining, there's a dark side to Danish hot dog slang. For example, the French hot dog, which has a tube-like bun, is called *en indianer i sovepose* (an Indian in a sleeping bag). A hot dog in an open bun uses a derogatory term for Indigenous Greenlanders, *en Eskimo i kajak* (an Eskimo in a kajak).

Greenlandic author Iben Mondrup says the use of 'Eskimo' in this context is frowned upon. "Many of my friends from Greenland are very tired of references to their ethnic backgrounds in Danish food, such as the ice cream 'Kæmpe Eskimo' (huge Eskimo)."

In addition to the racially disparaging phrases, some hot dog slang also includes references to shit, or menstrual and vaginal fluid.

Associate Professor Rashmi Singla from the Department of People and Technology at Roskilde University, has lived in Denmark for 36 years. Her studies focus psychology and interculturalism, and over the years has amassed a large catalogue of racially-charged slurs from her students.

"This kind of slang used at hot dog stands are slurs, or over-simplistic and negative terms for people. They are problematic because slurs often focus on negative traits and are therefore de-humanising."

Racism in food culture has been the subject of increasing debate in Scandinavia. In 2014, German confectionary company Haribo pulled its Skippers Mix liquorice product from Sweden and Denmark, after complaints that the candies took the shape of ethnic masks or faces resembling primitive African, Asian or Native American art.

Some Danes with foreign heritage couldn't see the harm.

"I am a brown person with African roots," wrote Social Democrat MP Mattias Tesfaye in a blog for TV2. "It is beyond my wildest imagination that some people think that liquorice masks are racist or cast a negative light on ethnic groups."

Singla argues, however, that while slurs are often thought of as harmless, they can be socio-psychologically stigmatising.

"These terms categorise groups of people as 'the other'. They are usually used when addressing people who are different to you. You wouldn't use these terms for people you know or respect."

She says it is hard to know if slurs are going out of fashion – she works in a sheltered academic environment. But while she doesn't have any documentation about the waning or increasing popularity of the terms, she hasn't witnessed a decline in the use of slurs in mainstream, particularly print, media.

"In the media and some newspapers the terms are getting harsher and more stigmatising," she says, adding that the continuing use of the slurs reflect an unease with an increasingly multicultural society.

"Globalisation has a psychological impact. While it brings opportunity, it can foster the process of 'localisation' and create anxiety. It makes people feel insecure. We need to recognise these insecurities as a driver for the slurs. But still, I think in Denmark we need to be far more mindful about the harmful effects of the terms."

Lena Rutkowski

COLUMN

Pork-pushing persecuting populists

Once revered internationally, Denmark is now getting used to being condemned in the press, first for killing a giraffe and a lion, and now the government's controversial refugee regulations. The laws may be demeaning, but the global condemnation is also rank with hypocrisy and sensationalism

IN RECENT YEARS a Dane browsing the web could, for the most part, be proud of his country. The best restaurant in the world, happiest people, best place for women and, almost, the most bike-friendly city in the world.

Last November, Presidential hopeful Bernie Sanders joked to a DR correspondent that if his campaign did not bear fruit he would "move to Denmark". Meanwhile, writing for the New York Times, Paul Krugman argued that the structure of Danish society refutes "just about everything U.S. conservatives say about economics".

FALL FROM GRACE

Last month, a change to Denmark's immigration laws made headlines around the world. From Al Jazeera to Canada's The Globe and Mail, the issue was discussed and dissected. Columnists were outraged and the goodwill directed at Denmark in recent years began taking serious hits.

International news outlets searched out Danes to comment on the changes. The Guardian placed a form on its front page where ordinary Danes could share their experience of living in such a "tense political climate". Over the course of just two days, on January 28 and 29, the newspaper published seven articles on the issue, including one where 'The Killing' star Sofie Gråbøl said that the new laws "hurt".

