

THE MURMUR

COPENHAGEN
EDITION

A wealthy suburb is divided over its new refugee neighbours

What does Aarhus offer as a European Capital of Culture?

Cooperative businesses show an alternative to soulless corporatism

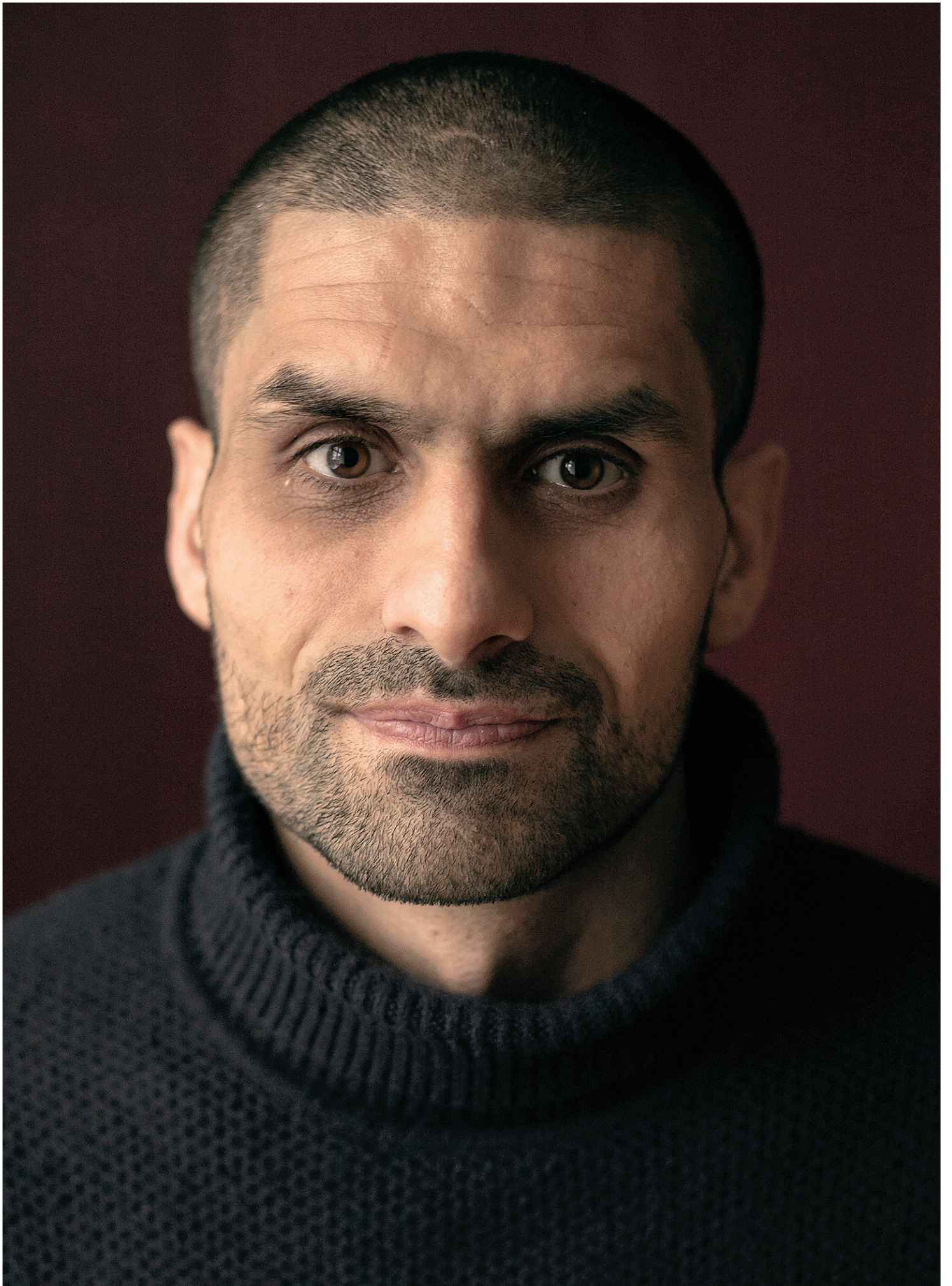
NEWS

CULTURE

POLITICS

COMMENTARY

FEBRUARY 2017 VOL. 4 ISSUE 2



The reluctant war reporter

He's been assaulted and kidnapped, but Nagieb Khaja is committed to covering conflict

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



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AS I SAT DOWN to write this, news rolled in of Trump's ban on refugees and migrants from seven mainly Muslim countries. I'm reading about Iranian scientists barred from returning to work

in their labs and Yazidi refugees from Iraq who can no longer look forward to the new lives that was promised to them. I'm thinking about friends who were born in these countries and who can no longer visit their families.

And for what? How does the policy protect American lives? Ryan Gallagher, a journalist from the Intercept, summed it up nicely on Twitter: "Since 9/11 fewer than 100 people in US killed in jihadist attacks. In the last 3 years alone 41,086 in US died from gun violence".

It's terrifying and sad to watch a mighty country be lead to precipice. And I can't help but wonder whether this is what's in store for Europe? I'm scared. Twelve months ago I didn't think the UK would vote to remain in the EU, or that Donald Trump would win the Republican nomination. But their isolationist messages won, and is winning ground across Europe.

But why? What I see in common with the supporters of both Brexit and Trump is the belief that the UK and US can remain respected, wealthy and influential countries even after they withdraw from international commitments. Brexit campaigners talk about creating 'Global Britain' that major economies will clamour to forge trade partnerships with. Trump seems to believe that erecting trade barriers with Mexico and China will usher in a renaissance of American manufacturing.

But in both cases the countries want to eat their cake and keep it too. They want everything that global trade offers, but to be isolated from the burdens of the problems the world faces. They want to cherry-pick from the international commitments that create a stable world order, while also wielding influence over the direction the global community takes.

The cost of independence is solidarity. UK PM Theresa May cannot condemn the US on the bigoted travel ban – "I do not agree" is all she could muster – she needs a trade deal when the UK leaves the EU. Brexit campaigners promised to invest 3.5 billion kroner into the UK's public health service when it left the EU. But now privatisation beckons after she suggested opening it up to US investors.

The cost of stability and prosperity, on the other hand, is compromise. It requires accepting small risks for a much larger payoff. But the problem is that humans are risk averse. We prefer to avoid losses, than acquire a gain.

It's why some political parties are so opposed to giving up sovereignty to the EU, even when it ensures prosperity, peace and influence. The Danish People's Party, the Red-Green Alliance, and New Conservatives all dream of a more sovereign Denmark, and support a referendum on leaving the EU.

But once they get their sovereignty, then what? MP Pernille Skipper from Enhedslisten dislikes the EU's rules on public spending, and believes that outside the EU it would be possible to create a broad left wing alliance with a greater focus on public investment.

But MP Holger K. Nielsen from the Socialist People's Party rightly points out this would make Denmark incredibly vulnerable.

"The multinational companies and finance will still exist. They will simply be operating in a Europe where all politics is returned to the nation states. It will most likely result in a free trade zone but without the EU's political structure. This is the right wing's wet dream," he wrote in Information.

There are forces promoting isolationism and nativism around the world, and I'm really not sure how to fight it. Watching the news, I feel rather helpless – I'm sure it's a feeling many people are having.

I know the world is a better place when we compromise and work together, and I know many others agree. I see them protesting outside US airports and marching for minority rights around the world. There is a resistance brewing. I just hope that we realise what we stand to lose in Europe, before it's too late. **M**

In the moments where things are happening – these terrible things I've experienced – I'm convinced it wasn't worth it. A story is not worth your life.

NAGIEB KHAJA, P22



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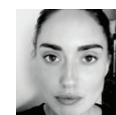
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English: *Cock-a-doodle-doo*

Spanish: *Kikiriki*

French: *Cocorico*

Korean: *Ko-ki-oh*

Japanese: *Kok-e-kok-ko*

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SPROG

MONTH IN REVIEW

Rufus goes home
Reality TV star and now former US ambassador to Denmark Rufus Gifford has left his post ahead of time, after President Trump recalled all politically-appointed ambassadors. Gifford first arrived in Denmark in 2013.

Women marched
Around 5,000 people attended the Copenhagen Women's March the day after Donald Trump became US President. Similar marches took place around the world, with up to 500,000 people marching in Washington DC alone.



Get license, lose license
An 18-year-old woman from Herning kept her driver's license for less than a day. Hours after passing the test, police caught her with a blood alcohol level of 0.15%, substantially above the 0.05% limit.

NO CONSENT
Young women are seeking help to have explicit images of themselves deleted from the internet, after they were shared without their consent. Around 330 girls under the age of 18 made contact with Save the Children after it launched the campaign 'SletDet' (delete it) in May.
The organisation provides guidance for reporting illegally shared images, as well as support for the victims. According to a 2016 survey, 16 percent of people aged 16-25 have had their explicit photos shared without their consent.

Gabriele Dellisanti

Copenhagen is the world's best city for attracting foreign talent
The Danish capital is the world's best city for attracting foreign talent, ahead of Zurich, Helsinki, San Francisco and Gothenburg. This is the result of the latest index created by business school Insead, which measures the ways countries and cities attract, maintain and grow talent from abroad. As a country, Denmark took the 8th place, dropping three spots compared to last year's ranking. It remains the country in the world with the most satisfied employees. Copenhagen was also selected as the world's most liveable and bike-friendly city.



Wonderful Copenhagen

YOUTH CRIME IS PLUMMETING
Youth crime has dropped by 41 percent since 2005 according to a report from the Danish Criminal Prevention Council. In 2010, 3.2 percent of 14 and 15 year olds had committed a severe criminal act over the previous 12 months. By 2016, this was only true for 1.9 percent of the same age group.
According to the report, a number of factors are responsible including less time spent outdoors, and much more time spent on the internet. Crime is also harder to commit now with widespread video surveillance and the decreasing use of cash.



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High levels of cancer

Denmark has one of the highest cancer rates and lowest survival rates in Western Europe. One in three Danes will be diagnosed with some form of cancer in their lives, and only 60 percent survive five years after the diagnosis.



Nationalbanken

Danes are richer than ever

Steadily increasing wages and negative interests have boosted Danish household finances to record levels according to Nykredit – with over 800 billion kroner in savings, Danish households have never been wealthier.

Tore Stramer, chief economist at Nykredit, says high employment levels and a thriving housing market have contributed to the

healthy private finances.

"We are seeing such tailwinds to the household sector that Danes can both increase consumption, bring down debt and increase their wealth," he told Bloomberg.

832,000 Danes now use investment funds to manage their wealth, an annual increase of 42,000 people.

Tap water is fine

Aqua D'or has withdrawn a promotional campaign to supply bottled water to schools after a petition against the campaign received 15,000 signatures in just one week and made its way to Parliament for debate. The company argued that the goal was not to compete with tap water, but ultimately chose to discontinue the programme following sustained public pressure.



