

THE MURMUR

COPENHAGEN
EDITION

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ing the
grassroots
movements
fighting for
a new EU

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or strong
women? The
complicated
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borders –
a project
to subtitle
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COMMENTARY

MAY 2016 VOL. 3 ISSUE 5



What future do we really want?

Angela Oguntala discusses technology, algorithms and challenging Western bias

THE MURMUR is a Danish newspaper, which just happens to use the English language. Through original reporting and photography, we tell stories about what it's like to live in Denmark.

THE MURMUR



Peter Stanners
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“A proposal: Let’s discuss something other than girls-only swimming classes or Justin Bieber’s haircut next week? I’m not saying they are unimportant questions. I’m just saying that almost every other question is more important.”

With his sardonic wit, psychologist Svend Brinkmann summed up another outrageous week of debate in the Danish media. First there was uproar following the news that a swimming pool offered segregated classes to children to accommodate the requests of Muslim parents. Then a media storm over whether Justin Bieber was guilty of cultural appropriation for his new dreadlocks.

Brinkmann isn’t wrong to suggest that there are more important issues to discuss. Why are gender segregated swimming classes so strange given the many other areas of daily life that are similarly segregated? Toilets and changing rooms are gender segregated, so too are sports teams. Many of my peers at university in the UK went to segregated schooling until high school, their first real encounters with the opposite sex didn’t take place until age 16.

As for Bieber’s haircut, it’s hard to pinpoint who exactly loses out because of his decision to have dreadlocks. Feminist commentator Henrik Marstal said the problem was that Bieber took from another culture without giving anything back. That made him appear “privilege blind”. But as Politiken newspaper’s culture editor Rune Lykkeberg put it: “African Americans in the USA have strong historic and actual grounds to feel used. But it does not lead to greater freedom or emancipation if we close ourselves off in different cultural reserves where symbols become private property.”

And yet, there is a reason the two topics were so fiercely debated – both

speak to Denmark’s existential angst about moving from a monoculture to a multicultural. In truth, this happened long ago – despite two decades of brave denial by the Danish People’s Party, multiculturalism is here to stay.

Danes are adapting to being members of a dominant culture, rather than a single culture. They are having to face up to the way Danish society can alienate minorities, particularly Muslims. When students start at university, they spend a week getting drunk together. What do you do with people who don’t drink? In culinary colleges, should you force Muslim students to taste pork dishes? What about women and men who refuse to shake hands with members of the opposite sex?

These are not unproblematic questions. The answers must balance the efforts to include those with different cultural norms, with standing up for the values that are central to ensuring a thriving free and democratic Denmark.

Linking a discussion about segregated swimming classes, to that of democratic values, might seem like a stretch. But I can sympathise with Danes who fear that compromising on values such as gender equality – or even the freedom to have whatever haircut you like – is the start of a slippery slope.

Brinkman might call these questions silly, but it’s through having these conversations that Denmark fine-tunes its own values and practices. Amidst the uproar about segregating swimming classes for students of Muslim backgrounds, others began pointing out several examples of pre-existing gender segregation in Danish society.

The debate about Bieber’s haircut didn’t prompt legislation for state-mandated hairdos, but gave rise to a constructive debate about the imbalance in power relationships between cultures.

Multiculturalism does not suppress debate, it is debate. And the more debate, the more I believe we strengthen our commitment to equality, fairness and tolerance. **M**

If poor, unprivileged and out-of-work Spaniards can start a revolution with no resources, then what can these privileged Danish kids do?

ELENA ASKLØF, P22



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James Clasper Food Editor. This month in his Get Stuck In column, James guides us toward good smørrebrød, To Øl's new brewery and bar, and encourages us to stop by the Native Cookery Competition. @jamesclasper



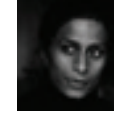
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Marie Ravn A Danish photographer educated at Fatamorgana in Copenhagen, Marie photographed Mija Bjung and Yong Sun Gullach.

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We are looking for an aspiring journalist with a passion for reporting and feature writing to join us for a six-month internship starting in August 2016. You need to be curious and self-motivated. You will be writing in English but we hope you can also read and speak Danish.

Email a CV, and examples of your work to peter@murmur.dk

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SPROG

MONTH IN REVIEW

Phthalates bans

After years of Danish advocacy, the European Chemicals Agency and the Danish EPA presented a proposal to ban four phthalates, suspected of disrupting hormones, from use in consumer products.

RED MEAT TAX?

Parliament's Council of Ethics has suggested introducing a tax on red meat to reduce consumption because of its impact on climate change.

ISIS ARRESTS

After a joint investigation by police and the intelligence agency PET, five people were arrested and jailed for 25 days for joining ISIS in Syria. One of the five is also charged with possessing

weapons and ammunition, while an additional four were charged in absentia.

Prosecutor Karin Degnbøl Thostrup said she was pleased the court agreed to hold the men on remand.



WHY GOD?

A bus campaign by the atheist association Atiestisk Selskab proved so successful that more than 3,000 Danes decided to leave the Church of Denmark. Non-members don't pay the Church tax, but aren't allowed weddings or funerals in state churches. In the advert below, they ask: "Why should you pay to have faith?"



Peter Stanners



Mette Jonassen

SIGNS TO IRAQ AND SYRIA CAUSE UPROAR

Road signs pointing toward Iraq and Syria appeared in Thisted, North Jutland, suggesting the direction that refugees should return home. Activists tore down the signs, which The Danish People Party MP called, "very funny".

The image above includes the original sign to Syria. But there is an additional message, photostopped in below, which was later added by faith-based aid agency Folkekirkens Nødhjælp. "4,426 kilometres to death, starvation, rocket attacks and torture."

EU court rules family reunification law illegal

A young Turkish man should not have had his family reunification application rejected, ruled the EU Court of Justice.

Caner Gents applied to join his father in Denmark in 2005 when he was 13. But the Immigration Service rejected the application on the grounds that Caner's potential for integration into Danish society was weak.

The Immigration Service can invoke the justification if more than two years have passed between the parent's arrival and Denmark and their child's application.

The courts ruled, however, that the two-year limit was arbitrary and didn't exclude the possibility that Caner could, in fact, be integrated. Source: TV2 News

NORDEA CAUGHT IN PANAMA PAPERS

The Panama Papers leaks revealed extraordinarily brazen attempts by the super-rich to conceal their wealth in shell companies with the help of law firm Mossack Fonseca. Among the banks that used the law firm is the Luxembourg branch of Danish bank Nordea. Following the revelations, the bank promised to launch an investigation.

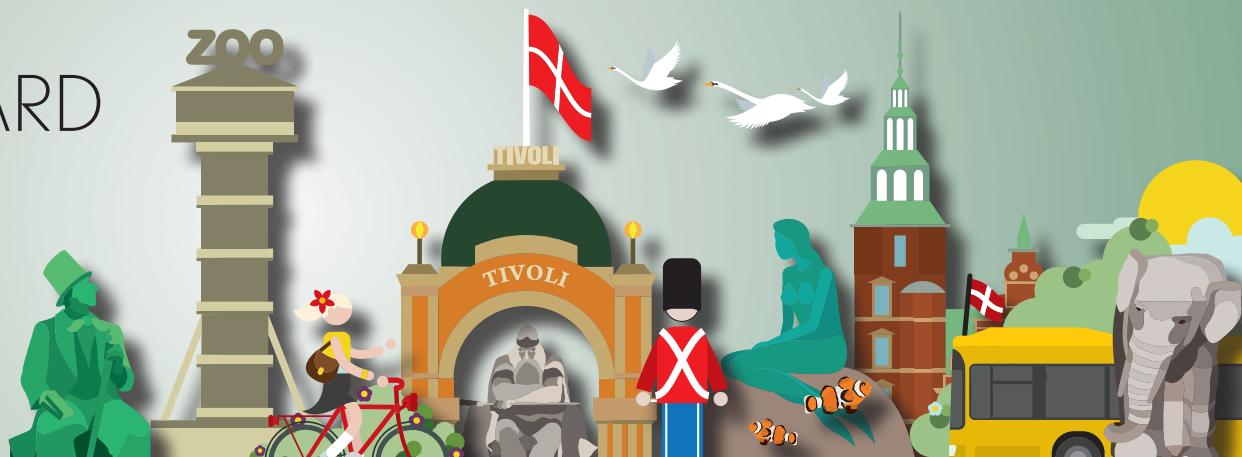
"Our tax advice policy and ethical standard are clear: we do not encourage or facilitate tax schemes of our customers that are regarded as tax evasion," the bank wrote in a statement.

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#TRENDING

**BILLION-KRONER
SUPER HAIR NETS**

Social media users mocked Boeing’s attempts to sell the government their fighter jet, the F16 Super Hornet

Commuters were confronted by a strange sight last month: adverts for the F18 Super Hornet fighter jet. Producer Boeing launched the campaign just over a month before the government is due to announce how it intends to replace its ageing fleet of F16s, which are now conducting bombing raids in Iraq and Syria.

The Super Hornet is one of three remaining contenders for the 30 billion kroner contract, the other two being the F35 Joint Strike Fighter from Lockheed Martin and the Eurofighter Typhoon from Airbus Defence.

The F35 is the clear favourite, despite concerns

that it is not properly developed and significantly more expensive to purchase and maintain than its two competitors.

This was one of the main arguments Boeing put forward in its campaign, which promised that the maintenance of a fleet of F18s would cost 20 billion kroner less over a 30-year period than the F35. Boeing said that if they received the contract, they would create 10,000 jobs in Denmark by prioritising its subcontracting with Danish businesses.

The F18 adverts were rolled out on busses, the radio and the internet, and were designed to tap into the unease some Danes feel in spending such large sums on military hardware in a time of austerity. Two political parties oppose purchasing the planes – the Red-Green Alliance (Enhedslisten) and the Alternative (Alternativet) – and 53.3 percent of Danes agree, according to a Wilke survey in April.

Boeing’s message is if Denmark is going to buy

war planes, why not buy something cheap and battle-tested? F18s have already spent one million hours in service, primarily for the US Navy.

Haunting parliament’s decision is the fiasco that played out following the purchase of high-speed IC4 trains from Italian manufacturer Ansaldo-Breda. Lengthy delays in their delivery, and trouble getting them to work on the tracks, were ultimately blamed on the decision to buy highly modified versions of the trains rather than standard tested models.

It remains to be seen whether Boeing’s strategy to market its planes as a ‘responsible’ choice will pay off when parliament’s defence committee decides which of the three planes to purchase. Either way, the advertising campaign brought plenty of mirth to ordinary Danes, who took the opportunity to produce their own versions of the adverts. **M**

Peter Stanners



Morten Vammen

Boeing’s original advert, above, declared: “10,000 Danish Jobs with the Super Hornet”. This was subsequently changed to “2,500,000 Danish Jobs with the Death Star” (right) and “10,000 Danish Jobs with the Super Hairnet” (below).



Christian Steffensen



Twitter / @jxrgen



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GET STUCK IN

Smørrebrød

SECOND-RATE SMØRREBRØD has long been the dirty secret of Danish cuisine. The likes of Noma and Geranium may have put the country on the map. But when it came to the national dish, too many restaurants make the open-faced sandwich with bare-faced cheek. To please diners – who mistook quantity for quality – restaurants piled plates with poor-quality ingredients. Think: frozen fish, shop-bought toppings, and herrings cured with enzymes. Worse still, many chefs looked down on the role of the smørrebrødsjomfru (“the smørrebrød virgin”). Making smørrebrød, quite literally, a woman’s job – and not one a “serious” chef should aspire to.

Thankfully today you can’t move for all the restaurants (in Copenhagen, at least) using fresh, organic, locally-sourced and in-season ingredients, and which prepare smørrebrød with a focus on quality and presentation, not portion size.

The revolution began a decade ago, when Adam Aamann launched his eponymous restaurant. It won rave reviews and paved the way for the likes of Almanak, Øl & Brød – part of the Mikkeller brewing empire – and Møller Snaps and Smørrebrød, which opened near Nyhavn last year and features improbably modern toppings such as Thai green curried herring.

Anders Hjermin



Smørrebrød from Palægade.

James Clasper

This month sees the launch of Restaurant Palægade, a stone’s throw from Kongens Nytorv. It’ll serve smørrebrød for lunch and traditional Danish dishes in the evening. Like its stylish predecessors, it eschews the wood-panelled stuffiness of the traditional smørrebrød restaurant and instead favours bright, clean, contemporary design.

Another sign of the times is Palægade, a collaboration between the Michelin-starred restaurant Formel

B and several former employees of smørrebrød specialist Schønnemann. Forget kitchen snobbery: Formel B’s chefs will work alongside the smørrebrød chefs Betina Simonsen Madsen and Karina Pedersen. Together they will come up with dishes, using the same ingredients in both the smørrebrød and evening dishes, and changing the menu three to four times a year to reflect the seasons.

“Smørrebrød is the most seasonal cuisine, if you do it properly,” says

co-owner Rasmus Amdi Larsen. “And it’s indigenous to the Nordic region. It’s from here, it belongs here.”