Personally, I find the changes to the laws terrible, shameful and downright ridiculous. But I also found myself wondering why new laws – which don't even break the UN's refugee convention – in a small Northern European country were worthy of primetime discus-

This is a phenomenal story. A once near-utopian society turns its back on all its values. A hero becomes a villain.

Elias Thorsson

sions and front-page articles?

My suspicion is that this is just a phenomenal story. A once near-utopian society turns its back on all its values. A hero becomes a villain.

CNN interviewed MP Kenneth K. Berth from the Danish People's Party (DF), who said that he had seen refugees return to their home countries "like Iran" because they "could not attend enough discotheques".

Berth is an interesting choice for a major American TV network to interview on the subject. He might be an MP, but he doesn't belong to the government. He isn't even his party's immigration spokesperson, but rather DF's representative on EU issues.

So why Berth? Well, he is incredibly inflammatory. In 2004 he channelled the spirit of Cecil B. Rhodes and claimed that if it weren't for "Europe colonising Africa", the continent would have continued with "slavery and cannibalism".

In the early 2000s he and childhood friend MEP Morten Messerschmidt were sentenced to 14 days in prison for a racist poster campaign depicting blood-splattered Muslim men holding the Koran.

Why does a major American TV network, care about the views of an Islamophobic colonialist from Odense?

An article in the Atlantic entitled "How not to welcome refugees", referred to the new laws as "passive aggressive", before mentioning a decision by the north Jutland town of Randers to make pork mandatory on the menus of all public institutions.

The article failed to mention that halal meat will also be served, and that no one will be forced to

eat anything forbidden according to their convictions.

Say what you want about 'frikadeller gate', but what does a narrowly passed-rule (16 for, 15 against) in Denmark's sixth-largest municipality have to do with changes in refugee regulations?

THE DANISH REICH

The sensationalist narrative illustrates that Denmark – a country that presidential hopefuls, left-wingers, bike enthusiasts and foodies once looked up to – is turning its back on enlightened and progressive politics.

This point is illustrated in an outrageous opinion piece by The Guardian religion correspondent, Andrew Brown.

"We seem to be in the middle of a huge re-evaluation of the image of Sweden and Denmark," he wrote, adding that policies of the two countries were now "being managed by neo-Nazis."

This was not the only time The Guardian invoked Godwin's Law. Two days earlier the newspaper's cartoonist Steven Bell drew a picture of Danish PM Lars Løkke dressed up like Adolf Hitler next to the caption "probably the stupidest party in the world".

In regards to Sweden, The Guardian published yet another article reporting that the Scandinavian country would repatriate 80,000 asylum seekers whose applications had been denied. "The revelation that a large proportion of asylum seekers will be turned down, and as many as half of failed applications will be forcibly ejected, sends another signal to refugees that Sweden is no longer extending the warm welcome it offered to them just a few months ago," the article stated.

Does it? If a person doesn't meet the criteria of a refugee, should they still be granted asylum?

SAWDUST AND PLANKS

While American media outlets The Atlantic, The New York Times and CNN are incensed by the changes, it is important to remember that the US has only decided to accept 10,000 Syrian refugees. This is relative to Denmark accepting only 175 Syrians.

It's a horrifyingly low number, given that the responsibility for the Syrian and Iraqi quagmire lies heavily on the shoulders of the US and the UK. It is pretty easy to make a mess, but pretty shit to clean it up.

And while it doesn't make Denmark's laws any better, other countries already have similar laws to those that were recently introduced here. Since 2008, refugees in the Netherlands have had to hand over 75 percent of their income to the government to cover costs. Last year, the sum collected amounted to around million Danish kroner. For a decade Switzerland has had rules requiring refugees to hand over valuables worth over 7,000 kroner, 3,000 less than the Danish law. Furthermore, refugees that are granted the right to stay and work have to give up 10 percent of their income for ten years to pay for their asylum.