Steven Depolo / flickr

NEW WIND TURBINE TEST SITES

Wind energy research will get a boost if the government follows through with a proposal to expand the Østerild (right) and Høvsøre wind turbine test sites. There are currently twelve test sites, and the hope is that by adding five more it will encourage more growth and investment to help Denmark maintain its global leadership in wind energy. The new sites will test 330-meter-tall wind turbines, as well as new, more advanced technologies. The Wind energy industry employs about 31,000 people and has an annual turnover of approximately 108 billion kroner.



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CITY

New Maersk Tower opens

A new building looms over Nørrebro – the 75-metre Maersk Tower, belonging to the University of Copenhagen. In January the copper-clad skyscraper was finally opened to the university's researchers, who can now make use of its ultramodern laboratory facilities.

"The opening of Maersk Tower marks a milestone for health science research at the University of Copenhagen," said Dean Ulla Wewer from the Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences at the University of Copenhagen.

"The new tower gives our researchers the opportunity to create new knowledge using highly specialised laboratory facilities, and our students can enjoy ultramodern auditoriums and recreation areas. Maersk Tower creates the best conditions for research and education at the highest international standard, and will play a key role in health in Denmark in future."

Designed by C.F. Møller, the building is an addition to Copenhagen Science City, which is a partnership between the university, public authorities and the private sector. Together it comprises one of Europe's highest concentrations of education and research in the fields of medicine, health and natural sciences.

The architects wanted to foster a culture of collaboration and interdisciplinary dialogue. On each floor there is a social space called a 'researcher square', which is hoped to encourage the tower's residents to socialise and exchange ideas.

"Maersk Tower's open connections between floors break with traditional laboratory layouts – typically limited to horizontal plan solutions – making it ready to cater for the way research is organised in the future," says Mads Mandrup Hansen, partner and architect at C.F. Møller.

"The primary focus has been to create a boundary-less, flexible and stimulating research community, spanning institutions, departments and external cooperation partners. At the same time, the exterior architectural design seeks to create a sustainable landmark which inter-



The Maersk Tower will be home to researchers from the University of Copenhagen.

acts with the city and university in a new and open way."

Nightlife mayor

At night, Copenhagen city centre can feel like a warzone. A high concentration of bars and clubs draws revelers from across the capital region, resulting in noise, fights and altercations with the police.

Residents are tired of being kept up at night and waking up to find their front doors covered in urine, and have long complained to the city authorities that action needs to be taken to rein in the city's nightlife.

Copenhagen's mayor for culture and leisure, Carl Christian Ebbesen, has responded by freezing the number of alcohol licences in certain areas of the city. According to Politiken, he has also asked police to step up their patrols, and increased the number of environmental monitors who can give warnings to bars and clubs that play music while their doors are open.

Now the Social Liberal Party

(Radikale) has proposed that the city create a nightlife mayor to specifically address these issues.

"When problems arise in our nightlife, the issues are shuffled between different authorities without anyone addressing them – it is very frustrating," Radikale city council member Michael Gatten told DR.

"The nightlife mayor will be the spokesperson for all the creative communities in the city that are responsible for making the city buzz," he said, adding that similar initiatives appear to have improved the relationship between establishments and residents in cities such as London and Amsterdam.

Tivoli to introduce new Orangery this Summer

When Tivoli opens for its summer season in April, it will showcase a brand new building called the Orangery. Located between the Chinese Tower and the Nimb Terrace, it will include a new stage for small performances,

Tivoli's own florist, a botanical garden with delicate plants and trees and a multi-function room available for events and as a TV studio.

It's also a greenhouse, with simple exotic plants growing in a climate that mimics the Mediterranean. Outside, guests can hang out in green areas, or sit and listen to performances on the stage.

Jesper Andersen, the architect of the Orangery said he was inspired both by Orangeries around the world, but also the Palm House in Copenhagen's Botanic Gardens.

"The Orangery in Tivoli will be a special treat for all the senses. It's going to exude tradition and innovation, which we know our customers care about."

The current TV studio, which was built in front of the Concert Hall in 2006, will be demolished and replaced with a new one as part of the new project. The new Orangery will cost Tivoli a total of 20 million kroner, and cover 370 square meters over two floors. **M**

Gabriele Dellisanti

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The SKUM sculpture by BIG, pictured here at Roskilde Festival, will be part of THE GARDEN at ARoS.

Time for the City of Smiles to shine

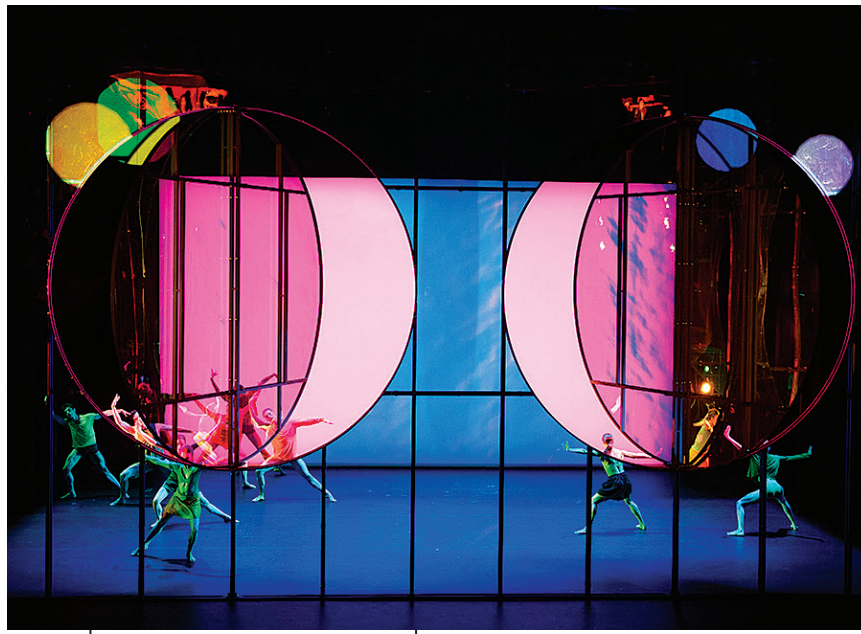
As Aarhus starts its year as European Capital of Culture, we take a look at what Denmark's second city has to offer – from Mega Events to food festivals

When considering the cultural, architectural and gastronomic experiences that Denmark has to offer, it can be all too easy to focus solely on Copenhagen. But that is about to change as Aarhus assumes the role of European Capital of Culture, in 2017 – a title it will hold in parallel with its position as European Region of Gastronomy.

For city-breakers, festival-goers, foodies and culture-junkies, this year is undoubtedly the time to make the trip. Not only for the galleries, restaurants and design that Denmark's second largest city already offers, but also for the range of one-off events taking place throughout the year: exhibitions, performances, lectures and festivals that will enrich this already vibrant cultural centre.

MEGA EVENTS

Currently listed as Lonely Planet's second best city in Europe to visit, Aarhus has come a long way since it was founded as a Viking fishing village in 900 AD. Home to ground-breaking Scandinavi-



The Tree of Codes is a collaboration between Jamie XX (score), Olafur Eliasson (visual design), and Wayne McGregor (choreography) and is based on a novel by Jonathan Safran Foer. Watch it at Musikhuset Aarhus, April 27-29.

an food, design and art innovation, a recently-completed waterfront regeneration means Aarhus is now home to both Scandinavia's largest library, Dokk1, as well as the angular apartment complex the Iceberg, which was voted 2015 Building of the Year for Housing. 2015 was also the year that the Michelin Guide finally looked beyond Copenhagen, awarding eponymous stars to three restaurants in the city.

Aarhus – known as the City of Smiles – is home to two of Denmark's most exciting museums: ARoS Kunstmuseum and Moesgaard Museum. The former is, in itself, an exquisite piece of art with an interior inspired by Dante's *Divine Comedy* and crowned by a rainbow walkway designed by the Danish-Icelandic conceptual artist Olafur Eliasson. ARoS is currently exhibiting work by J. F. Willumson, but will become central venue for the European Capital of Culture and host one of four Mega Events, THE GARDEN, from April to September.

The Moesgaard Museum is just as architecturally impressive, resembling an imposing wedge emerging from the landscape. Its star attraction has been the 2000-year old Grauballe Man, a preserved body found almost wholly intact in a nearby bog in 1952 and the subject of one of Irish poet Seamus Heaney's 'bog poems'. The museum also boasts extensive woodland walkways and in early summer will host another of the Mega Events, the *Røde Orm* (Red Worm), a magnificent Viking saga performed on the museum's roof and adapted from the classic novel by Frans G. Bengtsson.

TIME TO RETHINK

The European Capital of Culture title is meant to have a lasting impact. The project was initiated in 1985 in order to focus on the cultural life of one or two European cities – Aarhus shares the title with Pafos, in Cyprus, this year – and use this to strengthen community spirit and inspire development and rejuvenation. It is also supposed to emphasise the diversity of wider European culture through the universal medium of creativity.

The central theme of this year for Aarhus is 'Rethink', with the desire to show how cultural movements can reshape social behaviour and inspire new ideas. Events kicked off on January 21 with a light procession, when over 5000



River Art 2017 brings together beautiful light sculptures on and around the River Remstrup to create an exciting experience for people of all ages.



Watermusic sees Oh Land and 600 people participating in a magic universe framing a tale of love between land and water. Catch it on September 2 and 3.

Emily Tait

participants carried illuminated ships and lanterns through central Aarhus. Getting art out onto the street and to the people is a running theme, with events such as Little Rebellions in August and September when stairways, parks, basements, alleys and byways will become the setting for performances and art happenings.

There are also large-scale art collaborations taking place as seven participating museums based around Aarhus jointly host an exhibition titled *Seven Deadly Sins*. Each museum will exhibit work relating to a particular sin. For example, the Museet for Religiøs Kunst, Lemvig, will exhibit a site-specific installation by Barbara Kruger exploring gluttony as consumerism.

STRENGTHENING THE COMMUNITY

There are also cross-media collaborations, as the work of Oscar-winning director Susanne Bier will be transformed from screen to stage. Each film in her renowned trilogy – *Brothers*, *Open Hearts* and *After the Wedding* – will be reinterpreted as an opera, a dance performance and a musical and will be performed from August to November at Musikhuset.

Aarhus is already known for its festivals: with food, Viking, and music festivals, such as Spot and Northside, taking place annually. This year however, the food festival is being super-sized to celebrate Aarhus' status as European Region of Gastronomy. The festival will now include *The People's Feast*, potentially the biggest dinner party in Danish history with long tables catered for by various local and international chefs, a hot-dog championship and, in early July, a few days devoted solely to the local langoustines from the island of Anholt.

There is plenty for children too. In collaboration with Hay Festival, Aarhus will be hosting Hay's first children's literature festival in late October, bringing together 39 young writers at Dokk1.

While the Mega Events will draw the crowds, it's the smaller celebrations such as these – of good food, good books and social gatherings – that will have a lasting impact, soldering a sense of community as well as making Aarhus an enduring tourist hub. **M**

For more information, visit:

AARHUS2017.DK

GET STUCK IN

THE LAB THAT STIMULATES CURIOSITY SO WE CAN BETTER UNDERSTAND FOOD



Roberto Flore, head of culinary research and development at the Nordic Food Lab.