Doing it properly means refusing to compromise on the ingredients. For too long, Larsen says, too many restaurants have served herring cured in enzymes – not the old-fashioned way, in barrels.

“You can tell right away,” he says. “Theirs are soft and disgusting, with a bad flavour. When you eat the old-fashioned ones, you can taste the difference.”

Of course, the focus on quality ingredients begins with the bedrock of smørrebrød – the rye bread. At Palægade, the bread will be baked in-house every day.

Above all, Copenhagen’s latest smørrebrød restaurant is an opportunity to recognise the skill, artistry and pedigree of the kitchen’s smørrebrød chefs. Madsen and Pedersen met at culinary college years ago and enjoyed stints at a number of top establishments, including Aamanns and Hotel d’Angleterre, before teaming up at Schønnemann.

Together they’ve witnessed the sea change in smørrebrød – away from the limelight they played no small part in its resurrection. Still, with tourist traps fobbing off diners with second-rate smørrebrød, their work isn’t done.

“We should be very proud of our heritage,” says Madsen. “But we can do much better.” **M**



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Kris Vlegels



Native cooking award

FOOTLOOSE FOODIES should make a bee-line this month for the Knuthenlund Estate, on the southern island of Lolland, which is hosting the fifth annual Native Cooking Award. Denmark’s only international cooking competition is an event like no other – and a unique opportunity to rub shoulders with some of the world’s best chefs.

Five countries compete – Belgium, France, Denmark, Norway and Sweden – with each country represented by a team of four chefs with experience from restaurants at Michelin level or its equivalent. Each team is required to present a three-course meal to the judges, one of whom is Rasmus Kofoed of Geranium, the first Danish restaurant to receive three Michelin stars. The winning team will receive 40,000 kroner.

But here’s the twist: the Native Cooking Award takes place in the open. The emphasis is on local produce and interaction with nature, which means the teams are forbidden from preparing anything in advance. Instead, they receive raw materials from local food producers and are free to forage in the terrain around Knuthenlund. Each team is given bicycles and information about the wild plants and herbs

that grow in the area. It’s up to them to decide how to include the local flora in their dishes.

The competition puts a premium on the chefs’ knowledge of raw materials, as well as their creativity, craftsmanship and ability to cooperate. The Danish team is captained by Torsten Schmidt of Malling & Schmidt in Aarhus, and includes Karlos Ponte of Copenhagen’s Venezuelan restaurant Taller.

Spectators should have fun. Bring your own bike and you can follow the chefs on their foraging forays – provided you don’t get in their way. You can also enter a raffle to win one of the 15 dishes. But don’t despair if your number doesn’t come up: dining options on the day will include a farmers market, plenty of street food, and a barbecued whole hog. **M**

The Native Cooking Award
May 29, 2016
Knuthenlundvej 7B, 4952
nativecookingaward.com

BRUS

BREWERS TORE GYNTHNER AND TOBIAS EMIL JENSEN have come home at last. The To Øl founders got their start as home-brewing high-school students a decade ago and this month, six years after they launched their craft beer empire, they’re embarking on their biggest venture yet: BRUS. The 750-square-metre brewpub in Nørrebro is a stone’s throw from where it all began.

Situated in a former iron foundry that backs onto the Empire cinema, BRUS will feature a bar, a shop, no fewer than 13 fermentation tanks, and SPONTAN – a restaurant helmed by Michelin-starred chef Christian Gødient.

Many brewers might balk at expanding the business so dramatically. Not To Øl.

“When we heard the building was vacant, we jumped,” Jensen says. “Where else in Copenhagen do you find a space that large that has the structural strength to bear the weight of those tanks and a ceiling high enough to accommodate all that equipment – which also lies 100 metres from where we started?”

“It’s a big step,” adds Gynther. “But it’s also a natural step to some extent, because we wanted to get our production of barrel-aged beer closer to us.” The pair launched To Øl in 2010 as contract brewers, meaning they rent unused space from established breweries and



To Øl

use it to ferment their own craft beers.

Meanwhile, as the restaurant’s name suggests, spontaneity will be the watchword in the kitchen.

“We will try to focus to some extent on fermented products, since we ferment so much other stuff,” Jensen says. “There might be leftovers from the brewery that could be used in the food or vice versa – something from the kitchen could be used to infuse a beer, a so-

da or a cocktail.”

Besides beer they will create a range of other craft beverages at BRUS, from cocktails and tonics, to mead and kombucha. “We couldn’t settle for less,” Jensen smiles. “It would be dull to just be a brewery.” **M**

BRUS
Guldbergsgade 29F (Opens May 12)
to-ol.dk

CITY



In this render, Skt. Jørgens Sø has been engineered with broader banks to help mop up surplus rainwater in the case of a downpour.

Flash flood protections

On July 2, 2011, Copenhagen became a lake when a storm cloud deposited 135 millimetres of water over the course of just a few hours, resulting in 4.9 billion kroner in damages.

The incident spurred the City Council to action, looking into ways to make the city more resilient to flash storms. A first set of projects was agreed to in 2013, and this April, the Council approved 11 new projects costing 391 million kroner.

The ambition is to draw as much water as possible from homes and businesses using diversion canals and flood basins. The strategy is a more cost-effective alternative to increasing the capacity of sewers to drain water from the streets.

"We could dig up Copenhagen and install larger sewers, but that would cost around 20 billion kroner and only benefit the city when it rains heavily," deputy mayor for technical and environment affairs

Morten Kabell told Politiken.

The drainage basins are designed to double as green areas that city residents can enjoy at all times of the year. One of them would be formed by widening the banks of Skt. Jørgens Sø, an inner city lake. The deepest of the city's lakes, the plan would lower its baseline water level, thereby increasing its capacity when it rains. Surplus water would then run over the banks into new green areas.

The council warns the project will take several years to be developed, as the lake is a protected landmark.

Uber vs. The City

Since 1998, the Distortion Festival has morphed from a cosy set of street parties and club nights to a gargantuan pan-city event with hundreds of thousands of revellers.

This June, the festival will once again take over the city, but there's a problem – Uber. The taxi service was listed as one of the festival's pri-

mary sponsors, despite the fact that Uber drivers continue to be prosecuted for breaking Danish taxi laws.

Copenhagen City Hall has taken the side of the taxi industry, arguing that Uber is an unregulated and illegal taxi service that does not abide by Danish law. In April they threatened to revoke their support for the festival – amounting to 1.4 million kroner – unless Distortion drops its sponsorship deal.

"We cannot provide such enormous funding for the festival – or give permission for it to be held – if they don't follow Danish law and labour conditions that are required to receive the funding," Copenhagen's deputy mayor for culture, Carl Christian Ebbesen, told TV2 Lorry.

Distortion's founder and director Thomas Fleurquin responded by suggesting that the Danish government produce legislation that keeps up with new innovations.

"We will not enter into a dialogue with the council through the media,"

Fleurquin told Ritzau. "But, in principle, we are positive about the breath of fresh air that the sharing economy brings to Denmark."

Distortion later relented, but only for next year's festival, which Copenhagen City Hall is supporting with 1.7 million kroner. In a statement, Fonden Distortion København, which owns Copenhagen Distortion, stated they have no desire not to follow the City Council's demands or recommendations, insofar as the law or finances permit.

"Fonden Distortion København's primary and eternal goal is to create and facilitate an event that celebrates the newest developments in music, lifestyle, street life and modern culture. To this end, Copenhagen City Council is and will remain Distortion's closest partner. Since 1998, Distortion has celebrated the city of Copenhagen, by presenting it internationally as a modern and harmonious city."

Vesterbro food market

The dreams behind Tove's Galleri in Vesterbro never materialised. The ground-level shopping mall snaking its way south from Vesterbrogade never got the footfall it needed, and it failed to become a focal point for the neighbourhood.

In the autumn, it will reopen with a new focus – food. Renamed the WestMarket, its ambition is to mimic the successes of Copenhagen Street Food and Torvehallerne with between 60 and 80 stalls selling a range of specialty foods.

"WestMarket will be a food market with space for everyone," they write on their website. "It is here that Copenhageners in the future will combine food shopping, food experiences and social activities. Foodies are no longer a narrow group that geek out on gastronomy, terroir and organics. Foodie culture has become a popular movement."

It is hoped that the combination of takeaway, dining and market stalls will revitalise the area, though much depends on whether they can find enough producers willing to pay the 130,000 kroner a year a 12m2 stall will cost. **M**

Peter Stanners

Institut Sankt Joseph

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Off the streets and into the studio

The Container Lab from organisation Turning Tables, will give marginalised and refugee youth around Denmark the opportunity to express their creative potential, before it is sent around the world



Inside the Container Lab at its inauguration in April.

From the outside, it looks like an ordinary black shipping container. Inside, however, is a professional recording studio powered by a battery pack and solar panels.

The Container Lab is the brainchild of the organisation Turning Tables, established in Denmark in 2009 to “empower socially, politically and economically marginalised youths in developing countries by providing them with the means to express their grievances, hopes and dreams in music and film.”

Over the coming months, the container will travel through Denmark and give local youth the same opportunity. Starting in Albertslund, the Container Lab will proceed to a homeless shelter at Godsbanen in Aarhus, two reception centres for young refugees in Årø, and the Folkemødet (People’s Meeting) on Bornholm, before a final stint at this year’s Roskilde Festival.

Natasha Jessen-Petersen

At the inauguration of the Container Lab in April, Martin Fernando Jakobsen, from Denmark’s popular Copenhagen-based DJ collective Den Sorte Skole, explained the need to provide a platform for marginalised youth, who are often discussed but hardly ever spoken to.

“They have no voices in the debate, and yet people have so many thoughts about them. So we thought, let’s focus on the marginalised youth in Denmark, and let’s do a project that focuses on the homeless youth whom we have worked with before, refugee youth, and the youth in the Danish ghettos, who are also an overlooked group without a voice.”

Jakobsen is both the organisation’s founder and director. He started Turning Tables to establish permanent music and film schools for marginalised youth and activists in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Tunisia, Myanmar and Cambodia. In the process, the organisation has helped to produce over fifty videos, including the first-known recording of a female Jordanian rapper.

IMPROVING LIVES

The Container Lab is a collaboration with telecom company 3, whose CEO, Morten Christiansen, sits on the Turning Tables board.

“We think this way of using technology through creative means is a great way to help people,” Christiansen said. “It is essentially using technology to give people the tools to improve their lives and the lives of others who are in the same situation. And I like that.”

Christiansen says the first Container Lab is designed to get the attention of investors by demonstrating how simple and cheap it can be to create a product that can make a real difference.

“By helping to pay for the Container Lab, we are showing more global companies what exactly this is. And then we can start pitching it, and perhaps gain some momentum to get a few produced that will fuel a more global presence. Just think about South America, the Rio area, with all these protests – there are so many places where it’s needed.

Peter Stanners

“[The Container Lab] is easy to market, it makes for such a wonderful picture. It is beautiful. We are doing this and it does not cost that much, and you can see how many people are benefiting from it. You get local stars to come down and perform with local artists.”

PROMOTING DIALOGUE

Turning Tables project manager Åsmund Boye Kverneland is a musician and DJ who had grown tired of life on the road and decided to use his energy and skills to mobilise change through Turning Tables’ initiatives. He joined the organisation a little over a year ago and is now focussed on projects like the Container Lab that can make a lasting impact.

He explains that the founders started out by holding DJ workshops in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon in 2009. They soon wanted to do more than just show up, play, and disappear, so they formed Turning Tables to start working long-term and to establish local centres to produce music and film.

“This idea of coming in with something nice and then taking it away again, this happens too often,” he mused. “We want to establish centres or labs where we can operate for many years. We can teach the local staff who come to work for us how to fundraise, to learn how to build, and within a 3-5 year period to make themselves as self-sustaining as possible.”

Kverneland explains that while Turning Tables can connect the youths with record labels and film distributors, some of the young artists end up as instructors on the Turning Tables team. Others have gone on to become professional musicians. Ultimately, it’s important to employ these young people because of their deeper understanding of how to operate in the country.

Turning Tables has also helped to organise festivals globally in places such as Tunisia and Myanmar where they facilitate and promote dialogue between conflict

groups, illustrating that the arts can serve as a bridge.

“There was a lot of tension between the ethnic Burmese people and the Muslim minority in northern Myanmar. Then we set up a collaboration between youths from the two communities, and got them to showcase their work out in the broader societies. We showed that collaboration is possible.”

The inauguration was held in the spring sunshine outside the offices of the architecture firm Arkitektur Ministeriet. The dozens of guests ate free tacos and drank beer while listening to the opening speeches. Among them was Martin Højland, fellow member of Den Sorte Skole and Turning Tables’ head of Project Management, Fundraising and Coordination.

In his introduction to the event, he spoke of Turning Tables’ importance on all levels – from teaching kids how to hold a microphone when they’re rapping live to engaging youth on a large scale.

“A lot of people will ask what is the point of playing a rap song if you don’t have a home, or you have just lost half of your family to war or a crisis,” he said. “The reason that we travel around and do this work is because it does matter a lot. Telling your story and hanging out with other people can really provide a new perspective and enable you to see your future in a new light. And that is part of this project.” **M**



Turning Tables was established in 2009 to provide a voice to marginalised youth around the world. They have worked with thousands of young people in countries such as Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Cambodia, Tunisia and Myanmar.