So maybe we should cool it on the outrage. Denmark did not turn into a "neo-Nazi" reich overnight. The refugee crisis is an international problem, so until the large countries of the world start leading by example, then small countries will take unilateral steps they believe to be right. Keep it in perspective. **M**

COMMUNITY

What's the beef: A debate on meat & sustainable diets

Got a bone to pick with meat eating? The Murmur is joining forces with MadMad Mad Bodega to host a debate about nutritious and climate friendly alternatives to traditional meat eating practices



Leszek Leszczyński / flickr

MEAT EATING IS A SOCIAL and emotional choice and is deeply embedded in cultures around the world. Humans have shaped animal species by reproducing those that served their needs best, while animals have supported the growth of human civilisation.

This growth is now reaching an upper limit, as global warming from human emissions threatens to disrupt the climate and wreak havoc. Agriculture is responsible for 15 percent of global emissions, of which meat production produces a sizeable share. Eating less meat is therefore imperative if we want to be more healthy and sustainable, both as individuals but also as consumers in global food and agricultural systems.

So, when it comes to our everyday choices, what do we do? We are faced with so many different options

and a lot of conflicting information, so how do we find the best path to eating less meat?

There are two main issues to consider. Firstly, it is important to recognise that not all meat is created equal. Each animal is seasonal and each has a different 'climate footprint'. For example, beef production has a much higher footprint than poultry or fish, if you take into account greenhouse gas emissions, land clearing, and intensive water use in feed, meat production, processing and transport. But while consumers are increasingly aware of how their meat is produced, few really understand the difference between local, grass-fed beef and intensive feedlots when it comes to natural resources and food quality.

Secondly, there's no denying that protein is popular. How can we tell

people to eat less meat, but not less protein? In the same way we have embraced diversity in cuisines, we now need to think about creative and convenient ways to diversify our raw ingredients. There is a recent push for protein alternatives, such as soya, quorn or 'nano-meats', but is relying on another single source of protein that looks or tastes like meat a resilient solution? Perhaps we should be focusing on promoting a diversified diet and investigate a range of protein sources that help us rely less on one source, rather than another.

What is clear, is that we need information that is easy to digest (pun intended) and act upon.

We hope the The Murmur and MadMad panel debate will provide this information. The debate will host a 'carnivorous spectrum',

ranging from wild meat enthusiasts to advocates of vegetarianism.

Questions asked will include:

- How does eating meat impact our natural resources and health?
- What is your preferred pathway and how is it achievable?
- What are the barriers to successfully eating less meat and how can we overcome these?

Alongside the speakers, you are also encouraged to contribute your own views and share tips with the audience. The aim is to make the meat debate easier to "chew on", and help to empower mindful individual action when it comes to eating less meat. **M**

DATE: March 2, 18:00
LOCATION: MadMad Mad Bodega
ENTRANCE: Free
To RSVP a spot, please email heather@madmad-madbodega.com

WHAT'S ON • FEBRUARY



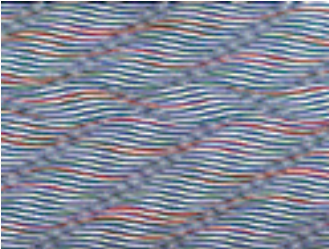
OZZIE ROCKERS
The Australian super group Tame Impala are performing on Danish soil for the first time for 2.5 years.

Falconer Salen
Falkoner Alle 7
livenation.dk
February 3

3

COPENHAGEN FASHION WEEK
Every February and August, Copenhagen hosts the Nordic Region's largest fashion event, Copenhagen Fashion Week.

Venues across Copenhagen
copenhagenfashionweek.com
Ends February 5



OP ART
Do not miss this beautiful Louisiana Exhibition on optical art from 1950-70, featuring Hungarian and English artists Victor Vasarely and Bridget Riley.