SOY SAUCE made with grasshoppers, "chocolate" produced using fermented peas, and an award-winning gin made using ants – these are some of the innovative foods created by The Nordic Food Lab.

A non-profit organisation based at the University of Copenhagen, and established in 2008 to investigate "food diversity and delicious-

ness", the lab combines "scientific and humanistic approaches with culinary techniques from around the world to explore the edible potential of the Nordic region".

James Clasper met Roberto Flore, head of culinary research and development, to talk about the interaction of science and gastronomy, biodiversity and the future of food.

WHAT IS THE NORDIC FOOD LAB?

The lab was founded in 2008 by (Noma co-founders) Rene Redzepi and Claus Meyer. They created it to explore the food potential that Scandinavia has. Until November 2014 the lab was based on a boat, in front of Noma. It started with one chef. Right now we have six full-time employ-

We have several areas of interest. One is in Indonesia, where we're trying to promote *tempeh* as an engine for promoting biodiversity.

ees and around 12 to 15 interns every year, as well as students from the university. But we've kept our heritage. We're still an open source organisation. We share everything we develop in the lab, even the scientific articles we produce.

WHY?

Because it's important to guarantee the circulation of information. Our main goal is to create food diversity and taste diversity, and to understand which ingredients are available mainly in Scandinavia, but we're also opening this region to other parts of the world. And it's important to be able to think about whether it's possible to change our diet, starting by changing our attitude to how we interact with the food we eat.

WHAT'S THE BEST EXAMPLE OF FOOD THE LAB HAS EXPLORED?

The one that people probably talk about most is our work with insects. That's probably the one that has attracted the most attention in terms of the press. Especially because people think insects are really exotic, yet we can find edible insects even in Scandinavia.

WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON NOW?

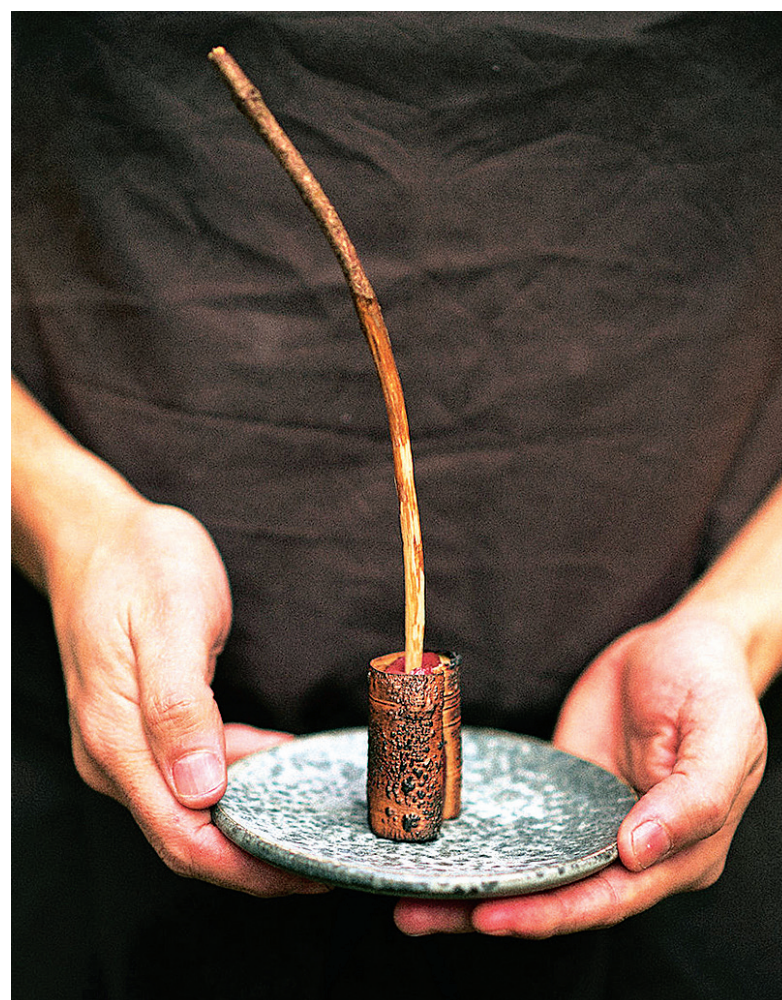
We're working on a project related to fermentation and *tempeh*, Indonesian cake made with fermented soybeans. We have several areas of interest. One is in Indonesia, where we're trying to promote *tempeh* as an engine for promoting biodiversity. In Indonesia there's a huge problem with soy importation, because 70 percent of the soy that's used for producing tofu and *tempeh* is imported, so there's a huge loss of biodiversity. We're trying to work on gastronomic innovation and apply it to local varieties of bean, to see if people perceive extra value in their local variety. So we're hoping to im-

Words:
James Clasper

Photos:
Brian Finke



Inspired by a Sardinian technique, Roberto Flore fills a lamb stomach with blood, freshly delivered from the Faroe Islands.



The Nordic Food Lab is working with hunters in Denmark to generate a more conscious way of interact with our natural food resources. This dish of birch and venison is among those that explores the gastronomic potential in using every single part of the animal.

prove local production and stimulate different local markets using gastronomic innovation.

In Europe, we're using traditional *tempeh* fermentation with local varieties to promote the use of beans in a different way, to embrace people who aren't interested in that ingredient, and to create a large range of flavour in our region. In other words, we're trying to use gastronomic heritage from abroad and create a new heritage here, to create something that's totally new.

To do that, we've started working with a specific bean from Sweden, a brown bean that's one of the oldest varieties in Europe, and we're also working with varieties of peas and grains. We've made a fermented bean cake using those varieties. It has this umami sweetness and is rich like liquorice, but it's not liquorice. It's interesting because even if the flavour isn't familiar to us, it's 100

percent local, made with local produce. So we can try to create a huge library of flavour using and recognising other people's culture as an instrument to create knowledge.

HOW DOES THE LAB TAKE INSPIRATION FROM THE HUMANITIES, ARTS AND SCIENCES?

The lab's an interdisciplinary place, which allows people with different backgrounds to work together and collaborate. This space is open to everybody. We have interactions with artists and philosophers – there's no rule about who could be interested. When food is central, is core, there's always a way of connecting people.

For example, one of the artists we hosted was interested in creating art using food waste. We also worked on a project about rancidity and how people like or dislike rancid tastes. At that point a philosopher could work

on the idea of acceptability of rancid flavours related to where people live, then the anthropological angle of how taste is developed in societies, and finally the scientific: let's make a rancid product and try to control the rancidity, to make a taste we can control. Many rancid products exist around the world, like *rast* – lamb hung without preservatives – in the Faroe Islands, rancid butter in Morocco and yak butter in Tibet. So we can try to understand how and when a product becomes rancid, and where's the boundary between people liking it and the product going off.

FINALLY, WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF FOOD?

I'm not a fan of talking about the food of the future. I just think there's no future unless we acknowledge what comes before. We have a pretty strong knowledge from the past,

and there are many things we should learn from if we want to create better food for the future. Here we are stimulating curiosity and trying to bring arguments and give people tools to understand food from different perspectives. I don't think I can say that what we're doing is the food of the future. I don't know if this is going to be a product that people will eat. But for sure we're giving our reasons as to why it could be interesting to make *tempeh* in Scandinavia, for example. And if a product like this can add value to local varieties of bean in the middle of Sweden and give more value to a local product and a reason why a producer should still grow these whole varieties, then that's a really good goal, because we're not just preserving a technique, we're also preserving a different product. We're basically promoting biodiversity, which is probably the basis of life. **M**

POLITICS

SOMALIS LOSE REFUGEE STATUS

Small improvements to security in Somalia mean some refugees can be repatriated, argues the government. But the UN refugee agency warns that Somalia remains dangerous and with limited access to basic necessities

THE SECURITY SITUATION in Somalia is "serious and fragile" admits the Immigration Service after months of sustained attacks on the capital Mogadishu by Islamic militants.

But despite the insecurity in their homeland, 800 Somali refugees risk being repatriated after government reopened their cases in the autumn. The Immigration Service argues that conditions in and around the capital Mogadishu have improved to such a degree that it would not violate their human rights if they were repatriated.

After the first 22 cases were reassessed, four Somali refugees were informed that they will be repatriated – the cases are automatically appealed. The proportion of cases that will result in repatriations are expected to increase as the Immigration Service works its way from the oldest cases, dating back to around 2002, to more recent cases – the shorter their stay in Denmark, the more likely it is they will be repatriated.

CONTINUED VOLATILITY

The decision to reopen the cases has been criticised on a number of fronts. In a report from May 2016, the UN refugee agency UNHCR warns that access to basic necessities such as water and sanitation, as well as health care and education, are absent in many parts of Somalia.

They add that the general security situation in Mogadishu and the regions of southern and central Somalia remains volatile.

"Violence is reportedly often fuelled by disputes over land and political control. Civilians continue to be severely affected by the conflict, with reports of civilians being killed and injured in conflict-related violence, widespread sexual and gender-based violence against women and children, forced recruitment of children, and large-scale displacement."

The Danish Foreign Ministry also advises against travelling to Somalia, due to the risk of terror attacks. A suicide attack on a hotel in Mogadishu on January 25 killed 28 and injured 43.



Rescuers carry an unidentified injured man from the scene of an explosion in front of Dayah hotel in Somalia's capital Mogadishu on January 25.

In an interview with Politiken, immigration minister Inger Støjberg said that while she was aware of the concerns expressed by the UNHCR, she had no reason to doubt the assessment of the Immigration Service, that it was safe to repatriate Somali refugees.

"The government does not believe that just because a person at some point has been granted refugee status, that they can live forever in Denmark," she said.

The government can return refugees to countries such as Somalia due to a law that was passed by the former centre-left coalition government. Previously, refugees that were given certain types of protective status in Denmark could not be repatriated unless there were fundamental and lasting changes to the stability of their home countries. Now, less substantive improvements can result in repatriation.

Both the Social Democrats (Socialdemokrater) and Social Liberal Party (Radikale) defended the law that they passed while in power. Radikale immigration spokesperson Sofie Carsten Nielsen told Politiken that she trusted the safety assessment made by the Immigration Service, despite the concerns expressed by the UNHCR.

"I have to trust the assessments made by the

Danish authorities, but I hope [the concerns] lead them to seriously reconsider," she said.

CAN ASSESSMENT BE TRUSTED?

The Immigration Service has already been accused of producing politically-expedient security assessments, however. After a fact-finding mission to Eritrea in 2014, the Immigration Service published a report that justified an end to blanket protection for Eritrean asylum seekers.

"Based on the updated information, the Immigration Service does not find that, in themselves, the conditions in Eritrea regarding national service and illegal emigration constitute persecution or fulfil the necessary demand for protection," the Ministry of Justice stated in a press release at the time.

The report and new policy was later retracted, after sources accused the Immigration Service of selecting evidence to suit a political agenda.