The Container Lab consists of a 20-foot shipping container, refurnished into a mobile and state-of-the-art music studio. Over the next few months it will tour Denmark together with musicians and DJs Phase5, Al Agami, Raske Penge, Egger-Stunn, Bjørn Svin and Zaki.

The Container Lab was designed by architect Mija Byung, together with Center for Maritim Arkitektur.

3 Danmark is the major sponsor. Gyproc, Ecophon, Isover and Glass Solutions donated building materials. Other support was donated by Arkitekturministeriet, Lauridsen Skilte, Victron Energy, NJ Service, Logik & Co, Eentileen and Elindco.



Turning Tables project manager Ásmund Boye Kverneland

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POLITICS

Green card programme to be scrapped

The Green Card programme, designed to help businesses get the highly-educated foreign labour they need, has been less than a success. According to the Employment Ministry, since 2013, 70 percent of Green Card holders have taken unskilled jobs.

Green Card holders have complained that the programme attracted them to Denmark even though there were no jobs available in their fields. They then found themselves without access to unemployment services, and without the right to start their own business.

Now the Social Democrats (Social Demokrater), Socialist People's Party (SF) and Danish People's Party (DF) want to end the programme.

"We do not need highly educated people from India and Bangladesh, who are not refugees, to take cleaning jobs in Denmark," Social Democratic immigration spokesperson Dan Jørgensen told Berlingske.

The three parties have a majority in parliament, meaning they can force the Liberal Party (Venstre) government to drop the programme.

"We respect the majority, but it doesn't change our opinion that Denmark should be as closed as possible for potential asylum seekers, but open to people who want to work and contribute to our society," Venstre immigration spokesperson Marcus Knuth told Jyllands-Posten newspaper.

3,840 people came to Denmark via the Green Card programme in 2014, of which just under half were family members of the Green Card holder. To qualify, the applicant has to satisfy a number of conditions, including education, work experience and financial security.

The Confederation of Danish Industry opposes closing the programme. It is disappointed that the parties aren't waiting to evaluate the effects of the 2014 reform on the programme, which now requires Green Card holders to prove they have a job paying at least 315,000 kroner a year after two years in Denmark. **M**

SF TAKES STRONGER POSITION ON IMMIGRATION

The Socialist People's Party (SF) wants immigrant women to enrol in education programmes or risk losing their benefits

Left-wing parties have long been accused by the right of failing to acknowledge the challenges that accompany immigration. That political divide is fading, however. Left-wing Social Democrat (Social Demokrat) leaders supported the government's tighter immigration and asylum policies, which included restrictions on family reunification for asylum seekers.

Last month, the Socialist People's Party (SF) entered the debate when the party presented six proposals to tackle low levels of employment and education among immigrant women.

Among the proposals are mentor programmes and an increase in the number of immigrants employed by the state. They also propose withdrawing unemploy-

ment benefits for women without a primary school education or vocational training certificate unless they are enrolled in an educational programme. The policy already exists for those under age 30.

At the party's annual meeting, leader Pia Olsen Dyhr outlined why tackling integration was vital.

"The combination of the threat from radical Islam, the enormous flow of refugees from the Middle East and North Africa, combined with failed integration is a poisonous cocktail. It threatens our free and open society. It threatens our community and solidarity," Dyhr said.

"Denmark is built on democracy, equality, and free speech. But we have people who travel to fight for the Islamic state, imams who preach radical Islam, and we see women subject to social control in patriarchal families. We cannot accept that, and we must address it to redress the errors of the past."

The party's position was condemned by Politiken newspaper columnist Brian Esbensen, who accused the party of succumbing to right-wing fear tactics.

"It's completely crazy to say that the

greatest threats to us today come from the refugee crisis or radical Islam, when we face the degeneration of European democracies, Trump's potential to become president, the 39 trillion kroner in tax havens, and a climate catastrophe worse than we had ever dreamed of," Esbensen wrote.

"The truth about the 'radical Muslims' who are threatening our values' is that there are extreme forces, but they have no power, and support for them is almost non-existent among Muslims."

Dyhr replied that Esbensen was failing to accept the reality of the integration challenges that Denmark faces.

"In his view, there are no integration challenges in Denmark. No social control of women. No challenges in marginalised housing areas," she writes. "It has always been the job of the left wing to fight for the rights of marginalised groups. In recent years, we have noticed how immigrant women are taking up the fight and becoming role models for children and young people in marginalised housing areas. I am full of admiration for these women. And they deserve to be backed up with more than words." **M**

GREENLAND'S URANIUM MINES ONE STEP CLOSER

Denmark's zero-tolerance policy on uranium mining is being challenged by Greenland's desire to extract the radioactive material

Despite an official zero-tolerance policy toward nuclear power, last month, the Danish parliament threw its weight behind Greenland's request to open uranium mines.

Greenland is a self-governing territory in the Kingdom of Denmark. While Denmark retains responsibility for Greenland's defence, Greenland is responsible for its exploitation of natural resources.

The island has a wealth of underground resources, particularly rare earth metals used in the technology industry. However, mixed with these rare earth metals is uranium, and to make the mining profitable, the uranium would also need to be exported.

Greenland's parliament, the Naalakkersuisut, voted in 2013 to overturn its ban on uranium mining, and has since passed a number of laws to create a framework for the arrival of international mining companies.



Wealth lurks hidden within Greenland's mountains.

The new laws regulate the processing and export of uranium from Denmark. They required the approval of the Danish parliament, given uranium's potential to be used to produce weapons of mass destruction. All parties except the Red-Green Alliance (Enhedslisten) supported the laws, which will ensure Greenland abides by regulations established by the United Nations and the International Energy Agency.

Proponents of the mines argue they will help Greenland become more financially self-sufficient – Greenland relies upon block grants from Denmark to finance its welfare.

Detractors, however, argue that the mining laws will enable the companies to dodge taxes, while others are concerned that too few Greenlanders will find employment at the mines, which are expected to be staffed primarily by foreign labour, particularly from China.

Demonstrations in Greenland in April are evidence of continuing opposition to the mines, while calls for a referendum on the issue have been rejected by the government.

If the laws pass in the Danish parliament, as they are expected to, they will take effect on July 1. **M**

IN BRIEF

Foreign aid misspent

The Liberal Party (Venstre) government has broken rules set by the OECD on how to spend foreign aid, reports Altinget. In 2015, 220 million kroner was spent on Danish-language education and jobs training.

"The problem is not simply that money was taken from initiatives that are supposed to help the world's poorest, but that Denmark seems to be cynically taking advantage of an OECD system that is completely broken," said Adam Moe Fejerskov from the Danish Institute for International Studies.

OECD's Development Assistance Committee allows foreign aid budgets to pay for costs associated with an immigrant's first 12 months in the country. But in a letter to Altinget, the OECD confirmed that it was not permitted to count funds that were used to integrate immigrants in the labour market as foreign aid, because those funds benefit the donor country's economy.

EASING THE POLICE BURDEN

The reintroduction of border controls in Denmark in response to the refugee crisis has diverted police resources away from their usual tasks. But now the national guard, hjemmeværnet, will be brought in to relieve pressure on the police.

According to justice minister Søren Pind, the border controls "will take place under the responsibility and leadership of the police, and the personnel will be subject to a targeted education programme under the guidance of the police school."

While 165 officers will return to their normal duties across the country, the police force remains squeezed following last year's terror attack in Copenhagen. Patrols and guards near the city's Jewish institutions have increased over time from 257,979 hours in January 2015 to 450,653 hours in March 2016.

Tax tension

The governing blue block is split on the issue of taxes. The minority Venstre government requires the support of both the populist Danish People's Party (DF) as well as the libertarian Liberal Alliance party.

The latter has strongly pushed for tax relief, particularly in the top tax bracket, and the Venstre has accommodated this wish in its governing manifesto.

DF announced, however, that due to in-

creased costs brought on by the refugee crisis, it would not be able to support any tax cuts.

"We simply cannot afford it," DF leader Kristian Thulesen Dahl told DR. "The money is being spent on refugees and migrants. And if there is any money left over, we need to use it to strengthen welfare services in health and eldercare."

Dahl pointed to new calculations from the government that predict the Danish population will increase by 100,000 people by 2020 as a result of the refugee crisis. According to the Finance Ministry, public spending will need to increase by 6.4 billion kroner between 2017 and 2020 to keep up.

"My prayer is that they completely reassess their refugee policy before it sucks up all our money."

DIIS saved

The Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) was among the publicly-funded institutions slated to be moved out of Copenhagen under the government's plan to redistribute public jobs.

The organisation has strongly protested the decision, arguing that their 88 employees will be unable to properly do their jobs in Denmark's second city, Aarhus. DIIS's mandate is to assess Denmark's foreign and political situation and to inform the media, politicians and the public.

The opposition Social Democrats (Social Demokrater) have decided to oppose the planned relocation of DIIS, bringing the government into a minority after they also lost the support of Liberal Alliance.

MP Mogens Jensen explains that while his party supports the government's redistribution plans, DIIS was a poor choice.

"In DIIS' case, 98 percent of their partners and users are in the capital," he told DR. "It's clear that keeping DIIS in Copenhagen is the most sensible solution."

Benefits cap creates poverty

The unemployment benefits cap introduced by the government this year will have a major impact on the incidence of poverty in Denmark.

According to calculations by the Economic Council for Labour Movement (AE), around 16,400 Danes will end up in poverty, including approximately 11,000 children.

Head of analysis Jonas Schytz Juul told Politiken newspaper that the cap on the total benefits unemployed people can receive will disproportionately affect single parents. **M**

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Rasmus Degnbol

Sleepwalking into the future

In an era where app-creators and developers are the new rock-stars, it's critical that we keep questioning the social impacts of the technology we create, warns Angela Oguntala

When you think about the future, what do you see? I see flying cars, robot servants, and holidays on space habitats. This vision has been shaped by the society I live in and the culture I consume – by the dystopia of Gattaca and the optimism of The Jetsons.

It's a question Angela Oguntala thinks we should be spending more time on. Originally from Philadelphia, Oguntala is an alumna of the Copenhagen Institute of Interaction Design (CIID) and works, as she puts it, across design and fu-

ture studies. This work has seen her head the Innovation Lab at Esbjerg and in 2014 was named one of 27 Future Innovators by Ars Electronica.

Oguntala wants to challenge our assumptions and get us to recognise our biases, whether they be individual or societal. This approach influences her choice of projects, which tend to touch on the relationship between our physical form, society and technology.

One such project was Momentum, in which she sought to explore self-perception and societal perceptions of how people per-

form and behave in highly public and often stressful situations. She attached biosensors and probes to her subjects, and conducted extensive interviews to monitor how their bodies and minds responded to these situations.

"I created a programme to analyse different bodily and behavioural aspects and to provide real-time feedback to people in these moments. The end goal was to create a feedback loop to understand how we present ourselves in public situations, how we reflect on these situations afterwards, and what that means for our sense of

self and identity."

Oguntala conducted around 80 experiments with different speakers, who received real-time haptic and other sensory feedback through wearable technologies such as a body band that collected bodily diagnostics like breath, sweat, and heart rate. Other devices would blur out the speaker's view of the audience based on the way their body was reacting to the event.

Afterward, people could review their performance through recorded videos overlaid with their biometrics and speech patterns to

Words:
Peter Stanners

Photos:
Rasmus Degnbol



reconcile the way they actually appeared with the way they thought they appeared.

“It’s known that people who behave in a certain way – cool, calm, collected and masculine – are perceived as more intelligent and competent. This was also supported in my data, even down to the fact that people who spoke in a deeper voice were perceived as more trustworthy and more intelligent,” says Oguntala, adding that the experiment demonstrated the human predisposition for conformity – both conscious and unconscious.

“We look at archetypally successful people, whether it’s a slick talking, uber-confident ‘Brad’ from corporate America or a hyperactive start-up whiz kid, and we emulate them. But in the process, we reinforce the message that if we show anything innately human, like unpredictability, irrationality, doubt, nervousness, emotionality, then we are somehow much less intelligent or competent.”

RECOGNISING BIAS

Oguntala says Momentum was a “soft and behavioural” exploration, and wasn’t designed to result in any scientific conclusions. But it did prove useful in demonstrating Western social norms and how they limit our ability to listen to different types of people.

The fact is that we are biased, and as a result, our technology will be too. But making that case is not always easy in scientific and tech communities.

“When it comes to technology or design, unbridled techno-optimism often prevails. We place a lot of faith in human reason, and often don’t fully take into account how irrational, unpredictable, vulnerable and strange we can be. I have experienced that some of my colleagues in this space can take a great deal of offence when you use a platform at a conference to say that algorithms and data sets can be biased, that they represent systemic biases that are already in the world,” says Oguntala.