Louisiana
Gl. Strandvej 13, Humlebæk
louisiana.dk
Starts February 4

5

FROST festival Copenhagen
Witness a wide range of high quality acts, both Danish and International, including Kentaur and Choir of Young Believers at The Space Theatre.

Venues across Copenhagen
frostfestival.dk
Ends February 26

5

WINTER JAZZ
You can look forward to a month full of jazz in a vibrant and friendly atmosphere which will surely be a warming experience in an otherwise cold month.

Venues across CPH & Aarhus
jazz.dk
Ends February 28



MASSIVE ATTACK
The English pioneers of trip-hop will stop by TAP. Sold out, but you could beg, borrow or steal?

Tap1
Ny Carlsberg Vej 91, KBH
tap1.dk
February 7

9

DISCLOSURE TAP1
After playing in front of 100,000 people at Roskilde Festival's Orange Stage in 2015, the two brothers from the UK are headlining their very own TAP1 show.

Tap1
Ny Carlsberg Vej 91, KBH
tap1.dk



Maja Tini Jensen

DANCING AT THE HARBOUR
Copenhagen Street Food and DanseHavn (Dance Harbour) take over take over Papirøen, filling the hall with salsa, DJs and great food.

Papirøen Food Market
Trangravsvej 14, KBH
copenhagenstreetfood.dk
February 13



PHOTO EXHIBITION: VENSKAB
An exhibition of portraits and videos themed 'friendships' from the 1940's up to today.

Nivågaard
Gammel Strandvej 2, 2990
nivaagaard.dk
Starts February 14

15

COPENHAGEN DINING WEEK
Great food at reasonable prices, the week lets you enjoy select menus at a large number of restaurants for 200 kroner per person.

Restaurants across CPH
diningweek.dk
Ends February 21



LIBYA - 5 YEARS AFTER
Riko - The Danish Council for International Conflict Solutions is holding a talk in which they will be outlining the state of affairs 5 years after the beginning of the rebellion in Libya.

Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke
Fælledvej 12, KBH
riko.dk
February 17

20

CRAIG DAVID
Pumpehuset are proud to present a concert with none other than Craig David, who has recently released his brand new single When the Bassline Drops.

Pumpehuset
Studiestræde 51, KBH
pumpehuset.dk

Joshua Hollingdale

WHAT'S ON • FEBRUARY

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JOHAN STRAUSS GALA

Gain insight into the brilliant artist's life, when K&K Philharmoniker and the Austrian K&K Ballet visit Musikkens Hus, The House of Music.

Musikkens hus
Musikkens Pl. 1, Aalborg
musikkenshus.dk



HORSE RIDING WORLD CUP

The World Cup of Icelandic horses is back offering this year's hottest stallions, most fabulous foals and incomparable equestrians.

Odense SØ
2013.worldfolt.dk
February 26-27

27

WHITNEY HOUSTON SHOW

'The Greatest Love Of All - The Whitney Houston Show' brings Whitney's fabulous pop song production to life. Expect all the great hits and classics.

Musikhuset Aarhus
musikhusetaarhus.dk



Matthias Rhomberg / flickr

MAYHEM RECORD FAIR

Visit the Mayhem record fair and browse the best vinyl records of all your favourite musical genres.

Mayhem
Ragnhildgade 1, KBH
bit.ly/mayhemrecords
February 27

COPENHAGEN CARD

SEE MORE. PAY LESS.



WWW.COPENHAGENCARD.COM

COPENHAGEN CARD APP

The Copenhagen Card guide is also available as an app for iPhone or Android.



Free admission to
74 museums and
attractions

Free transport by train,
bus and Metro in
the entire metropolitan
area

One adult can bring
along 2 children
under the age of
10 for free

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 background is a soft-focus classroom setting.

DANISH. CONCENTRATED.

INTENSIVE DANISH COURSES
IN HELLERUP AND LYNGBY



SPROGCENTER
HELLERUP

sprogcenterhellerup.dk