"The Danish report seems more like a political effort to stem migration than an honest assessment of Eritrea's human rights situation," said deputy director for Human Rights Watch Africa Division, Leslie Lefkow, in a press release. **M**

Peter Stanners

Danish forces in Syria

The international coalition that is fighting the Islamic State has called on Denmark to contribute land forces in Syria. Around 60 Danish special forces soldiers are currently stationed in Iraq, but the coalition now wants Denmark contribute land forces in Syria too.

"The fight against Islamic State is an important foreign and security priority for the government," foreign minister Anders Samuelsen (Liberal Alliance) told Politiken.

After presenting the request to parliament's foreign policy committee, Den Udenrigspolitisk Nævn, the right wing coalition government were given permission to send the land forces to Syria.

Defence minister Claus Hjort Frederiksen would not confirm how many soldiers would be stationed in Syria. The government also agreed to contribute the Danish frigate Peter Willemoes to sail in convoy with an American aircraft carrier that is stationed in the region.

The Social Liberal Party (Radikale), in the political opposition, chose not to support increased military involvement in Syria.

Defence spokesperson Martin Lidegaard argued that there is no plan in place for managing areas of Syria that are liberated from the Islamic State, and that the situation on the ground could change rapidly following policy changes from the US.

"The after effects of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan still haunt us. We should not be sending Danish soldiers into active duty on the ground if we cannot answer what the next step will be," Lidegaard wrote on his Facebook page.

He added that his party supported Danish involvement in Iraq where the situation was more stable.

"The current level involvement, composed of air support and the training Iraqi forces has made great progress in the fight against Daesh [Islamic State]."

Cities should lower taxes

Instead of hoarding money, municipalities ought to lower taxes, says finance minister Kristian Jensen from the Liberal Party (Venstre).

According to Berlingske, Danish municipalities have around 39.5 billion kroner in savings, compared to 24.7 billion in 2009. Jensen explains that the healthy finances are the result of better-than-expected levels of employment, which increased taxable income, and spending limits enforced by the government.

"The municipalities have chosen to keep the money in the bank instead of lowering income and property taxes. There is very good liquidity at the moment and there is no outlook for increasing their spending flexibility, as that is the way we control the public sector," Jensen told Berlingske.

While Copenhagen municipality has around nine billion kroner in savings, Lord Mayor Frank Jensen rejected the finance minister's suggestion to lower taxes.

"I don't think there is space for tax cuts. The money we have saved has been set aside for investments in schools, in-

stitutions and elder care that we have planned for the coming years. There is not a kroner saved that we don't need for maintaining economic balance," Frank Jensen said.

The Alternativet breaks free

The Danish parliament is traditionally divided into the left wing 'red bloc' and the right wing 'blue bloc'. But the Alternativet (Alternativet) has decided that it wants to create its own grouping – the 'green bloc'.

According to political spokesperson Rasmus Nordqvist, the new position is designed to add more dimensions to the political landscape.

"The red and blue blocs are too narrow," Nordqvist told Altinget. "It kills political dialogue and innovation if we only look at politics in two dimensions."

Alternativet swept into parliament for the first time in 2015 when they secured 4.8 percent of a vote. With a message of sustainability, entrepreneurship and a new political culture, they have belonged to the red bloc, but leader Uffe Elbæk says there is no guarantee that they will automatically support the prime minister candidate from the Social Democrats (Socialdemokrater), the traditional red bloc leaders.

In an op-ed for Politiken, Elbæk criticised Socialdemokrater for moving too far to the political right, particularly on immigration issues, in order to win back voters from the Danish People's Party – a pro-welfare party, but which supports the blue bloc due to their strict immigration policies.

"Let's use the next few years before the next election to have an inspirational, ambitious, wild, untamed and brave political discussion about how we build the next phase of the welfare state: The sustainable Denmark of the future, a more entrepreneurial Denmark, and a less unequal Denmark."

More qualified politicians

Prominent Danes should run for parliament instead of using newspaper columns to constantly criticise politicians.

The appeal came from Liberal Party (Venstre) MP Bertel Haarder, a veteran with more than 40 years of experience representing the party in parliament.

"It's a fact that around the country there are lots of people who act like they are political experts and write about it in newspapers, but never present themselves for service. We need to change that culture," Haarder told Berlingske.

He identified prominent 76-year-old businessman Asger Aamund as someone whose expertise the Danish parliament would benefit from. Responding to the praise, Aamund suggested that he might consider joining parliament if all 178 MPs had the political talent of Haarder, but that he didn't want to work with colleagues with questionable talent.

"As it stands now there is only one Bertel Haarder in Parliament. There are also many others who I respect and believe are competent, but there are also far too many loonies, to speak plainly." **M**

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Fighting poverty made harder after the government scraps the poverty limit

Despite the EU's assessment that poverty in Denmark is increasing, there is no official method for measuring the level of poverty in the country. NGOs and the opposition argue the government is deliberately ignoring the issue

THERE USED TO BE a way to assess whether a Dane was living in poverty – anyone who earned less than 50 percent of the median income for three consecutive years.

This official poverty threshold was introduced by the previous Social Democratic (Socialdemokraterne) government, and was regarded as an important tool in fighting poverty. In 2013, the Ministry for Children and Social Affairs estimated that 42,200 Danes lived in poverty.

The UN, the EU and many countries including Norway, the UK and the US also have established a poverty limit to help estimate the number of poor.

The ruling Liberal-Party government does not see any benefits in the barometer, however, and scrapped it in September.

"A poverty limit is useless for any form of social policy," minister of social affairs Karen Ellemann told Jyllands-Posten at the time.

"Therefore, we do not want to spend any of our resources on it, or use it in any way."

Employment minister Troels Lund Poulsen hammered that point home in a column for Politiken in January, when he claimed that he neither accepted the previous government's poverty limit, nor its calculation for the number of poor.

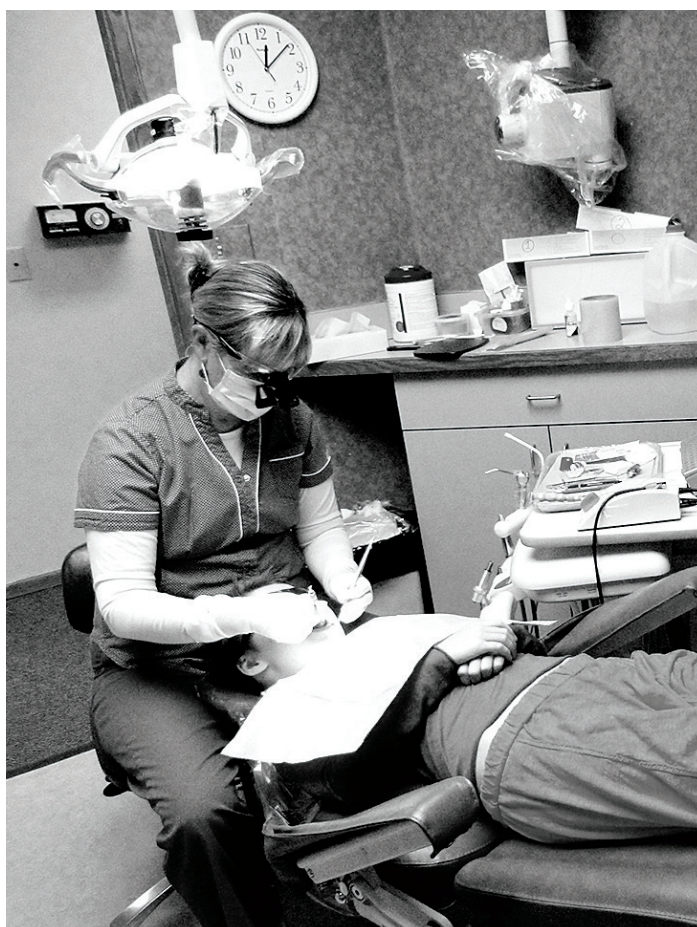
INCREASING POVERTY

In December Eurostat released its figures on poverty on Europe, which found that the number of Danes living in extreme poverty had increased from two percent in 2008, to 3.7 percent in 2015. By comparison, only 0.7 and 1.7 percent of the Swedish and Norwegian population respectively, were living in extreme poverty.

Despite these worrying statistics, the current government still does not believe that poverty is an issue in Denmark.

"It is not a problem," said Venstre's social affairs spokesperson Carl Holst.

"There are many forms of poverty, such as emotional poverty, but economic poverty is not an issue."



People in poverty avoid dental visits because of the costs.

kellyhogaboom / flickr

According to Sjørnsen, poverty in Denmark needs to be talked about in relative terms, as poverty in more disadvantaged countries is different from the richer part of the world. In Denmark, people who are unable to send their children to after school activities, struggle to pay rent and avoid health care services, such as going to the dentist, are poor.

Sjørnsen also argues that while the number of poor in Denmark increases, attitudes toward the poor have changed too.

"I think especially among the young there has been a change. People focus more on the individual and solidarity has been on the decline," he says.

"Maybe people feel that their taxes are not going towards helping the elderly or improving our public schools, so they feel that they need to take care of these things on their own."

The recent reforms of unemployment benefits also worry Sjørnsen, who believes Denmark will see a stark increase in the number of poor as a result.

"We can expect that reforms such as the cap on unemployment benefits will push more people into poverty."

REINSTATE IT

The opposition Socialist People's Party (SF) is highly critical of the decision to remove the official poverty limit, too.

"A limit allows us to have discussions about when the cuts to the welfare state are too deep," said social affairs spokesperson Kirsten Normann Andersen.

"It helps us see when people can no longer afford to live in the country. Eliminating it was politically motivated and has hindered us in discussing the issue."

She adds that the discussion about poverty is too focused on people who receive benefits, rather than the existence of the working poor.

"Their rhetoric is that 'it must pay to work', which implies that if you are employed you can't be poor. This is just not the case," she

says. "By claiming that you are the master of your own destiny, they can close their eyes to poverty and refuse to acknowledge it."

Pointing to statistics that show increasing levels of poverty, she dismisses the government's claims that poverty is not a problem, arguing that their wealthy background's mean they cannot relate to what it means to be poor.

"The government has ignored the problem. It is too stuck in its ideology of individual responsibility."

For a country that has always been proud of its welfare state, the government's policies are making a bad situation worse, she argues. She points to pensioners who live in poverty and young people who get by on little and are forced to take jobs that offer little security.

But as much as she wants the government to change its policies, she also wants broader society to change what it thinks about poverty.

"We want to fight inequality and poverty and that fight starts with our children. Heavy investment is needed to help children live a good life and ensure they get things such as food in school," she said.

"But the problem is also that we now have rich ghettos, where people grow up without ever seeing poverty. This creates individuals who believe everybody is in the same position as they are. This problem will only get worse as, increasingly, apartments in Copenhagen are only available to the rich."

If elections were held today, the left wing 'red bloc' would sweep back into power with 51.4 percent of the vote. Should that happen, Andersen insists that SF will fight to reintroduce the poverty limit and roll back the unemployment reforms that were implemented by the current government.