“There are a lot of people who get very angry with that, who take

Robots and algorithms are increasingly making decisions for us and making our lives more efficient, but can we trust machines to always make the right decisions for everyone?

it as a personal criticism, who don’t think their research would be biased. But I don’t believe anyone’s doing it deliberately; I don’t think they’re evil. The only way we are going to move beyond bias is by acknowledging that it pervades our everyday lives. If we don’t, it will just fester and continue to influence our technological and policy decisions.”

Oguntala’s experience is that an attempt to address the biases embedded in the way we develop technology often gets confused with an attack on the need for technological developments. But the two issues are separate, she argues.

“I am incredibly interested in and work with emerging technologies and the cycle of culture to technology and technology to culture. But I do think that we need to reflect on it and be honest about how the cycle takes place. Right now, a growing subset of those in charge tend to have a techno-optimistic view. As their agendas are pushed forward, we will need to build in frequent pauses in our society to reflect on whether technology and efficiency is always the solution. Robots and algorithms are increasingly making decisions for us and making our lives more efficient, but can we trust machines to always make the right decisions for everyone?”

MAKERS AND START-UPS

But it’s not just technological leaders that may suffer from a lack of critical reflection on the social and cultural effects of technology on society. In recent years, the rise of cheap hardware, the ubiquity of smart phones, and cheap manufacturing technologies have opened up technological development to the masses.

On the one hand, it has fostered a thriving ‘maker’ community that uses technology such as sensors and 3D printers to create whatever they can imagine. The increasingly lucrative mobile app market continues to foster a ‘start-up’ culture that can turn people into billionaires overnight. Take the photo-messaging app Snapchat, for

example, which turned down a four billion dollar takeover from Facebook in 2013, just two years after its initial launch.

“You can be seen as a naysayer in some communities across design and technology if you question the ambition to build and make. I do believe in making for fun, or just for the spirit of seeing if and how we could make something, you know, like the PancakeBot which takes your drawings and makes pancakes out of them...or the myriad of weekend hackathons where people come together to collaborate and experiment. But that’s different.

“I just think that if we are building a solution for or with people, then there should be some level of discussion and reflection about the emotions and philosophy imbued in the solution. We just have to accept that we bring all of our baggage with us, and we need to put forth and outline what our worldviews are. That would be a great first step, but some people have a difficult time accepting that first step, because you have to criticise some of the baggage you come with and the biases and filters you use.”

The start-up community, she argues, is particularly prone to focussing too heavily on the eventual payoff, rather than on what the possible social impact of their products could be.

“There’s a fever pitch in the start-up community, which I belong to. I go to loads of events and there seems to be this frantic hustle and hype, where the focus is on the quick flip. It’s glamorous, because we’ve seen people come out of nowhere who are nobodies one day and rock stars the next. People are enticed by this get-rich-quick approach, and I think we shouldn’t be blinded by that. By now I had hoped we would have had a come-to-Jesus moment and have a more open discussion about how to structure this new reality, but I don’t think we are going to have that moment because the prospects are so glamorous.”

Oguntala argues that our educational system is somewhat to blame for the lack of reflection. While we are encouraged to spe-

cialise and find a niche in which to work, we end up lacking a broader understanding of the way the world works.

“We have so many more opportunities to create change now than ever before, but we have to ask why we are doing it, who we are doing it for, what are the associated risks, how do we negotiate these risks, and what do our decisions say about us. I think it would be great to pair technical and engineering courses with a course on science and technology studies, because right now academia doesn’t reflect the real world, where everything is connected. We need to learn how to think consequentially and systemically about the larger socio-cultural, political, economic and environmental consequences of our decisions.”

FUTURE VALUES

Though teaching, workshops, and consulting, Oguntala works with students and organizations to think and feel through the consequences of technology and the types of possible futures they’d like to create, as well as the ones they’d like to avoid.

“What’s interesting is that you don’t need to start at a place of extreme knowledge. You’d be surprised how people can think through the different consequences just using their life experiences, then build connections between the different impacts. For example, what would be the impact in the developing world of a breast pump that introduces vitamins? A lot of the impacts would require doing a bit of research, but most of the time they can come up with scenarios just by thinking how their family would be impacted by the new technology.”

Thinking through the consequences of technologies can also help identify possible scenarios where the technology works against our values. The rise of the automobile took place within the capitalist pursuit of individual freedom. When there were few cars on the road, this freedom may have existed. But what freedoms are the



residents of smoggy and congested major cities around the world missing out on because we built cities to accommodate cars, and not mass transport?

LEAPFROGGING

But would car culture have developed if Western values weren't so individualistic? Perhaps not. Technology isn't neutral, but because what we acknowledge as technological progress started in the West, we are often blind to how it is imbued with our myths and language. As the peoples of the world become increasingly developed and capable of finding their own solutions, Oguntala argues, our approach will no longer hold a monopoly.

"The West has exported its ideas and its approach to life to the rest of the world for decades. That

worked for a period of time, but it doesn't work any more. Developing countries are now starting to see returns on solutions they created in their own likeness and developed out of their own history, traditions and knowledge," says Oguntala.

"A Nigerian writing science fiction would tell very different stories to us about how artificial intelligence would affect a community. As a result, the technology they develop based on these stories would be built and behave differently. Science fiction has long been written outside the West, but it's been given wider access and accolades probably only in the past 5-10 years. There is more and more speculative literature being published in the developing world, where people are imagining different types of futures."

Oguntala points out that the

West has already been influenced by technologies that were created to address the different needs in developing countries.

"We often fail to realise that the technological solutions that are created in developing countries can benefit us. Take mobile payment systems. Ten years ago, few people in Kenya had bank accounts, but they still needed a way to send money to family members that lived far away and to pay school fees. So they started using mobile airtime as a mode of money transfer. Kenya became a pioneer in the mobile money market this way. My mother-in-law pays for everything with MobilePay. That was inspired by how Kenyans live and their vision for the future."

Developing countries are no longer following the West's trajectory of development, and in-

I just think that if we are building a solution for or with people, then there should be some level of discussion and reflection about the emotions and philosophy imbued in the solution.

stead they are leapfrogging ahead. Oguntala argues that this is an empowering process for these countries, which are often criticised for investing in technological innovation over poverty reduction.

"Many developing countries such as Ethiopia and Bangladesh have space programmes, but people are incredulous that these countries aren't spending all of their resources on directly tackling poverty instead. And sure, there's a conversation and a cost-benefit analysis of some sort to be explored in there. But I think it's a conversation that is much more layered and complex than the one we have now, which often centres on whether or not poor countries should have the audacity to dream and to allocate resources in this way."

Ogunatala argues that it is a valid ambition of developing countries to be more self-sustaining and to gain insight into a range of issues that can directly impact their economic prospects. Ethiopia, for example, is looking to boost their local agriculture and communication industries with their space program.

"It's not far-fetched to think we could learn from their research and from their programmes. Look at India, which launched a Mars probe for a fraction of the budget the European Space Agency and NASA spent. And India continues to reap substantial benefits from their program, both economic and life-saving – weather-monitoring systems have provided accurate early warnings for extreme weather events in regions where such events would have previously killed thousands."

Back in the West, disruptive technologies are upending the status quo. While Uber and Airbnb offer consumers cheap and reliable services, their long-term impact on the labour market and economy have yet to be fully appreciated.

In the meantime, increasingly powerful recommendation bots control what we read and watch. Behind the scenes, highly-educated graduates fine tune these algorithms to make our lives run more smoothly. But Oguntala wonders whether a smarter computer is really what we need to solve the problems facing the West and the world.

"I am anxious about the future. I'm not fearful, but it's definitely going to be interesting." **M**



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Carsharing also offers businesses a flexible access to vehicles. Free parking means LetsGo cars are

ideal when a staff member needs to quickly meet a colleague or client in town. It also means that multiple staff members can rent cars at the same time, which can often be a problem for small businesses that can only afford one car for the office to share.

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nal stretch of the journey.

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ronmentally friendly as possible – you can even borrow an electric car.

CARSHARING OPENS UP MANY POSSIBILITIES

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ABOUT LETSGO

The carsharing scheme has existed for 10 years (the last four years under the name LetsGo), so LetsGo knows what they are doing. The company is owned by a foundation whose ambition it is to reduce the number of cars in cities. LetsGo is non-profit, so the profits are continually re-invested in the company, which means that the fleet steadily growing.

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CAPTURED

Rasmus Degnbøl

"Our body is not your property". Demonstrators march through Copenhagen streets for justice for rape victims. The protest was organised after a controversial case, which saw rape charges dismissed against three young men. The 17-year-old victim was intoxicated at the time of the rape, but the court in Roskilde found the men could not be prosecuted because it could not be proven they had the intention to commit rape, which is required by law.



Europe's grassroots revolutions

Elena Askløf and Peter Laugesen travelled through Europe in search of activists and change makers. They found that concerned citizens across the political divide are rising to fill the gaps in public services left by the state. They believe anyone can inspire change with a few simple tools

EUROPE is rumbling with discontent. Economies in the south have yet to fully recover following the 2008 financial crisis. The hardest-hit group are young people, who are failing to join a fragile labour market, while a lack of growth suppressed wages, and austerity politics hollowed out public services.

This was the backdrop against which Elena Askløf and Peter Laugesen set off across the continent in 2013 to interview young people. Their project, Our Europe, won them the Charlemagne Youth Prize in 2014 for their coverage of life as a young person in Europe.

“On both the left and the right across Europe there is a ‘fuck the establishment’ attitude – fuck the older generation, fuck politicians,” Askløf explains. “We experienced such an enormous level of dreaming and desire for change.”

After spending a year holding talks and seminars about their experiences, they set off again last September. This time, they went in search of activists and change makers – people who were taking action to address the problems that their governments were unable, or unwilling, to address.

“There are so many problems that aren’t being taken seriously. There is a feeling that the older generation looked after itself, but didn’t hand over a healthy society to the young people, so they cannot be relied upon. That’s why they feel the need to take action and create the society they want,” says Askløf.

RISING GRASSROOTS

Their four-month trip took them from Denmark to Istanbul, Athens, Lesbos, Palermo, Madrid, Berlin and Amsterdam where they met protesters, media activists, eco-village entrepreneurs, and local organizers.

They returned with valuable insight not only into the diversity of grassroots movements that are taking shape across Europe – from volunteer hospitals and universi-

In many countries, it is the right wing that has taken on the role of looking after the workers.

PETER LAUGESEN

ties for refugees to social businesses – but also into the strategies and tactics the youth employ to bring about change.

“We saw a lot of grassroots movements that have arisen to address issues created in countries by national governments and the EU. In Greece, for example, health insurance is connected to work, so when you lose your job for two years, you lose your insurance. Hospitals are also understaffed, so a group of activists created Helliniko Medical Center to make sure people don’t get chronically sick or die because of the budget cuts. They want to stop people dying of austerity,” Laugesen explains.

Images of volunteers helping refugees ashore on Greek islands have been published in newspapers around the world. But the assistance doesn’t end there.

“Many Europeans have reacted to the refugee crisis with the feeling that it can’t be true that refugees arriving by boat have not been treated better. So thousands travelled down to provide the reception the Greek government should have given them. We visited a group of people in Berlin who have started an online university for refugees, so the newly arrived Syrians for example, can get a degree and, through that, get better integrated. It’s another example of people who aren’t waiting to vote for the society that they want, they are actively making it.”

While some movements started with a motivation to fill a gap left by the state, others offered a political alternative to the establishment. In March 2011, the movement Real Democracy Now! (¡Democracia Real YA!) was kick-started in Spain, leading to the anti-austerity Indignant Movement, which held protests that drew millions across the country.

These, in turn, led to the formation of the political party Podemos, which is citizen-driven through around 1000 assemblies, or ‘circles’.

“We propose simple but deep

changes: to reclaim democracy, place politics at the service of people and Human Rights, and to be able to choose the economic model in which we work and live,” the party states on its website.

GAINING INFLUENCE

Not all of Askløf and Laugesen’s planned stories panned out. In a visit to a sustainable village in the mountains outside Athens, they found a lone man holding down the fort after the other volunteers left following a disagreement.

They also had to tread carefully, especially in Greece. There, the political situation is particularly polarised following the rise of the far-right political party Golden Dawn, which sits in both the Greek and European Parliaments. Left-wing activists couldn’t understand why Askløf and Laugesen would want to talk to Golden Dawn, and threatened not to speak to them if their interview would appear on the same website as the neo-Nazi party’s.

Grassroots activism isn’t a preserve of the left wing, however. In Nice, they interviewed a man from Generation Identitaire, a right-wing youth movement whose goal is to promote French identity and cultural values. They oppose both immigration and globalisation, and use bold actions to draw attention to their cause.

“They were incredibly good at gaining attention,” says Laugesen. “They have a clubhouse, publish a magazine, and host a European summer school. But they mostly get influence from actions like climbing up mosques and unfurling their banner, or flying their flag in front of journalists outside EU institutions. I learned loads from them. They are disciplined and dedicated. They aren’t doing it for fun, it’s serious business. They think Europe is in danger, that people are ‘flooding in’ from abroad, they see Europe as under invasion. I don’t see it that way, but we learned from their strategies and methods.”