"The poverty limit should be re-established. But the only ultimate demand we have regarding our potential role in a future government is the abolishment of the benefits cap. That is non-negotiable." ■

Holst argues that only people who are receiving unemployment benefits can be considered to be living in poverty. The main challenge is, therefore, finding ways to get them back into the labour market.

A USEFUL TOOL

Many organisations that fight poverty have expressed concern at the elimination of the poverty limit, including the council for the socially vulnerable (Rådet for Socialt Udsatte), an independent organisation, which is part of the Ministry for Social Affairs.

"The poverty limit is a very useful tool for measuring poverty," said Jann Sjørnsen, the council's director.

"Its elimination has meant that once again the discussion has moved away from finding solutions to poverty, to discussing what poverty actually is. I was a part of the commission that decided the limit at the time, and I truly believe that it was correct and worked."

Elias Thorsson

[kvæk]

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Italian: *Cra Cra*
Turkish: *Vrak*
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Copenhagen International School's old facilities in Hellerup will soon house around 60 refugees.

Young, male and Muslim: A community divides over its new refugee neighbours

The safety of children and young women is being hotly debated in a wealthy Copenhagen suburb after it was announced that a temporary refugee shelter would be established in the middle of the community. But other residents are prepared to take on the challenge of integrating the massive influx of refugees that have been assigned to the municipality, which has been accused of using shady tricks to keep the numbers down

SITTING PROMINENTLY at the rise of a hill, Copenhagen International School (CIS) used to educate 700 children from around the world at the heart of the wealthy community Hellerup. CIS moved into its new state-of-the-art facilities in Nordhavn in January, but the buildings will continue to house international families of a different sort – refugees.

When the municipality, Gentofte, announced the news late last year, some residents sounded the alarm.

"I am no way a racist and of course we need to help people in need, but we have to protect ourselves and our values," stated one concerned resident in a letter to

Gentofte mayor Hans Toft, which was published by left-wing publication Modkraft following a freedom of information request.

"We have heard many times that refugees perform widespread vandalism, rob shops, set fire to cars, assault random people on the street, and rape young women," wrote another.

A third argued that, "thumping disco beats from school parties, lightly dressed girls in the summer heat and the municipality's beaches will, without a doubt, act as a magnet for frustrated and bored young males refugees. Will the municipality ensure they are educated in how to treat women?"

Words and photos:
Peter Stanners

SUDDEN INCREASE

Gentofte City Hall was also annoyed that a portion of their new 85-million-kroner acquisition would have to be used to house refugees. But they had little choice. Compared to other municipalities, they own very little public housing or land suitable for development.

Even if they could build new homes, the housing need is immediate. Over the next year Gentofte will be assigned 201 refugees to house and care for. This is a steep increase on the 137 they received in 2016, and 89 in 2015. After family reunification, the number normally triples.

Hans Toft – Gentofte's mayor for 23 years and member of the

Conservative People's Party (Konservative) – voiced his outrage in December when the Immigration Ministry announced the new quotas.

"The problem we face is finding the number of temporary and permanent homes," Toft told TV2 News. "The responsibility is [immigration minister] Inger Støjberg's who knows that we don't have the housing but still wants us to house the number of refugees that she does."

If it were a simple conflict between the government and a wealthy municipality, the story would have ended there. Gentofte does have a severe lack of public housing that it can use to house



Frederik Hostrup-Pedersen manages the volunteer centre *Netværkshuset* (Network House) in Gentofte. Around 300 residents pay to volunteer their time to help refugees skills, languages and how to navigate Danish society. He is pictured here in the centre's bicycle repair shop.

refugees and their families, and the government has no choice but to care for refugees and distribute them fairly across the country. It's also hardly news that there is a sizeable portion of the Danish population who are made anxious by Islam and Muslims.

But there's another set of Gentofte residents, who shook their heads when they saw Hans Toft attempt to shift blame on to the immigration minister. The portion of the community who are tired of Gentofte's depiction as wealthy, intolerant and unwilling to pull their weight. And who now argue that it is time they put their ample resources to good use.

A BITTER PILL

Gentofte might not even be in this situation if it had accepted its fair share of refugees in the first place.

Refugees who are granted protection are divided between Denmark's 98 municipalities, who take responsibility for their integration into Danish society. It's a long-standing policy, designed to prevent ghettoisation and the concentration of immigrants and refugees in deprived parts of the country, separate from mainstream Danish society.

It's deeply embarrassing that Gentofte has not taken our fair share of refugees before – it's scandalous that we included diplomats and au pairs in our quota.

MARIANNE
VICTOR HANSEN

The quotas are set based on the size of the municipality, its share of non-European residents, and the number of foreigners who have settled through family reunification in the past year. As a result, Gentofte has historically received relatively few refugees – 38 in 2014 and 26 in 2013.

In late 2015, Gentofte's local newspaper *Villabyerne* reported the reason: diplomats and Philipino au pairs were included as non-Western immigrants, thereby reducing the number of refugees Gentofte was assigned.

There was a national uproar that Gentofte could reduce the financial burden of housing and integrating refugees, because its residents were wealthy and could afford to hire help at home.

The Immigration Ministry agreed, and after they changed the formula to omit au pairs, foreign researchers, diplomats and students, Gentofte was told in 2015 to accept triple the number of refugees it had before.

STARTING DIALOGUE

"It's deeply embarrassing that Gentofte has not taken our fair share before – it's scandalous that we included diplomats and au pairs in our quota," says Mari-

anne Victor Hansen over a cappuccino in busy café.

A 52-year-old independent development aid consultant, Hansen was disappointed by Toft's reaction to the new quota.

"I was struck with indignation, that it's so typical that the richest people don't want to support or give space to refugees, even though we should have more resources and space for them."

She was also moved by the letters of concern her neighbours had sent to *Villabyerne*, as well as those sent to the mayor, in which they demanded the refugees get screened for infectious diseases and speculated that their property prices might drop.

"I was struck by how many of the letters were representations of fear. Most often it was a fear for their children – what does it mean when our daughters are at the beaches half naked in the summer? What sort of cultural meeting can we expect? I thought why couldn't we, instead of digging trenches, try and listen? Ask what is it people are worried about, rather than simply reject them as racists, or horrid rich people?"

So she started an online petition to gather together residents who were eager to take on the chal-

lenge of welcoming the new arrivals. The petition gathered around 400 signatures, and was directed at the mayor, asking him to present the community with specific ways in which they could help.

Hansen also explains that it was designed to send a message to neighbours who were scared by the news.

"Fear can also be reduced by taking the problems up front. Of course we have to have a dialogue about norms and cultures. About how they should behave with our children running around half naked in the summer. Its important for our children to behave this way because they always have done it in Denmark, so let's start a dialogue."

YOUNG, MUSLIM MEN

According to the municipality, most of the facilities in the old CIS Hellerup campus will be used for sports, adult learning and child care for the community. But some of the former classrooms will also be converted into housing for around 60 adult refugees.

A third will be families and the remaining will be single men – around 30 of which are expected to be between 18 and 33 years old.



Marianne Victor Pedersen wanted to bring residents together after concerns were raised about the new refugee centre. Her petition, asking the mayor to involve civil society in the task of integrating the new arrivals, was signed by several hundred local residents.

The vast majority have fled conflict and persecution in Syria, Afghanistan, Iran and Eritrea.

While refugees are already housed in around 60 locations around Gentofte municipality, few currently live in the wealthier areas Hellerup and Charlottenlund along the coast. Hellerup is especially known for its harbour, beach, and high quality shops. One concerned resident argued that this made it a target.

"The location on Hellerupvej is, in our opinion, more tempting than another locations in the municipality for weak souls because it lies close to an attractive residential area, a train station in walking distance, excellent retail on Strandvejen, and a beach only five minutes away, where lightly dressed women will be a temptation," wrote one resident.

Another added that the refugee centre on Hellerupvej ought to be equipped with 24-hour surveillance as its location near the train station "makes it easy for radicalised Muslim gangs to access".

With so many references to crime and the safety of under-dressed young women, it's not hard to read between the lines – young, single Muslim men are perceived by

some residents as an inherent risk to the community.

GENTOFTE IS GLOBALISED

Across the street from the former CIS campus is Bernadotteskolen, a lower-secondary school with both Danish and International departments. Following the news that young, single refugees would be moving in, many parents wrote concerned letters to the school principal Marina Kaiser, who was compelled to reply.

"I think we should look to the experience on Hospitalsvej, where there has been no increase in crime according to (Mayor) Hans Toft," she wrote in the letter.

One parent understands the concern, but thinks it is exaggerated.

"I don't know what they're expecting, that their children are going to be snatched off the street in broad daylight?" asks Deborah Marlow, an American film producer who has two daughters in the school. "It makes me feel like I'm naïve for not being scared at all. I don't want to be naïve, but I definitely don't want to be fearful."

She still understands where the fear comes from. The attacks on New Years Eve in Cologne, Ger-

I don't know what they're expecting, that their children are going to be snatched off the street in broad daylight?

DEBORAH MARLOW, PARENT AT BERNADOTTESKOLEN

many, last year did nothing to appease the simmering mistrust toward Muslims that exists in some layers of Danish society.

"People are worried that it's young single men who are traumatised and don't understand our lifestyle. Will they get it? But my position is that if we look at them with scorn in your eyes, how are they then going to react to us? We need to embrace it from the beginning. I just feel like we have a responsibility to get involved and help this integration process."

At the nearby international bookshop Books & Company, owner Isabella Smith offered a similar message.

"It's a small group of people who have been through so much already, so why not go out and be positive and try and make a difference? When we make people feel welcome, they become an asset to the community - people don't do well when they don't feel welcome. This could be a huge opportunity. We have the resources, so why don't we lead by example and show the government what could be done? It is important that we change the discourse and not allow the negative voices to drown out the positive initiatives."

Still, Smith couldn't help identify a degree of hypocrisy in the reaction from some of Gentofte's residents

"Globalisation has done so much for Gentofte. People come in to my shop exuberant with all the experiences they bring back from around the world. Now these different cultures are coming to us, let's hope we have the decency to show the same enthusiasm and generosity. It really is as simple as treating others as we ourselves would like to be treated."

COMMUNITY ACTION

A few kilometres west, alongside Vangede train station, I sit with Frederik Hostrup-Pedersen in the volunteer centre Netværkshuset (Network House). It's a Saturday so it's quiet, but in the kitchen women with headscarves chat and young boys interrupt our conversation to ask where the Playstation has disappeared to.

"People talk about the house as their second home. We aren't part of the municipality, so we are on their side – we don't deal with their money or residency."

Hostrup-Pedersen manages the centre as the only staff member, and creates the framework with-



Isabella Smith, owner of Books & Company in Hellerup, thinks the community should see the new arrivals as an opportunity.



Bakri Jejan (left) and Feras Eyad Muad, both 14, are refugees from Syria. They have been in Denmark one year, speak Danish, and go to a local lower-secondary school.

in which 300 paying volunteers offer their skills to the municipality's refugee population.

"There's a willingness among residents to help these residents. We don't see Gentofte residents as people who don't want to help. We see them as being resourceful and open people who have compassion for people in a difficult situation," he says while eating his lunch.

He explains that on a week-day around 150 refugees will walk through the door for help with homework, looking for jobs, or simply to socialise. We take a tour through the two floors and he shows me where they learn, play table tennis, or browse the internet. One room downstairs is packed with dozens of bicycles, tools and spare parts, in another a few boys play pool. 14-year-old Feras Eyad Muad fled from Syria and now goes to a local lower secondary school. He has learned Danish in just one year, but he says that's normal for the child refugees.

"The adults can't, but we can," he says before he and his friends huddle around a mobile phone.

Hostrup-Pedersen sympathises with the mayor and the difficulties he has finding appropriate housing for the refugees. It's not the only

problem the refugees face, though. Gentofte is largely residential, and has little unskilled jobs to offer the refugees, who often lack the qualifications and language skills to enter the Danish labour market.

Some businesses do view the refugees as a resource, however. Eight refugees currently work at Ikea in Gentofte, which has taken on around 24 refugees as apprentices and other paid positions over the years. McDonalds didn't have numbers specific to Gentofte, but stated that they have taken on around 75 refugees over the past 20 years.

These businesses help, but Hostrup-Pedersen is still worried by the lack of opportunity.

"It would make me really happy if there were lots of unskilled jobs to give – they want to work. There is an economic incentive because welfare for refugees is low, and they want to build a life up in Denmark, free of public support," he says.

"The situation is not improving in the countries they come from, such as Syria and Eritrea. They don't know their future; it's an awful situation. It's really hard to live like that."

RELIGION IS PRIVATE

The following Wednesday I meet

Gentofte residents are resourceful and open people who have compassion for people in a difficult situation.

FREDERIK
HOSTRUP-
PEDERSEN, FROM
REFUGEE COMMUNITY CENTRE
NETVÆRKSHUSET

Hostrup-Pedersen again in Gentofte City Hall. We are here for an information meeting that has been called by mayor Hans Toft. Around 350 people fill the central hall, and TV cameras and journalists follow the proceedings.

Toft starts by thanking everyone for their interest.

"There is a wide spectrum of opinion but I hope you understand that we have to live up to our obligations. We have a responsibility to find the best possible solution," he says. "Refugees who have been invited here have to be treated well, which means proper housing. Otherwise we can't integrate them properly."

He is followed by presentations from a municipality representative responsible for the integration programme, and local volunteer organisations that explain how to get involved in helping the refugees integrate.

The floor is opened to questions and number of residents use the opportunity to urge their neighbours to get involved with the integration efforts.

One resident asks whether the mayor would build extra youth housing after a portion had been re-assigned to house refugees, and another

asks whether extra surveillance would be installed to improve security in the neighbourhood.

"A lot has been said about how we should treat the refugees well," one elderly man says. "But we also need to be treated well. No one has talked about religion. People are afraid."

Toft replies diplomatically, assuring the speaker that all refugees and immigrants to Denmark have to live up to a wide set of demands.

Then 17-year-old refugee Solaf Masoud takes the floor. She has lived in Denmark for two years since she fled Syria. She explains that she learned Danish by spending a lot of time with Danes who helped her with the language and made her feel welcome.

"Their help made me want to give back," she says, before sharing an observation.

"In Syria religion is private. You couldn't talk about religion. When I came here I thought it wouldn't matter what I believed in. I thought it would be not allowed to ask what I believe in. But I was asked a lot by Danes if I was Sunni or Shia – this would never be asked in Syria! It was so strange. It's private. It really doesn't matter what you believe in." **M**



CAPTURED

Aleksander Klug

"Rainbows, unicorns, bridges. Not walls"

Thousands rallied in Copenhagen in solidarity with the Women's March on Washington, and to draw attention to the need to fight for minority rights

It was a grey and foggy morning the day after Donald Trump's inauguration as the 45th president of the United States. But thousands had still gathered outside the US Em-

bassy on Dag Hammarskjolds Allé for the Women's March Copenhagen.

The marchers were young and old, black and white, and represented a range of faiths and sexual orientations. Mothers brought their daughters, and some brought their granddaughters too.

They marched with their partners, sons and friends, who supported the issues that launched The Women's March on Washington, which was happening on the same day.

The Washington march was announced in response to



Donald Trump's inauguration as US President, and the divisive language and policies he is associated with – from building a wall with Mexico, to boasting about sexually assaulting women.

Protests around the world were soon announced in solidarity with the march on Washington. The Copenhagen march was one of 673 taking place on seven continents across the globe – representing a global campaign of protest on a range of issues related to reproductive rights, immigration and civil rights.

"It's about women's rights and is not an anti-Trump move-

ment," said Lesley-Ann Brown, one of the organisers behind the march in Copenhagen.

"But it is inspired by the rhetoric that has been used during the election campaign. Nationalist, racist and misogynistic trends are growing worldwide and threaten the most marginalised groups in our societies including women, people of color, immigrants, Muslims, the LGBT community and people with disabilities."

Homemade banners declared a variety of stances. One banner read "This pussy grabs back", while another stated "Get your tiny hands off our fundamental rights".

One woman was selling hand-knitted pink 'pussy hats' to raise money for Planned Parenthood – an American organisation that offers a range of sexual health services to women and which now risks losing its funding under Trump.

Many of the participants were from the US, among them 38-year-old Casey Blond and her six-year-old daughter.

"I'm marching for my fellow Americans in Washington and for my sisters all over the world," Casey said.

Her daughter looked on. She had her own banner, which declared: "Rainbows, unicorns, bridges. Not walls". **M**



I BECAME A JOURNALIST BECAUSE I WANTED TO CHANGE THE WORLD

He's been held hostage by the Taleban and followed rescue workers saving lives while under fire in Aleppo. But while Nagieb Khaja doesn't think a single story is worth dying for, he can't stop returning to the battlefield

Nagieb Khaja approached the Turkish border guards with his hands in the air, declaring in several different languages that he was a journalist. It was late 2015 and

with no legal way to enter Syria, he had to smuggle himself across the border. But instead of being placed under arrest, the guards beat him up before letting him continue onwards.

The next day he posted a selfie where his left eye is so badly bruised it was swollen shut.

"Physically, I don't know why, but I can take a lot," says Khaja in his apartment in the Nordvest district of Copenhagen.

"I think it's partially because I grew up in Avedøre. I got into a lot of fistfights with other kids so I know how to take a good beating. Maybe it's also partially genetics. But after they beat me up, I picked up my stuff, had a few days break, and started working again. I know some other guys who would have been traumatised by it – it was a rough one – but I could work. And maybe that's one of the reasons that I have a bigger obligation. I don't know if it's a curse or a gift to be mentally strong, to physically take these things. I am really good at talking to people and developing good relationships with people, I can put a story together, and I can take a good beating once in a while or be exposed to threats and work afterwards. So I think it's a waste of capacity if I don't do it."

POOR BUT PRIVILEGED

The son of Afghan immigrants, Khaja has olive skin, dense black hair, speaks Dari and understands basic Arabic. These are the superficial reasons why the 37-year-old reporter has become one of Denmark's most prominent war

I don't know if it's a curse or a gift to be mentally strong, to physically take these things – I can take a good beating once in a while or be exposed to threats and work afterwards.

Words:
Peter Stanners

Photos:
Rasmus Degnbol

reporters in the Middle East and Afghanistan – he fits in.

In Afghanistan he found that the Taleban couldn't be reduced to simple-minded Islamists and that there were a myriad reasons for their power and support. In Syria, he identified early on the complex and mutually exclusive interests of the different anti-Assad rebel groups, who were initially supported without differentiation by the Western media and governments.

He has been held hostage twice by the Taleban, observed the aftermath of Israel's 2014 assault on Gaza, followed rescue operations in Aleppo, and trailed a Danish gang leader who had travelled to fight with Syrian rebels. Besides national TV and print media, his work has also appeared in Vice, The Guardian and Al Jazeera.

His accomplishments are noteworthy, given that he was brought up in a marginalised suburb of Copenhagen with high rates of unemployment and low levels of education. But while his family was not well off, his father encouraged him to be curious.

"He worked in factories and hotels, as a dishwasher and in the kitchen. He was a man who had a lot of potential, but unfortunately the circumstances meant he had to work with other things. He hoped his unfulfilled ambitions could be fulfilled through his kids – he hoped to inspire us," he says.

Khaja would discuss international news, especially events in the Middle East, with his father who provided a different perspective to the Danish media. The 911 attacks and subsequent invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan were especially interesting to a young Khaja, now studying journalism at the University of Southern Denmark.

"My father also made me aware that there are a lot of stereotypes in the media of Arabs, Afghans, Muslims in general. Later I realised it myself as a young kid with an Afghan back-

ground from a so-called ghetto. People from these environments see themselves portrayed in the media quite often and we find it difficult for us to recognise ourselves."

Growing up where he did, Khaja could hardly avoid getting to know the young men in his neighbourhood who were involved in crime and anti-social behaviour. But it wasn't just geographical proximity that brought them together – Khaja was also curious.

"I thought they were cool – I was attracted to them because they were wild some of these kids. Sometimes we got into trouble – fights, stealing stuff, doing stuff that shouldn't be the average thing kids do, but when you're in an environment like that a lot of the things that are not average things to do, start to seem normal," he says.

Khaja drifted from the crowd when he moved for university, and returned to Copenhagen to start work as a journalist. But a funeral this summer brought them together again, and he saw how drug addiction and poor lifestyle had taken a toll on some.

"One of them almost didn't have any teeth left. So it wasn't a normal or average Danish environment. This is a part of Denmark that is not being portrayed in the international press. Denmark is always perceived as the perfect place. And relatively, Denmark is certainly better than many places. But there are environments in Denmark where people are not well off compared to other places that Denmark compares itself to."

FOREIGN FIGHTERS

His contacts in criminal communities would prove vital for his first major scoop in 2005. After reading an article by TV 2 News about the formation of a new Copenhagen gang, Triple A, he wondered why he hadn't heard anything about it, given that it was supposed to be active in Avedøre. He eventually revealed that



no gang existed and that the story was a fabrication – a revelation that got Khaja nominated for Denmark's top journalism prize, the Cavling.

His contacts would again prove useful in 2012 when a former gang leader, Abderrozak Benarabe, learned of his plan to try and travel to Syria to cover the early stages of the conflict.

"He said that we should go down together. I thought, 'what's he talking about?' I didn't know what to answer him, it didn't make sense that this criminal would be going to Syria – what would he do there?"

Khaja asked around in the community and learned that Benarabe – otherwise known as Store A (Big A) – had become religious following his most recent conviction. When his brother survived a cancer diagnosis, he decided to express his faith by fighting with Syrian rebels.

At first Khaja was worried about being associated with Benarabe, who had booked himself on the same flight as Khaja to Turkey en route to Syria. But then it dawned on him that Benarabe's journey would make a good story. The ensuing documentary *From gang war to Jihad* was one of the first journalistic insights into the foreign fighter phenomenon.