LEFT AND RIGHT UNITED

The goal of speaking to groups such as Generation Identitaire was primarily to learn about how they seek influence. Other groups in Poland and Italy were equally interested in sharing their techniques, and seemed completely convinced of their cause.

What they found was that movements on both the left and right were motivated by the same issues, but that their analysis and conclusions were different.

“The views on the left and right are surprisingly similar,” says Askløf. “They share a critique of capitalism and consumerism. Generation Identitaire feared that by mixing cultures, we will lose our identities and the values that we have in common. Fundamentally, they argue that we need to share something to believe in, and that once that stops, we simply become consumers.”

Laugesen added that the left and right were both critical of the EU, though they didn’t offer the same solutions.

“The left-wing party Syriza in Greece is active in pointing out all the issues with European cooperation, and argues that we need to create a Europe with more solidarity. The right-wing National Front in France is also highly critical of the EU, but thinks the solution is to leave the EU completely. There is also overlap between young Podemos and Generation Identitaire supporters, who both critique the political corruption in the establishment and the lack of focus on problems facing the working class. It shows a more complex political landscape than we normally imagine. The traditional left-right spectrum has overlaps created by the generational question and by working class issues. In many countries, it is the right wing that has taken on the role of looking after the workers.”

THE CASE FOR EUROPE

While formally non-political,

Words: Peter Stanners

Photos: Rasmus Degnbøl



Elena Askløf and Peter Laugesen from Our Europe.

Askløf and Laugesen are Europhiles and are concerned by a lack of historic understanding about the benefits the EU has brought Europe, particularly among the younger generation.

“For a lot young people in Europe it’s not a valid argument that the EU provides peace between nations,” says Askløf. We have never lived through war, so a lot of young people believe that we can have the same peaceful situation with out EU.”

Laugesen is also concerned by parties such as Jobbik in Hungary that would happily pull the country out of the EU, and by the decision in the UK to hold a referendum on EU membership in June.

“They promise a better situation outside of the EU. But it’s a nationalistic fantasy plucked out of thin air, with no basis in reality. That’s what’s interesting about UK Prime Minister David Cameron, who first went to great lengths to criticise ‘welfare tourists’ and guest workers, but when it comes down to it, he’s enough of a realist to admit the UK is better off in the EU. If Cameron knows this, most people must know it – that we make each other stronger.”

The crises Europe has faced in the past decade have only polarised opinions on cooperation. On the one hand, some argue that their problems are directly related to European cooperation, and that splitting up would allow nation states to implement the measures required to rebuild their economies and security. Others argue that the crises are a product of a lack of integration.

NEW EUROPEAN POLITICS

Either way, it’s undeniable that the problems facing Europe are transnational, whether it’s finding a humane and fair way to deal with refugees or moving towards a green energy economy. Askløf and Laugesen found that on these issues, in particular, activists had built strong international networks to co-ordinate their efforts.

When the Treaty of Lisbon came into force in 2009, the

It’s frustrating that there is no progressive critique in favour of moving the European project forward

PETER LAUGESEN



You can’t just wait for the start of the revolution to join.

ELENA ASKLØF



EU took a major step toward becoming more democratic by giving the European Parliament more powers. But European politics still hardly features in national media, which are more interested in the affairs of local parliaments. And when the EU is raised in national media and parliaments, the discussion often turns to the ways in which it limits, rather than empowers, member states.

“It’s frustrating that there is no progressive critique in favour of moving the European project forward,” bemoans Laugesen. “The problem is also that people want to have a simple position on the EU. But we don’t have that simple view of our own parliament, we have a nuanced view of it. Just because we are against a law, it doesn’t make us want to abandon parliament.”

Others feel the same way. In February, former Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis launched the Democracy in Europe Movement 2025 (DiEM 25), whose goal is to reinvigorate the EU as a democratic institution in a bid to fend off extremism.

“Today a common bureaucracy and a common currency divide European peoples that were beginning to unite despite our different languages and cultures,” states DiEM’s manifesto. “A confederacy of myopic politicians, economically naïve officials and financially incompetent ‘experts’ submit slavishly to the edicts of financial and industrial conglomerates, alienating Europeans and stirring up a dangerous anti-European backlash. Proud peoples are being turned against each other. Nationalism, extremism and racism are being re-awakened.”

Laugesen’s optimism for the project is muted, however.

“If a left-wing and progressive Europe is to succeed, then DiEM25 is needed. But who is fighting for that in Denmark? Only one Danish politician, Rasmus Nordquist, from political party The Alternative, was there for the launch. But he hardly made a peep about it. We need someone to carry it forward.”

WE CAN ALL BE ACTIVISTS

Askløf and Laugesen understand the apathy many feel toward the issues facing society. Tax evasion and corruption, for example, are huge issues that individuals are mostly powerless to address.

But with the skills they picked up on their journey, they now hope to inspire people to take a more active role in shaping the society in which they live.

“Change is underway, you just have to know where to find it,” Askløf says. “We aren’t finding it on the streets and at the barricades only in France and Macedonia these days. You can’t just wait for the start of the revolution to join.”

She adds that it doesn’t take a huge commitment to make a change. On Lesbos, in Greece, they met a large group of women from Stavanger, Norway, who decided to spend two weeks on the island as volunteers helping refugees. Then they went home to their everyday lives.

“I think it’s a trend that people are taking on democracy as a value, and becoming co-creators in the process. It’s better than having a large mass of people doing nothing and an elite few doing everything. I am hopeful for a really living society where people are increasingly thinking democratically and politically in what they do.”

Askløf and Laugesen are in the process of writing a book about their experiences and they continue to tour Denmark, holding talks about activism and young people in Europe. They bring with them the tools and strategies for effecting change that they picked up during their travels.

“After our presentation, young Danes can’t say they don’t know what to do,” says Laugesen. “If poor, unprivileged and out-of-work Spaniards can start a revolution with no resources, then what can these privileged Danish kids do with all their resources, knowledge, money, time and opportunities? That’s the mental revolution we are going for.” **M**

Rising above the haters

Euroscepticism is being confronted with renewed vigour by Europhile political initiatives that hope to revive and refocus the European project

EUROPE has always been divided between those who want to build walls and those who want to tear them down, but the two sides have become even more entrenched following the refugee crisis. The wealth built through free trade and movement is under threat from calls to reinstate border controls, while the UK referendum on membership in June threatens to completely destabilise the cooperation.

Political party The Alternative (Alternativet) thinks that the EU has failed in its primary role as a peacemaking force. They criticise its passive behaviour and delayed reaction to major challenges, and is now calling for change.

In March, the party launched a new political campaign, 'We Are Bigger Than This,' to instill hope in the European project. The campaign was launched at a summit at the Danish parliament that was organised with help from British think tank Compass and together with 70 politicians and individuals from across Europe.

HOPE FOR EUROPE

Alternativet, which was first elected to Parliament last June, is known for its novel approach to politics. In addition to its manifesto, the party is guided by six core values – including humility, empathy and humour – and develops its policies through so-called political laboratories.

So perhaps it wasn't surprising that they held the meeting in 'the Hope room,' workshoping solutions to problems such as the refugee crisis and climate change.

The initiative, however, is not merely an intellectual brainstorming process – it is also a model for how to rebuild and strengthen the European community.

"We must stand together, think bigger while strengthening personal leadership, so that the individual takes responsibility for communities and for democracy as a whole, both locally

If we do not work together, we run the risk of being drowned out by the voices of fear that are undermining European cooperation.

MIRKO BUSTO

Hana Hasanbegovic

and across Europe," says Alternativet's leader Uffe Elbæk.

British MP for the Greens, Caroline Lucas, supports the movement, saying that politicians "lack the courage to step up" and share the responsibility of tackling the problems facing Europe.

Italy's eurosceptic Five Star Movement was also present at the meeting.

"To solve the crises we face, it is very important to make connections and collaborations across Europe to exchange ideas," says Italian MP Mirko Busto. "If we do not work together, we run the risk of being drowned out by the voices of fear that are undermining European cooperation."

ACCOUNTABILITY

Alternativet is not alone in its desire for greater pan-European cooperation. This year also saw the

launch of the Democracy in Europe Movement 2025 (DiEM25) by the former Greek finance minister Yanis Varoufakis. The movement addresses many of the same issues, but with a greater focus on increasing the transparency and accountability of the EU.

This was made clear at the movement's launch in Berlin earlier this year, which included Alternativet MP Rasmus Nordqvist as a keynote speaker, alongside prominent public figures such as Varoufakis, Slavoj Žižek, and Julian Assange.

While a collaboration between DiEM25 and Alternativet is already in motion, the two movements have a number of differences.

DiEM25 is a pragmatic and well-established operation, with a thorough manifesto and goals to be achieved by 2025 regarding mi-

gration, public debt, investments, banking and poverty.

The same cannot be said of the 'We Are Bigger Than This' campaign, which has yet to develop concrete proposals for reaching its goals. The rhetoric on the website is even less decisive – "[Europe is] a continent where suspicion melts into trust," and "we combine smart brains and warm hearts."

Is the campaign running on empty buzzwords? An Alternativet representative stated that its main purpose at the moment is raising awareness and creating a debate across Europe.

What both initiatives have in common, however, is a wish to strengthen the EU. The question is whether the movement can gain more momentum than the forces that would happily pull it apart. **M**



Former Greek finance minister Yanis Varoufakis, founder of the Democracy in Europe Movement 2025.

A new narrative of transnational adoption

Uprooting children from a foreign culture to start a new life in Denmark can be fraught with difficulty. Adoptees and experts reflect on the history of transnational adoption and offer their views on how to ease tensions and create a more inclusive society for children brought up in Denmark with complicated cultural ties

WHEN YOU ADOPT, you save a child's life. At least, that's the narrative we are used to – children who would otherwise live in orphanages are given the security a family offers.

But it's more complicated than that. Adoptees and experts in Denmark are increasingly coming forward to share experiences that challenge the prevailing wisdom that transnational adoption is a win-win for children and parents alike.

"Taking a child, removing it from everything it knows, and placing it with a couple that doesn't look like that child, doesn't smell like that child, doesn't talk like that child, is an extreme trauma," says Yong Sun Gullach, chairwoman of the Forum for Adoption Politics (Adoptionspolitisk Forum).

Beyond the psychological issues, transnational adoption is under scrutiny on a number of fronts. Adoption agencies have been accused of corruption and document forgery, and developing countries are increasingly tightening adoption regulations. As a result, the number of transnational adoptions to Denmark has dropped rapidly in recent years, from 527 in 2004 to only 124 in 2014.

The old narrative, that transnational adoption benefits everyone, is under major pressure to make way for a more nuanced understanding of the complexity of transplanting a child from a foreign culture into a Danish family.

SPEAKING UP

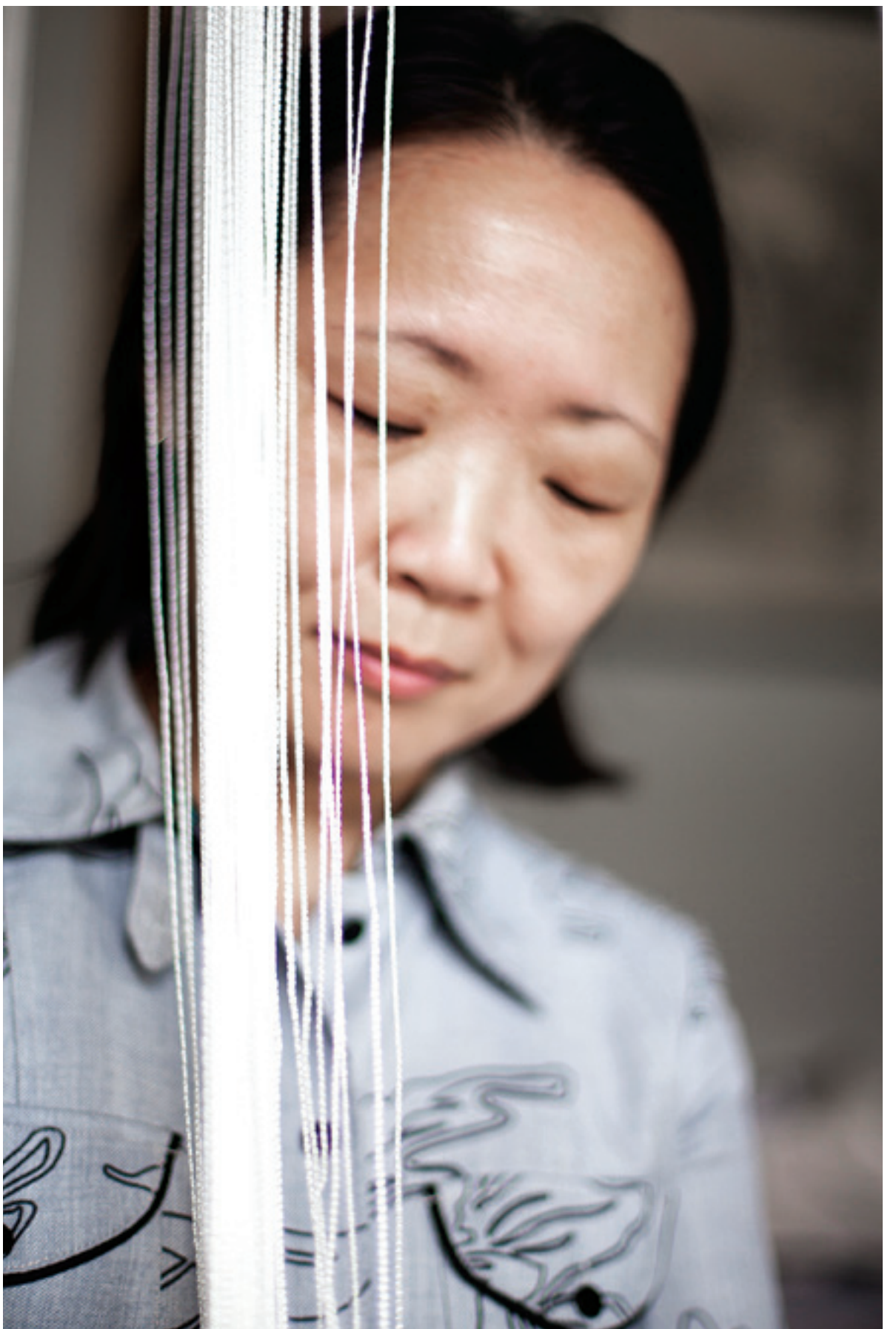
Gullach participated in the formal foundation of Adoptionspolitisk Forum in 2013 to give adoptees a critical voice and to create a space where they can collaborate to advocate for their rights. Gullach's aim is that these initiatives will lead to change in what she perceives to be a stagnant adoption system built on a religious and colonial narrative and structure. She points out that the majority of countries that are open to transna-

It is as though through adoption, the race and the original culture of the child is negated, their past erased.