"I saw him as a chance to attract a different audience, to attract people who don't care about foreign politics or wars in the Middle East, because I had a fascinating character," says Khaja.

I have my conviction and I want to make a difference. I became a journalist because I wanted to change the world.

"I told him that a lot of young people who don't care about Syria will watch a documentary because he was in it, because they love true crime and he was like a celebrity in these environments."

A BRUTAL CONFLICT

In the process of shooting the documentary, Khaja was confronted with a conflict far worse than anything he had ever experienced before.

"The conflict in Afghanistan was nothing compared to what [President] Assad was doing to his people – the Syrian government were ruthless," he says.

While Assad's methods were cruel, the opposition groups weren't always pretty either. But these nuances were often lost in the reporting he found.

"At the time everyone was portraying the Syrian uprising as an uprising that was about democracy and all the groups were fantastic freedom fighters. It was a biased perception about all the rebels – there were very few critical stories right in the beginning about the Syrian rebels and their different agendas," he says.

"One group didn't just want a secular Syria, they also wanted pluralistic Syria. But there was another group of guys we underestimated – the Islamists who didn't just want to topple Assad but replace him with an Islamic government."

The conflict in Syria started almost six years ago, and reached a brutal peak in December with the bombardment and eventual evacuation of rebel-held eastern Aleppo by Syrian and Russian forces.

Khaja had been in the city earlier in the year to follow the work of the White Helmets, a volunteer civil defence organisation, which he first saw rescuing civilians following artillery and aerial attacks in Eastern Aleppo in 2014.

"When the Syrian government and Russian airplanes bomb areas they have a tactic of returning and bombing again and hitting the people who were coming to rescue the survivors. The White Helmets were quite heroic because they knew they would come back and bomb the same place so I was very impressed by them," says Khaja, who spent 12 days following them for a documentary that was aired on Al Jazeera.

REAL JOURNALISM

But not everyone shares the same view of the White Helmets, for example the journalist Eva Bartlett. In December, she spoke at a press conference organised by the Syrian government and held at the UN in which she attacked Western coverage of the conflict and argued that organisations such as the White Helmets did not exist.

Many of her points against Western reporting of the conflict – including the claim that the Al Quds hospital attack never took place – have since been debunked. But this is unlikely to reach all of the 3.4 million people who have watched a video of the press conference on Facebook.

"Watching people like them telling stories about the White Helmets being in bed with militants made me angry, very angry, because it was lies," he says.

"Her statements are being fed out through a lot of platforms sponsored, for example, by Russia which has a very aggressive information war going on right now about Syria and other things."

Russian disinformation campaigns have been strengthened in recent years with dedicated English language news channels, such as RT and Sputnik. The video with Bartlett was distributed on Facebook by a page called Now This, which is a branch of the Russian state broadcaster RT. Their support of the Syrian government means they have an interest in undermining support in the West for rebels, which have been armed by the US.

Still, Khaja isn't overly concerned that RT and Sputnik will fundamentally undermine trust in media, by presenting conflicting and – often untruthful – news stories. The fact that there is even a discussion about fake news shows a major improvement in the critical media awareness of the public. In the process, they are understanding the need to support quality media.

"A few years ago people were talking about how the era of journalism is gone because we had these new social media platforms that made journalism superficial. But I think we are drifting back again because of the big stories about major fake stories."

SYRIA UNDER ASSAD

The conflict in Syria has claimed around 500,000 lives and displaced around five million people since 2011. Early hopes that Assad's regime would be replaced by a secular and democratic alternative have largely been lost following the rebels' defeat in Aleppo.

If stability means Assad's continued rule, it could be considered the most pragmatic option to end the six-year conflict. But Khaja warns that stability under Assad will come at a high price. There is strong evidence that the Syrian government systematically impris-

When the Syrian government and Russian airplanes bomb areas they had a tactic of returning and bombing again and hitting the people who were coming to rescue people the survivors.

ons, tortures and kills citizens seen as a threat to their rule. According to Amnesty International, at least 18,000 have been killed in Syrian prisons since 2011.

"Can we trust Assad when he says, 'lay down your weapons and nothing will happen to you? A lot of people are afraid of that. A quarter of the Syrian population is now abroad. A lot of them fled either because they wanted to avoid military duty, or because they didn't want to fight and have blood on their hands. What will happen to them? They can't go back. What about the refugees who are political activists, or people related to political activists or militants who can't go back? So there are a lot of people who will never have the chance, or won't risk going back. So this will be a peace, if it's on his terms, that will at worst benefit his elite or those who supported him."

CHANGING THE WORLD

Khaja has spent a lot of time with people who are threatened by Assad. They are his sources, the people he needs to tell his stories about life in conflict. And it would be hard not to get attached to them given the circumstances.

"The things you experience down there, the relationships you have with people who are stuck down there and harmed because of the war, it's really heavy – it's a heavy burden to have," Khaja admits.

"When I travel to Eastern Aleppo and come back I feel like I've fallen down a black hole. I feel better down there, I feel worse up here because of the relationships I have with people. I feel like I am letting people down and that I am running away. I know there are kids down there that can't get out of the situation. It's actually terrible, and because of that I get a small depression. But after a couple of months I feel like my batteries have been charged again. And one of the ways of getting all these negative feelings out is using them in a constructive way, engaging with the public in Denmark or interna-

tionally with my family and friends. I am good at that," he says.

In previous interviews he claims to hate the adrenalin that comes with being in a warzone, and that he has refused to write a will out of superstition that something would then happen to him. But, even though he doesn't like the warzone or the danger, he keeps returning – often against his own better judgement.

"In the moments where things are happening – these terrible things I've experienced – I'm convinced it wasn't worth it. A story is not worth your life. One story will not change anything unless it's a story that goes out on all platforms and ends up in political change. But when I get out of these situations, I would say that in general my work is worth taking risks for – but it's not worth the single story. And it's not only when I was kidnapped, it's when I am sitting in a house or building in Aleppo and I hear a Syrian government airplane coming and people say they are going to drop a bomb, I also don't think it's worth it. When in Syria I see someone get shot right in front of me, it's not worth it. It wasn't worth it two months ago when I was imprisoned for 24 hours by the Taleban because I was doing a documentary about Helmand," Khaja says.

While physically fit – he turned down sugar in his coffee and admits to taking three fitness boxing classes a week – he knows he isn't psychologically impervious to the pressures of reporting from a warzone. If the pressure gets the better of him, he says he would be happy to communicate the issues he believes in from a safer setting.

But for now, he still manages to convince himself that the risks are worth taking, and that he will make it through somehow.

"I don't see it like, it could be fun to do journalism. I don't do it because it's exciting. I want to change things," he says.

"I have my conviction and I want to make a difference. I became a journalist because I wanted to change the world." **M**



Nagieb Khaja helps his wife as she opens her new café in Copenhagen in January.

Fire your boss and take control

Co-operative businesses give workers more freedom to structure their lives, while also giving them a share of the profits. It's an old model, but one that's gaining traction as disillusionment with hierarchical corporatism grows



Peter Klint is a carpenter at the co-operative business Byggeselskabet Maj (BygMaj), which was established in 1985.

WHO HASN'T WORKED a dead-end job for a faceless employer who has no interest in what you think and doesn't care about you as a human being? It's a reality for many in the modern labour market, where contracts are getting shorter and jobs are increasingly lost to automation and countries with cheaper labour.

But it doesn't have to be this way. In recent years, an increasing number of people have chosen to take control of their own jobs and rekindle their sense of purpose as creative human beings who are inspired to serve their communities and the planet.

Some say we're witnessing the death throes of an old way of doing things – where people are small cogs in big machines and follow 'top-down'

Words:
Rob MacLachlan

Photos:
Rasmus Degnbol

instructions. They see a new model being born, in which we can express ourselves, collaborate freely with others, and exercise more influence over our own work.

SELF-MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL PURPOSE

Such ideas are hardly new in Denmark, where there is a strong tradition of farmers joining together in co-operatives to control their own work and income. Historian Peter Manniche even described Denmark at the end of the 19th century as "virtually a farmer's co-operative commonwealth".

The latest movement has been given an intellectual framework by Belgian professor Frederic Laloux, whose book *Reinventing*

Organisations pulls together lessons from around the world, in which businesses and organisations have achieved surprising success by apparently breaking all the rules.

A striking example is Dutch neighbourhood nursing provider Buurtzorg. Founded in 2006, it quickly grew to 7,000 employees organised in self-managing teams of 10-12 nurses. There are no managers in the entire organisation. The teams have access to initial training in group decision-making, coaching and tools such as rota systems.

By liberating the skills, commitment and creativity of nurses, Buurtzorg dramatically improved patient recovery rates, reduced costs, and increased patient and employee sat-

isfaction. It's a single case among many that demonstrates the benefits to clients, employees and society as a whole when staff are equipped with the skills and systems to self-manage.

Laloux calls these 'teal' organisations, which represent the next stage of evolution in society. They have three things in common: a high degree of self-management, a strong sense of social purpose, and an understanding that people are multi-faceted human beings.

CHANGING MAINSTREAM

Two of Denmark's most enterprising and admired companies are Novo Nordisk, the world leader in diabetes care, and hearing aid manufacturer Oticon. Both are famous for their social purpose – to empower people with diabetes and hearing loss – and do so by empowering employees to maximise their potential and creativity.

These principles were drawn together in the influential 2012 book *Unboss*, which was co-authored by entrepreneur Jacob Bøtter and Lars Kolind, former Group CEO of William Demant, which owns Oticon.

"The Unboss organisation involves everybody instead of the few, it functions through mechanisms instead of structures, and it builds on purpose instead of profit," they wrote.

Last autumn, the consultancy Agora – comprised of business psychologists based at universities in Jutland – established a consortium of 11 organisations who are jointly funding a research project to share their experience of new organisational forms and values. They include e-commerce consultancy Vertica and marine refrigeration specialist B COOL, as well as some public sector bodies.

"These are all organisations that are doing something different," says Anne Lund Thybring, one of the researchers. "We want to examine what alternatives to command and control-based organisations might look like in the real world."

CO-OPERATIVE THINKING

Perhaps the ultimate example of self-management already exists in Denmark: worker co-operatives, where employees own the business themselves. Many were founded in the 1920s and 1930s in response to industrial conflict between traditional employers and trade unions, and primarily operate in the construction, painting and plumbing sectors.

But a new generation of professionals in services such as management consulting is now joining them.

"What excites them is the possibility of control over how working life is organised," says Su-

By sharing knowledge freely in the company we can ensure that the best possible people work on specific projects.

FREDERIK PEDERSEN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF KNOWLEDGE-WORKER



Frederik Pedersen, chief executive of KnowledgeWorker, a co-operative business consultancy.

sanne Westhausen, director of Kooperationen, which represents the interests of 92 worker co-ops in Denmark.

Westhausen points out while many co-ops are hugely successful, few people realise they are run by the workers themselves.