YONG SUN GULLACH

Words: Natasha Jessen-Petersen

Photos: Marie Ravn



Yong Sun Gullach.

tional adoption are those that have previously been colonised.

The flow of children from developing to developed countries fosters a ‘saviour mentality,’ she argues, in which we are framed to believe the child is being offered a better life. This approach persists in Denmark, she argues, under the guise of ‘integration’. Adopters are not encouraged to embrace their child’s heritage. Instead, the child is expected to explore it on their own as an adult.

“It is as though through adoption, the race and the original culture of the child is negated, their past erased. The child is now in Denmark and therefore Danish, regardless of their country of origin,” Gullach says, adding that there is a need to address the trauma these children often feel.

“We cannot talk openly about the challenges that we are experiencing mentally, or talk about needing psychological help, without being framed as too sick to be able to have a voice, or to judge what is best to happen to us. Adoptees might be more likely to seek psychological help but that doesn’t mean we are sicker than others, we are just reacting naturally to a very unnatural situation.”

According to a 2013 report published in the journal *Pediatrics*, adopted children are four times more likely to commit suicide than non-adopted children. A 2010 study based on the Danish Adoption Register revealed that Danish adoptees have higher mortality rates than the general population. The most common cause of death was alcohol-related.

ADOPTION BUSINESS

According to Gullach, adoption has also been historically framed as a class issue, one in which children were taken from lower-class families and raised by families with more money and thus greater resources.

But the question is whether the transnational adoption business is

responding to a supply of orphaned and needy children, or whether it is actually creating demand.

According to UNICEF, while there are around 132 million children around the world that are classified as orphans, only 13 million have lost both parents. The organisation states that the vast majority of orphans are living with a surviving parent, grandparent, or other family member, and that 95 per cent of all orphans are over the age of five.

“The number of children eligible for adoption does not correspond to the demands from the western world. Transnational adoption is, therefore, an industry creating a market that is unfortunately primarily regulated by demand and financial gain,” says Gullach, who adds that countries that open up adoption to international adopters see an increase in the number of orphanages.

In Denmark, there is only one company today that deals with transnational adoptions: Danish International Adoptions (DIA). Gullach argues that the privatisation of adoption and the demand for children in adopted countries has created a situation that is ripe for abuse. Parents become persuaded into giving up their children for adoption, despite being able to support them, by promising them continued contact. Cases of stolen children have emerged. Gullach cites the example of police officers in Ethiopia who were paid to claim that they personally found a child in order to ease the transnational adoption.

“I know about irregularities in the papers, falsifications of death certificates, certain members of the original families have not been informed about their rights, original families have been lied to, and children have been stolen – taken away on false premises, and stolen.”

In 2015, *Politiken* newspaper reported that a Danish couple had to return their adopted child to Kenya after spending five months with the child in Nairobi. The girl’s mother

had come forward and claimed that her daughter and gone missing during a bus ride the year before.

BETTER PREPARATION

For Danes who go through with international adoptions, the learning curve can be steep. Sofie and her husband adopted their son from Ethiopia during a time when adoptions from the country were still legal and far more common. She asked to be interviewed anonymously, having grown tired of the public’s increasingly judgemental and often negative outlook towards adoption.

Sofie was quick to emphasise that adoption, in her view, should not primarily serve parents who can’t have children, but children who do not have any other options.

“We should not use adoption to get children to parents who can’t have children, we should use adoption to get parents to children who have no other options wherever they are.”

Sofie and her son often talk about his Ethiopian heritage, but he has so far declined to join an Ethiopian adoption group. They have also talked about returning to Ethiopia with their son and while he has expressed desire to do so in the future, as of now he is more interested in travelling to the same vacation destinations as his peers. He does bring up his birth parents, however.

“We say that he has one set of parents who made him, but we are the parents who are here, the ones whom he sleeps next to every night, and who comfort him when he’s in bed. He’s just got two sets and that’s how it is.”

While she says her son appears to have settled well into life in Denmark, she knows of other families that have struggled. The adoption agency did provide courses to prepare parents, but Sofie thinks they could have been more thorough.

She also criticised the thoroughness of the background checks carried out by the adoption agency.

It should be part of clearing a child for adoption that you make 100% sure that you have found as much information as possible.

SOFIE

She and her husband noticed some gaps in their son’s files and felt compelled to hire a private investigator to look into his past. The investigator confirmed that while the information provided by the agency was correct, they had failed to deliver the full story.

“I find it odd that the adoption agencies are not better at looking into the stories of the children, because they could have done that as easily as we could. It should be part of clearing a child for adoption that you make 100% sure that you have found as much information as possible.”

As difficult as the process may have been, Sofie is so happy to have her son, and says the joy is immeasurable. When asked what her son has brought to her life, she replies, “happiness and hard work.” She laughs heartily and then adds, “Just like what any parent would say.” She pauses before reiterating, her voice clear with pride, “We really think that we have the world’s greatest little boy.”

SEEKING ROOTS

Sofie’s son is still young, but a whole generation of transnational adoptees have entered adulthood and are starting to speak out.

Among them is Mija Byung. A graduate of the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, she is now head of architecture and construction for the organisation *Turning Tables*, which gives marginalised and minority youth the opportunity to create music.

Her job is fitting, given that Byung grew up as one of only a couple of non-white Danes in her small hometown.

“As I started growing up, the kids around me also starting growing up and I began to notice the differences between me and them. My parents would never ever understand this experience, of being singled out, of racism. They would never know what prejudice feels like. In that way you are actually very alone as an adoptive kid, because

you can't mirror yourself in your parents. They don't understand that part of being a minority."

Byung felt encouraged to integrate into white society without reference to or discussion of her South Korean roots. This negation of her heritage meant, however, that every time someone observed that she was different, it felt like an attack. She perceived her background as something to be ashamed of. It made her feel vulnerable.

"You're so Danish, I don't even think about it. I never even think about how you're Korean," says Byung, imitating comments she has heard more times than she can count.

"That they want you to be so white, so Danish, that you can't even be Asian."

CONNECTING

Byung returned to South Korea two years ago for the first time since her adoption, in part, to reclaim her self and her identity.

"For the first time in my life, I was able to blend in, which was the weirdest feeling but so relaxing – to arrive in the middle of Seoul and to be like everyone else," she says, adding that she was worried about what her parents felt during her trip to South Korea – especially after her father's reply to an email she sent upon arriving.

"My dad answered very briefly in the e-mail, 'Okay, good to hear, I hope that you're coming back to Denmark'. There were so many feelings in that sentence. I realised that maybe they were both scared as shit, and that me going back to Korea made them reflect, maybe for the first time, about me being Korean."

Byung believes that there needs to be a new approach to the adoption narrative starting from the moment a child arrives.

"I think there is this whole fairy tale that an airplane delivers a baby to the couple and they are going to be happy forever now. It is like that baby drops into the airport and life just starts there. But that's not true. Life has already happened. And a lot of people got hurt already. A lot of painful decisions have already been made."

She adds that adopters and adoptees also need to challenge the narrative that transnational adoption is about salvation.

"Growing up, I was often confronted by people who said, 'Aren't you happy that you got adopted



Mija Bjung.

We can go out as adults and tell our truths around our experiences as adopted people in this country and insist we be listened to.

MIJA BJUNG

into this country instead of growing up in Korea?' People had this whole idea that Korea was just a third world country and I had been saved. It's the weirdest question, because I had absolutely no say in the matter, so I will never ever say 'oh yes, I am so grateful that somebody saved me'."

A BETTER WORLD?

Lene Myong is an adoption scholar at the University of Aarhus and member of Tænketanken Adoption (Think Tank Adoption). Lately, her research has focused on representations of transnational adoption in Danish newspaper reporting.

"Transnational adoption was never implemented top-down or introduced by Danish governments. It was, first and foremost, promoted by adopter activists who wanted to create a better world but also to meet a growing need for adoptable children in Denmark."

According to Myong, 'rescue narratives' continue to inform dominant understandings of transnational adoption, but these narratives have also changed over the years.

"In newspaper reports of the 1960s, adoptions of Afro-German

children were often framed as an act that 'rescued' children from a racist post-Nazi society, but when the Danish adoption agencies turned their attention to countries in the Global South, the rescue narratives changed. Adoption was seen as an opportunity to rescue children from poverty, a life lived in institutions and without a loving family. This understanding of adoption is still prevalent today."

While adoptees such as Byung try and forge a new narrative about adoption, Myong says adoption critique and adoptee activism have a long history in Denmark, going back to at least the 1980s, when adoptees began to question the difficulty of accessing information about their history.

"In recent years, we have seen a growing political mobilization among transnational adoptees. The related questions of assimilation and racism have been central to this movement, as the majority of adoptees of colour have been raised in white families and in racial isolation from other minorities. Adoption has been seen as an act of anti-racism, but I think we need to consider adoption as the effect of racism"

ADVICE

Gullach wants transnational adoption to be restricted to follow the guidelines set by the UN's convention of the right of the child. This means that it should only be a possibility as an absolute last resort and that the child would always have a right to know their origin and maintain contact with their original culture. Consequently, she has one piece of advice for Danes considering it.

"My advice to couples that want to adopt transnationally is that they should never adopt from a country where they can't imagine getting married to one of the citizens, learning the language, could experience or imagine living in the country. If you can't imagine those three things, then don't adopt from this country. When you have chosen a country – learn the language, live there for a while – in short: educate yourself about what you are about to do."

Byung says her trip to South Korea was an emotional eye-opener that reaffirmed her need to open up more dialogue about transnational adoption and the impact it has on children who start new lives in Denmark. She would also like to see adopters encourage their children to be proud of their heritage.

"I remember thinking that I shouldn't ask too many questions about where I am from because I didn't want to hurt my parents' feelings. But fuck that. The parents are the grown-ups who chose to adopt a kid, and they should open all those conversations. It should not be taboo. Take pride in that baby's heritage, in their roots and their culture. It might make the kid not feel so alone if the adopted parents own their kid's culture too."

She adds that a new narrative about transnational adoption needs to start with adoptees opening up the conversation.

"That's how I see it. We can go out as adults and tell our truths around our experiences as adopted people in this country and insist we be listened to. Of course we should be listened to – we experienced it first hand. But the system isn't actually taking it seriously. We are still looked at as the adopted children – we are always someone's children. We need to break down the taboos. We're grown-ups now. We need to say stuff even if it hurts people." **M**

BRANDED CONTENT



Summer School

at Copenhagen International School



Want to learn English, French or Mandarin? What's a Rube Goldberg machine and how do you build one? Always wanted to try cheerleading? Brush up on your public speaking skills? Or find out how it is to attend an international school with friends from all over the world and do games you might never have tried before?

This summer, Copenhagen International School (CIS) once again opens its doors to interested children of all nationalities for our Summer School Program. This is the perfect opportunity for children to experience an international learning environment in the largest and oldest international school in Denmark. English language proficiency is not required.

ACTIVITIES AVAILABLE IN SUMMER 2016

The program will run for three weeks from Monday, June 20 through Friday, July 8, 2016. Children are welcome to join for one or more weeks as it fits with their current school's holiday start. We offer ½ day programs until 11:45 or full day programs until 15:00 depending on the class and mix of classes. The Summer Program for the younger students (Age 4 – 7) is only a full day program.

AGE 4 – 7

Through differentiated activities, the summer school program assures developmentally-appropriate practice to accommodate all learners. The program is an excellent opportunity for children to engage in exciting and fun learning activities to further stimulate their language and social skills. The early childhood summer program is based on the PYP curriculum and is open to all students aged 4-7. The daily schedule will include music, drama, physical movement, eurythmics, and art. The focus is to provide a wide range of language-building activities in a positive, play-based setting. Your child will enjoy exploring the many interesting learning experiences. Space is limited so please sign up quickly to secure a spot for your child.

AGE 8 – 12

Cheerleading, Chess, Art, Dance, Danish Immersion, Drama, EAL (English as an Additional Language), Basketball, Drum Troupe, Fun and Games, Introduction to French.

Each activity lasts for one week, and they are not building on each other for a continuum so children can join any week. There are morning and afternoon activities that can be combined for a full day. Some activities are full day for the students to enjoy getting completely engaged in the “universe” of Dance, Drama, Art, EAL, Danish immersion or French.

Children can bring their own lunch or enjoy healthy general or vegan packed lunches from our own cafeteria.

AGE 11 – 15

Cheerleading, Chess, Art, Danish Immersion, Drama, EAL (English as an Additional Language), Basketball Clinic, Drum Troupe, Introduction to France and French, Introduction to Mandarin, Manga and Street Art, Public Speaking, Radio Journalism, Rube Goldberg Machine, Science Club and Teen Camp etc.

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Visit the school's web site www.cis.dk and click on “Student Life” for all information regarding the Summer School.

If you have any questions, please contact us at summer@cis.dk



Istedgade, in Copenhagen's Vesterbro district, has a long history as the city's main red light district.

The spin on sex work

Migrant sex workers are overrepresented as victims of trafficking, says a legal aid lawyer. Meanwhile, associate professor Christian Groes-Green argues that we're trying to explain away prostitution to deal with our discomfort about global inequality

IT'S NO SECRET that Copenhagen's trendy Vesterbro neighbourhood doubles as a prominent red-light district. Take a late night saunter, and you're likely to encounter sex workers lingering on certain streets, occupying an increasingly shrinking beat around the quarter's eastern end. Most are women, and many are migrants to Denmark from African countries.

But unlike their openly displayed trade, we rarely hear these women's voices articulated in the public arena, leaving a blank canvas onto which different back-stories are projected. They're often assumed to be trafficking victims.

Lena Rutkowski

In March, a flurry of opinion pieces in the Danish media presented competing narratives about sex workers, with one opinion column contending that many of these women are actually strong and financially self-sufficient.

The debate on how to improve conditions for the sex workers is just as polarised. Last year, Amnesty International came out in support of the decriminalisation of prostitution, arguing that sex workers would be better protected. Opponents push for a variation on the 'Nordic Model', which criminalises the purchase, but not the sale, of sex. The policy has been adopted

to differing degrees across the Nordic countries, but not in Denmark, where both the sale and purchase of sex are legal.

These conflicting accounts reveal how little the city knows about the migrant sex workers occupying its streets or about how to best secure their rights and welfare.

COMPETING VISIONS

When Vesterbro resident Siddik Lausten looks out of his window at the exchanges between "white men and African women," he sees the exploitative legacy of colonialism at work.

"[The customer] stands like an

old colonial master who has the right to buy the poor, black woman and make her his slave for a little while," wrote Lausten in an op-ed for Politiken newspaper in March.

The commentary drew both criticism and praise from social workers in Vesterbro. One responder was Kira West, director of Reden International and Reden København, organisations that provide support to migrant sex workers. She penned a column thanking Lausten for drawing attention to the issue of the sex workers' welfare, before making a case for increased support for the women, in

particular for extra funding for trafficking victims.

In an interview in Politiken earlier in the month, West and another support organisation, Hope-Now, asserted that the increasing numbers of sex workers soliciting in the area was forcing women to lower their prices and standards, while also pushing them further into the city.

However, Laustsen was challenged in another op-ed penned by lawyer Maja Løvbjerg Hansen from Gadejuristerne (The Street Lawyers), an organisation that provides legal aid to sex workers.

“If Siddik Lausten moved away from the window and actually came down to talk to the women, he would get a different picture,” read the response to Politiken.

“African sex workers in Vesterbro are independent, strong and incredibly self-aware.”

TRAFFICKING MYTHS

It’s a perspective rarely mentioned in discussions about sex workers, particularly migrants. I called Løvbjerg Hansen to ask whether it’s true that an oversupply of sex for sale is adversely affecting the workers. She’s sceptical, because she says that some journalists have refused to quote her perspective – which is that the numbers aren’t increasing at all.

“The numbers fluctuate with

We feel like we need a reason for why women go into sex work, to justify it and say it’s not their fault.

MAJA LØVBJERG HANSEN

the seasons, and the media has been reporting that the price has been dropping since 2006. Every time there is a chance to say prices are down and numbers are up or that the women on the street are getting younger, you read about it,” says the lawyer, who says that resource allocation is a motivation for non-profits to skew the facts.

“It’s a race to the bottom to tell the most dramatic story for attention and money.”

Løvbjerg Hansen argues that local non-profits also overrepresent the number of women who are victims of human trafficking, seduced to Denmark under false pretences, and then forced into sex work by the pimps who exploit them. This is because support for trafficked victims secures more funding she says.

While the lawyer sympathises with non-profits’ struggle for funding, she believes these organisations have an obligation to represent the whole truth.

“I could easily tell you a story about women who have made shitloads of money, and paid off their debts within ten months. Of migrant women who have degrees and have opted to go into sex work because they cannot find other sustainable work here – because that happens too. But it wouldn’t be the whole picture.”

She says the myths take the focus away from the immediate chal-

lenges facing the sex workers.

“I am not saying these women’s lives are fabulous, or that this is the work that they would choose if they had a variety of options. But I wish that we could look at reality and accept the real horror in the issues facing these women in terms of legal status, worker’s rights, the threat of deportation if they’re caught up in random police sweeps, or their health. Isn’t there horror enough in that?”

EXPLAINING STIGMA AWAY

Christian Groes-Green, associate professor at the Department of Culture and Identity at Roskilde University, researches the migration of sex workers. He agrees that the conversation about sex workers is highly politicised – and that it can be about more than securing resources. He says that the stigma attached to sex work is so prevalent that it needs to be framed in terms of extreme victimhood to be made palatable to the public.

“We live in a welfare state, we are highly individualised, and we think about sex as a kind of holy act. So we have a hard time understanding why women would migrate to undertake sex work, other than as trafficked victims.”

Groes-Green also points out that politicians feel compelled to reduce the reality to easily digestible concepts with strong emotion-

al resonance. Meanwhile, the women themselves may have an interest in being identified as trafficked, as they are more likely to obtain asylum if they face deportation.

Løvbjerg Hansen agrees that conjuring up images of trafficked women is a strategy to wash away the stigma attached to sex work, garnering more public sympathy.

“Being a sex worker is the ultimate undignified status. As a society, we feel like we need a reason for why women go into sex work, to justify it and say it’s not their fault.”

REDEN: INCREASING NUMBERS

West, from Reden, agrees with Løvbjerg Hansen that the numbers of sex workers on the street can change on a seasonal basis. She has seen increasing numbers of women frequenting Natcaféen (The Night Café), a refuge space offered by Reden.

“We’re seeing up to 100 women in the night café since the new year. In the past, there were around 30 per night, which increased to 65 women in 2015.”

West draws on Reden’s 14-years-experience supporting migrant sex workers to point out that she has observed a general worsening of conditions in the trade.

“We have generally seen that there are too few customers relative to sex workers, which is why I suggested to Politiken that it



Rasmus Degenbol



would logically follow that women are forced to lower their prices, because at the end of the day, they must earn the money, for whatever reason.”

She also says that the organisation has seen migrant sex workers seeking out customers beyond Vesterbro’s borders, in neighbourhoods such as Frederiksberg, Sydhavn, Nørrebro and the city centre. “The police have been calling us to ask why this is happening.”

West points out that ‘trafficking’ is a broad spectrum. According to the director, the reality of migration from developing countries means that most sex workers are, to some degree, in debt to smugglers regardless of whether they freely elected to come to Europe.

“Many of them owe money to a pimp because they were transported, and therefore they feel threatened.”

However, West does concede that much of the media reportage of sex workers is sensationalised. She says that when she was last interviewed for a newspaper, she primarily focused on discussing long-term solutions to improve conditions for the women. Her points didn’t make the final edit.

We don’t want to have deeper conversations about migration caused by global inequality. It’s not a ‘sexy’ agenda.

CHRISTIAN
GROES-GREEN

“It is clearly not a very nuanced image. The issue gets sexed up, and journalists always want to take dramatic photos of red lights. We are tired of it, too. At the same time, it’s difficult for journalists to just go out and get a proper story from these women, as you need to first build up trust and rapport over a long period. It’s not that simple.”

West says that’s why it’s difficult to tap into the complexity of the sex workers’ situations.

“I agree that these women are strong. You have to be to live that kind of life. And when you meet them on the street, they seem pushy and brave. But when we meet them in the context of health clinics, and talk with them for months and years, we get a different picture of their vulnerabilities and the very real risks they face.”

A MIGRATION ISSUE

Groes-Green agrees that there are usually elements of structural coercion at play, irrespective of whether the women were officially trafficked. Factors such as poverty and family pressure can compel women – possibly forcefully – to migrate and ultimately end up in sex work.

He says that many women face the choice between harsh, physical

labour and entrenched poverty at home, or sex work abroad where they can quickly pay off their migration loans and begin to support family members.

However, the associate professor believes that these broader social implications are lost when the conversation simplifies sex workers as victims of trafficking. It’s easier, he says, to blame the pimps.

“We don’t want to have deeper conversations about migration caused by global inequality. It’s not a ‘sexy’ agenda.”

Furthermore, Groes-Green argues that as a society, we’re quick to connect migrant sex workers with exploitation, because gender stereotypes mean we assume migrant men relocate of their own free will, but we do not automatically ascribe the same degree of agency to migrant women.

“The panic around the exploitation of women migrating from poorer countries to Europe echoes the panic around women from Europe who migrated to Russia or the US in the early twentieth century,” he says.

“In both periods, we have failed to understand that these women don’t primarily migrate because they are forced by pimps, or the sex industry, but more often because

they are forced by circumstances and inequality.”

The associate professor also believes this reality is being obscured by binary debates about whether the women are victims, or strong and independent.

“These women’s lives are conceived of as a journey from idyllic rural lives to terrible exploitation in Denmark. By the same token, you can’t just see the women as powerful and individualistic, because they are subject to structural limitations and forces beyond their control.”

Løvbjerg Hansen is quick to say that she is not romanticising sex work. Lausten’s column, she argues, was problematic because it invoked these old assumptions about migrant women as weak and men as powerful, without factoring in the autonomy some sex workers have to make choices within their extremely limited circumstances.

“People have criticised me for calling these women strong. But what is the definition of ‘strong’, anyway? How can we judge it by our own privileged standards? These women are making the most of what little they can. That is strong.” **M**

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The sound of subtitles

Podcasts may be a global phenomenon, but British radio producer Eleanor McDowall thinks it's a pity that she can only listen to audio in English. So she began a project subtitling radio from around the world, especially Denmark

You can watch a subtitled film, read a translated book, or paste an article into Google Translate and receive some awkwardly phrased sentences in return. But unless you understand the language in which it was produced, there's really no point in listening to a podcast.

A form of 'radio on demand', podcasting has risen from fringe digital entertainment to global cultural phenomenon over the past decade. Podcast apps on our smartphones tap into the needs of an eternally busy generation, allowing us to download podcasts wherever we are and be entertained or informed on-the-go.

Podcasts are now almost as diverse as cinema or television, ranging from scrappy, amateur interviews recorded with a smartphone to highly stylised productions. But the podcasts that go viral – and the ones dominating the iTunes charts – all tend to be in the English language. US cult podcast Serial racked up 50 million downloads with its second season this year.

For radio producer Eleanor McDowall, who produces the award-nominated documentary series 'Short Cuts' for BBC Radio 4 in the UK, it means podcast culture is becoming a one-sided conversation.

TRANSPORTING LISTENERS

"We have a conversation about story-telling and radio that is so dominated by the English-speaking world," says McDowall when we meet in a cosy arthouse cinema in downtown Copenhagen. She's slightly flushed after presenting a talk in the theatre. Despite working in radio, the soft-spoken producer confesses to a "complete terror" of her own voice.

Last month, the Londoner visited Denmark for Københavns Radiobiograf Festival (Copenhagen Radiocinema Festival), which invited international radio producers to 'screen' their favourite audio samples at Copenhagen cinemas and discuss the future of radio and podcasts.

McDowall is fascinated with audio experimentation and pushing radio to its outer limits. Her lecture focused on audio's capacity to stimulate the body and invoke visceral reactions – such as cringing, crippling fear, or nausea. McDowall opened the event by switching off the cinema lights and broadcasting an audio clip about pleasuring yourself in public bathrooms – complete with sound effects. Suddenly, the audience was plunged into an oppressive darkness, collectively listening to the tell-tale sounds of someone masturbating. We shifted uncomfortably in our seats, unable to escape the awkwardness. When the lights came on, some were blushing. McDowall smiled, her point proven.

As a podcast connoisseur, however, the producer is also concerned with breaking through other kinds of boundaries – linguistic ones.

Last year, McDowall launched 'Radio Atlas', a one-woman project that subtitles audio from around the world into English. In her spare

time, the producer transforms radio documentaries, dramas, and sound art into miniature subtitled films. The only visuals are the subtitles, as McDowall doesn't want imagery to distract from the experience of listening.

Converting endless pages of transcripts into subtitles is a painstaking effort. One 30-minute audio piece can take McDowall twelve hours to subtitle, which is why Radio Atlas' website offers only a handful of curated audio clips.

"It's certainly a labour of love," says McDowall. But she's committed to seeing the podcast scene become more accessible and democratic. Otherwise, she says, we'll never know what we're missing out on.

DANISH TO ENGLISH

Of the seven podcast episodes available on Radio Atlas, five hail from the Nordic region, and three are in Danish. McDowall says the project was partly inspired by a prior visit to Copenhagen for a documentary festival that left her dying to dive into the radio documentary scene and frustrated with the language barriers that prevented her.

When it comes to audio content, Denmark is certainly making interesting strides. There's Third Ear, a multi-layered audio magazine which McDowall says she's long ached to access, and which currently offers only one English-language episode.

Danes loved the podcast Album so much they crowd-funded a third season to hear the hosts spend episode after episode dissecting individual records in the vein of a drunken pub argument.

McDowall also swears by Danish radio producer Rikke Houd, whose documentary *Leaps and Dunes* evokes the experience of teetering on the cusp of adulthood, and appears subtitled on Radio Atlas.

The problem is that only Danish speakers can enjoy the country's unique audio landscape.

"The Danish stuff I have heard, I have loved, and I wish I could recommend it to people back home in the UK to show how exciting and interesting it is," says the producer.

UNCHALLENGED EARS

Far from just missing out, however, McDowall believes that saturation of English-language content could cause the podcasting genre to stagnate.

"You're constructing this slightly surreal audio space, which strips visual prejudices away – it's a wonderful way to tap into someone's head without prejudice. But because UK, Australian and North American content is penetrating the podcast charts, nothing is coming back to challenge our production assumptions and pushing us to experiment," she says.

She points out that the iconic US radio programme This American Life, which broadcasts on public radio and produced the smash-hit Serial, is now so ubiquitous that radio producers fail to look further afield for inspiration.

"I personally love This American Life, but newer podcasts are often ripping off its story-telling style – minus its journalistic element or

It would be a nightmare if everyone thought that the only way to do a podcast would be to do it in English.

public service mandate. They just take some interviews and overlay it with some music, and suddenly that's a podcast. We don't get the sense that there are other ways to tell audio stories, for example by using non-linear narratives."

Much like international musicians who sing in English in order to access more listeners, McDowall fears that radio producers will feel forced to take the same approach with their podcasts, and other documentary traditions will be lost.

"It would be a nightmare if everyone thought that the only way to do a podcast would be to do it in English. Producers might start ruling out contributors and stories if interview subjects don't speak English."

PERFECT TIMING

McDowall's method of subtitling almost feels like an art form unto itself. She takes great pains to ensure that the words appearing on the screen match the speaker's delivery.

"You're never going to replicate the experience of understanding an Icelandic radio documentary without speaking Icelandic. But the subtitles can convey the tone and delivery of the words in that language – by pausing when there's a pregnant pause in the audio, for example. Or making sure the subtitles never ruin the punchline of a joke."

In McDowall's subtitled audio-films, fragmented sentences seem to dance across the screen to the beat of the spoken language. One radio documentary explores memory and nostalgia, so McDowall chose to have the words fade in and out slowly, to match the transition of the speaker into different emotional spaces. In contrast, functional dialogue hits the screen fast.

"The experience of watching it should mirror the experience of listening. That way, the listener can get a feel for the musicality and poetry of the language, and how long it takes to express ideas in that tongue."

But armed with only her transcript in hand and going by audio cues, McDowall says the process of guessing what word should go where, and when, can sometimes be a stab in the dark.

"Making the Icelandic podcast was a nightmare because Icelandic words are much longer than English ones. I kept inserting sentences and then saying, 'hang on, that can't be right...?'"

I ask whether the experience has transformed her into a polyglot. McDowall laughs.

"I have a terrible ear for learning to speak languages! But immediately after I finish something, I do feel a bit like I can speak it afterward, I definitely felt like I almost spoke Finnish once. But now the only word I remember is the Finnish word for 'black' because they kept describing a black road."

When I ask about the future of the project, McDowall jokes that Radio Atlas will soon be staffed by 100 people. But for the moment, the handful of clips she can produce in her spare time is one of the only ways listeners can access international radio content.

McDowall says the onus is on major companies such as Apple or soundcloud to create the necessary tools to produce subtitled audio en masse.

"We need to demand this as consumers. It astounds me that we don't care more that we're not hearing the majority of audio being made in the world." **M**

Lena Rutkowski

OP-ED

Why it's not that funny when you make 'squinty eyes' and say, "Ching, chong, chang"

I live in a fantastic dorm with some kind, intelligent and curious people. Yet, at a recent dinner conversation, I found myself having to explain why it is not okay to use the 'N' word or to refer to gay men as "fags". But describing where the line lies, between humour and hate, is not easy

DURING MY second year of university in the US, a South Korean student posted a campaign poster for a position on the student union. Her slogan was "Small person. Big ideas". Another Asian student, encouraged by his friends, posted a campaign that mimicked the first. His slogan was, "Squinty eyes. Big vision."

The campus descended into chaos. The university disciplined the second student, who argued he had a right to free speech. Others criticised his satirical campaign, claiming that it perpetuated negative stereotypes. As an Asian American, I was inundated with e-mails that offered free therapy sessions should I wish to discuss my sentiments towards the whole ordeal.

I thought the offer of therapy was overkill, but typical of the type of 'political correctness' found on American colleges. After four years, I was sick of it. So when I moved to Denmark, I was delighted to find a dark humour that aligned with the sarcasm I grew up with. I love the uninhibited manner with which Danes tell jokes. Nothing is off limits – everything can be laughed at.

BURQAS AND SWASTIKAS

One of the first parties that I was invited to in Denmark was hosted by the Asian Studies department at the University of Copenhagen, titled "the Yellow Fever Party". The description began with, "herro errerybody..." A little taken aback, I still found it funny. I had worked hard to shed the affectation of political correctness I had adopted at my American university.

How could I explain that it's okay for me to make an Asian joke, but not okay for my friends to make the same joke just five minutes later?

Natasha Jessen-Petersen

My open-mindedness was, however, recently shattered when the jokes went too far. At an event at my dorm, residents were asked to read from the Qur'an and crawl on the ground, searching for the suicide bomber – all part of a drinking game. Participants were dressed in haphazard, burqa-resembling costumes.

This theme was just one in a string of provocative parties that I had either experienced, witnessed or heard about. There was the confederate flag hanging in my neighbouring kitchen, the Donald Trump theme that challenged "Mexicans" to climb an obstacle course representing the border, and an Auschwitz theme with a swastika painted on the host's forehead. It was all a little too much.

RESPECT

Over dinner one night with my housemates, I struggled to articulate why I was uncomfortable with my housemates dressing in blackface for an upcoming party. Another housemate, who is black and on exchange from Canada, explained that she felt offended by the action. My Danish friends just did not get it.

My housemates pushed for explanations. "Why isn't it okay for me to say n***** when rappers say it all the time in songs?" or "but where do you draw the line?" and "why can't I have an Auschwitz party, everyone thought that the swastika on my forehead was funny and it's not like I was involved?"

My answers ranged from easy to extremely difficult to articulate: "That's a word with deep

roots that go back to a time during which black Americans were slaves and the word itself was a tool for the oppression of a minority community," "I don't know," and "Just no".

How could I explain that it's okay for me to make an Asian joke, but not okay for my friends to make the same joke just five minutes later? I recognise the hypocrisy, but do not know how to eloquently explain it. I'm reclaiming and owning my identity... you're just mocking it?

I argued that it was about it respect. Most black people do not want to be called negros, and most gays would not wish to be referred to as fags. I have yet to meet an Asian who likes to be labelled a chink. So out of respect, people who wish to treat those aforementioned groups kindly, should refrain from using those words.

One of my housemate still criticised this response as a censorship of free speech. I tried to contextualise the issue and asked how he would feel if he were to attend a cancer-themed party had someone close to him been diagnosed. He was initially hesitant, but ultimately said that you should be able to laugh at anything.

I take no issue with him and his friends holding a cancer-themed party in the privacy of their home. But I don't think it's a suitable theme for a party that is supposed to bring students together. My mother is a survivor and I cannot laugh at that. Attending parties that evoke a traumatic experience or remind of oppression are simply put, personally not that fun.

The question I think my friends

should ask is whether these parties express the inclusion I know they believe in. Denmark is no longer homogenously white and Christian. People of colour, like me, aren't an exotic 'other' any more. We belong to the community too. As a minority it only adds to the alienation when your entire almost-exclusively white dorm colours their skin yellow and greet each other with "ching, chong, chang."

SHIFTING NORMS

Denmark's awareness is clearly increasing. For example, we no longer call a fødebolle a negerbolle (negro bun) or a negerkys (negro kiss), because we realised that it ostracised an already marginalised group.

Context and intention are important tools for determining the difference between humour and hate. My roommates don't hate cancer victims, Muslims or Mexicans. I don't want to ban black humour or humorous cultural stereotyping. We all do it. It can be really funny. But we shouldn't ever tolerate truly hateful speech, so where do we draw the line?

I am still trying to identify the line between political correctness and open-minded humour. Often I wonder if the two exist dichotomously, or if it is possible to transcend the two spheres and to possess a dark sense of humour that does not offend anyone.

To be honest, I don't have the answer. All I do know is that Justin Bieber's current dreadlocks are not flattering, regardless of whether it's cultural appropriation or not. **M**

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8

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13

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Hammelstrupsvej 41, KBH
kmm.dk
Ends May 16

14

COPENHAGEN CARNIVAL
With over 120 bands and 2000 dancers, the carnival is an explosion of colour and movement, guaranteeing a good time for all.

Fælledparken, KBH
karneval-kbh.dk
Ends May 15

16

NØRREBRO RUN
A 5K run through the streets of Nørrebro, the run helps to support young minority males.

Blågård's Plads, KBH
norrebrolobet.dk



BRYGGE HYGGE
Come welcome summer on the Island Brygge boardwalk. Bring a drink, dance to a sunshine playlist and celebrate the hopefully imminent warm days.

Islands Brygge, KBH
bit.ly/bryggehygge
May 20

EVENT OF THE MONTH



Matthias Vejerstedt

20

CLICK FESTIVAL
The sixth annual CLICK Festival presents the best of future art, science and technology through exhibitions, workshops, talks, and concerts.

Kulturværftet
Allegade 2, Helsingør
clickfestival.dk
Ends May 22



AALBORG CARNIVAL
The largest carnival in Northern Europe, Aalborg Carnival often hosts up to 60,000 participants and over 100,000 spectators.

Vesterbro 2, Aalborg
aalborgkarneval.dk
May 20-28

Natasha Jessen-Petersen

21

RESTAURANT DAY
Restaurant Day is a one-day celebration of free-spirited food culture in Denmark. Anyone can open a pop up restaurant, café or bar just for the day – quirkiness encouraged.

Venues across copenhagen
restaurantday.org

WHAT'S ON • JUNE

1

DISTORTION

Party in the streets of Copenhagen over a five-day long celebration. With over 150 dance floors, Distortion hosts festivities in Nørrebro, Vesterbro, and Refshaleøen.

Copenhagen
cphdistortion.dk
 Ends June 5



WILEY & SLIMZEE

Pumpehuset hosts performances by two of the artists who helped to pioneer the grime genre. Wiley and Slimzee promise an unforgettable show.

Pumpehuset
 Studiestræde 52, KBH
pumpehuset.dk
 June 2

4

MISS DRAGHOUSE

A competition between seven drag queens in three different categories, Miss Draghouse is a fabulous and fun showdown between Denmark's top queens.

Vega
 Enghavevej 40, KBH
vega.dk



LUKAS GRAHAM

After taking the world by storm with their number one single, 7 years, Lukas Graham, are returning to their roots with their first ever stadium concert.

Østerbro Stadium
 Gunnar Nu Hansens Plads 7
billetlugen.dk
 June 4

LETSGO

– CARSHARING IN COPENHAGEN

LetsGo is a flexible and easy way to have access to a car when you live in the city, and much cheaper than having your own car in Denmark.

- LetsGo have 180 new cars in Copenhagen, Odense and Aarhus.
- Our low rates includes gasoline, insurance, tax, parking, maintenance and a 24/7 service hotline.
- The cars are parked at signed parking spaces all around the city.
- We have five different types of cars to meet your demand, from micro to sedans, vans and EVs.
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Register before May 31st and get the first month membership for free.

WELCOME



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sprogcenterhellerup.dk