"Partly that's because we don't have a special legal structure for worker co-ops in this country," explains Westhausen.

"So they may be structured as shareholder companies. The important difference is that only the employees are shareholders."

SHARED PROFITS

One thriving workers co-op can be found in Copenhagen's former industrial zone, Nordhavn, in the shadow of Svanemølle power station's three sentinel cooling towers. Established in 1985, Byggeselskabet Maj (BygMaj) specialises in restoring buildings and making high-quality furniture and installing kitchens. Of the 25 co-workers and six apprentices, five are founding members, including carpenter Niels Mundus who also has the role of director.

"We wanted to create a different sort of feeling in our work, a different way of speaking and behaving towards each other."

While BygMaj turns over around 15 million kroner a year, co-workers also express solidarity with people in need from around the world. Initially the co-workers gave two percent of their earnings to a small charity that built homes for an indigenous community in Nicaragua. More recently, the co-op sent two teams of eight co-workers to Nepal in association with ActionAid to build two schools.

Most of the co-workers are carpenters, cabinetmakers and bricklayers. While each bring in their own clients and work orders, more complex enquiries are handled by one of several co-workers with experience in estimating costs and negotiating prices. When the order is placed, they invite co-workers to be on the work team and monitor the progress along the way.

BygMaj has been successful thanks to a few key principles. First, every member is expected to bring in work orders. Second, earnings are split relative to how much, and how effectively, each person works. Third, everyone in the work team on a particular customer order gets the same hourly rate of pay for their contribution — whether that's setting up the job and dealing with the customer, or being a builder, carpenter or cabinet maker.

For example, when a work order is agreed and the team selected, each co-workers is paid the trade union minimum rate of 140 kroner per hour for their contribution. When the job is completed, the costs are paid and 22 percent of the surplus is returned to the company to pay for overheads such as rent and insurance. The remaining surplus is divided between the co-workers on the team, in proportion to the number of hours they worked. This means that if a job is completed in less time than estimated at the outset, the effective rate of pay for everyone increases, and they all have an incentive to work efficiently and get on to the next job.

CO-OP CONSULTANCY

A couple of kilometres away in the heart of Co-

penhagen's retail district near the walking street Strøget, is a very different type of co-op. Management consultancy KnowledgeWorker helps businesses tackle a range of problems, from developing their businesses plan to increasing turnover.

They also collaborate with partners as a business developer to create new products and services. For example, they are working with housing provider Dominia and Juul & Hansen Architects to develop a framework for maximizing the sustainability of urban renewal projects. On projects that actively seek to improve conditions for people with limited social and economic resources, they offer their services for free.

Founded in 2011 by young university graduates with degrees in fields such as economics, business development, engineering and communications, the co-op has 17 members of which seven currently work full-time, five part-time, and five are occasional contributors.

Chief executive Frederik Pedersen says they rejected careers in more hierarchical organisations because they stifle the creativity and motivation of knowledge workers. Instead, they employ collaboration as a creative principle and a source of valuable ideas.

"By sharing knowledge freely in the company we can ensure that the best possible people work on specific projects. We also teach each other because knowledge becomes more valuable when it is shared. By working together we create something that is greater than the sum of the parts," says Pedersen.

FREE LIVING

Self-management allows co-workers to meet their own diverse priorities as complex human beings. This means having the freedom to say 'no'. In BygMaj, no one is obliged to join the work team on any particular job. Workers who turn down opportunities may be asked less often, however, and if any co-worker gets a reputation for being unreliable or slow, they may not be asked at all. If someone has no work, they then qualify to be made redundant and collect unemployment benefits through their unemployment insurer, though this rarely happens.

Most KnowledgeWorker members also work for themselves or other employers, so they sometimes can't devote more time to the co-op.

"That's perfectly fine," says Frederik Pedersen. "The co-op enables us to tackle more complicated projects than we would be able to individually. It's founded on personal freedom mixed with social responsibility."

Another freedom in self-management is in deciding where to set the balance between earning money and having free time. Many co-workers at BygMaj, for example, choose to work less than 37 hours a week.

"If you want to make good money here, there's the opportunity," explains Peter Klint, who is a carpenter and also sets up the kitchen remodeling jobs and work teams.

"But I've taken extended time off, for example to design furniture and exhibit at the Milan Show."

Others at BygMaj have reduced their hours to build their own homes, spend more time with their young children, or travel abroad. BygMaj's em-

Being in a co-op isn't really a matter of owning anything. It's more about sharing, facing challenges and the satisfaction of building something together. We all feel connected as friends and partners.

**PETER KLINT,
BYGMJAJ**



Co-workers at BygMaj charge for the hours they put into a project, and also claim a share of the surplus.

ployee association also sometimes contributes if co-workers need support for special health needs or educational purposes.

But could being the co-owner of a worker co-op also put people under pressure to commit too much time and energy, as is commonly experienced by the owners of more conventional businesses?

"It does require a lot of discipline," says Frederik Pedersen from KnowledgeWorker. "Your responsibility is both to yourself as a worker and to the rest of the co-operative as a co-owner."

TRUST MATTERS

For self-management to succeed there has to be a strong sense of mutual trust. While BygMaj's co-workers can do some work for other employers, they are not allowed to own their own companies too because that would create a conflict of interests.

Klint recalls the case of one "very clever, fast and well-connected guy" who people were glad to welcome into the co-op, but was later discovered to be operating his own company at the same time.

"After that, he lost the trust of everyone else, and had to leave."

Both co-ops have found it's important to have someone responsible for the overall perspective and make quick decisions on everyone's behalf when necessary. KnowledgeWorker operates in a fast-paced environment and delegates a lot of decision-making to chief executive Pedersen. He is formally accountable to bi-annual general assemblies, and there are also weekly meetings of the active co-workers.

"Decisions are rarely subject to a vote, as we aim to reach agreement through discussion and debates," says Pedersen.

At BygMaj, part of Mundus's role as director is to make sure everyone follows the agreed rules. He works about a quarter of his time as director, a quarter as a contract constructor and half as a carpenter. His tasks as director includes helping co-workers chase their cus-

tomers to pay on time, and ordering building materials in the most cost-effective way.

All of BygMaj's co-workers meet every two months to review how the co-op is doing and decide on matters such as investing in new machines, admitting new co-workers, taking on more apprentices or supporting charitable projects. At an annual general meeting they also elect three people to a board, which then appoints the director.

This role was created ten years ago because the co-op recognised it needed someone to keep an eye on 'the big picture' financially, and to talk to the tax, municipal and regulatory authorities.

"I accepted the role because someone has to do it," says Mundus.

But it doesn't set him apart. He mainly has to persuade people, rather than tell them what to do. For this part of his work, he's paid a fixed rate per hour, which is roughly the same as what he earns as a carpenter. His overall salary is equivalent to what any experienced carpenter in Copenhagen might expect to earn.

"There's no reason why working in a co-op has to mean a lower salary. But if you're only here for the salary, then this isn't the place for you."

Peter Klint adds: "Being in a co-op isn't really a matter of owning anything. It's more about sharing, facing challenges and the satisfaction of building something together. We all feel connected as friends and partners."

BygMaj's original founders are now in their late 50s and remain enthusiastic about co-operative ideas. Together with the apprentices and a younger generation of co-owners who joined the co-op around ten years ago, BygMaj has a healthy representation of age groups.

"Many younger people want to have the freedom of managing their own work, and have a higher level of understanding about how co-ops operate," says Niels Mundus. "They have the ability to bring in customer orders, and are keen to take responsibility. It's great to see them choosing this lifestyle, joining BygMaj and making their future here." ■

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Driven by social outrage and anger

Unemployed and impoverished Danes can reach out for material help and legal support through the Facebook group Næstehjælperne. Activist Maria Pedersen explains the group is a reaction to government's cuts to welfare and fear tactics that are used to nudge the unemployed back to work

Maria Pedersen decided that she'd had enough. It was March last year, and the government had just announced new cuts to unemployment benefits, which threatened to put families on the streets and keep children locked in poverty.

So she joined a Facebook group called Næstehjælperne – which roughly translates as 'neighbourhood helpers' – that had just been launched as a network for protest, solidarity and practical help for those affected by the reforms. Six months later she is now an admin-

istrator of the group, which has more than 14,000 members from across Denmark.

I first met Pedersen in a refugee camp on the island of Lesbos in Greece. A nurse, she had visited the island once before to provide medical assistance to refugees after their journey over the Aegean Sea. She had grown frustrated with the handling of the refugee crisis and decided to mobilise colleagues in her field to address the lack of medical care. This initiative ultimately resulted in the creation of the organisation Nurses for Refugees.

"My work in Lesbos and other projects have all simply sprung from a sense of 'what the fuck is happening here?'" she explains at

You can't expect someone to get up out of their chair if their stomach is screaming with hunger. We can't pull them out on a rainy day for a demonstration if they don't have proper shoes.

Words:
Justine Garofalo

Photos:
Aleksander Kiug

home in Bananhuset in Christiania, where she lives with her partner Klaus and their two cats Coco and Zorro.

"I'm driven by a social outrage and anger. Shouldn't we see if we could do this just a little bit better? I'm from a time when all middle-aged women, such as myself, were encouraged to get a coaching education and where it's been emphasised that we need to 'remember to think about yourself'. But I would actually really like us to act less on this sentiment. I would go nuts if I stayed alone at home and detoxed and got healthy and mindful. That just doesn't work for me."

FACEBOOK OUTREACH

Pedersen has a long history of activism and social outreach, particularly on issues of homelessness and drug abuse, and has worked with a number of organisations such as Gadeplan, Hjemløsedagen, and Arbejdet Adler.

Næstehjælperne focus on a different group – the 'middle-group' as she calls it – who are at risk of homelessness or drug abuse, who have families and a place to live, and who have been affected by factors such as mental health disorders or poverty.

"We can reach them through Facebook, because this is their platform. This is where they have a social life because many of them deal with so much social anxiety and social phobia that they don't go out beyond their screen," says Pedersen.

Maria is direct, unapologetic, takes action when she sees injustice. When the government an-

nounced a welfare cap for those receiving unemployment benefits, there were concerns that recipients could have their welfare slashed just for regularly eating dinner with friends, neighbours or partners. Municipalities argue that this sort of help can in some cases be interpreted as cohabitation, which would reduce welfare payouts. But Pedersen sees it as another example of the climate of fear and uncertainty the government uses to maintain pressure on the unemployed.

Pedersen believes that the current approach is counter-productive, and that if the unemployed are to find work again, they need all the help and support they can get.

"You can't expect someone to get up out of their chair if their stomach is screaming with hunger. We can't pull them out on a rainy day for a demonstration if they don't have proper shoes," she says.

"People who have been on unemployment benefits for 30 years probably haven't found a job because there is something else wrong with their life. Just a few years back you would have classified those people as having other problems, not just that they were unemployed. We need to take people by the hand."

NO QUESTIONS ASKED

Soon after joining the group, it was evident to Pedersen that there was a need for the work they were doing.

"We realised how bad the situation had really become for a lot of people – how penniless some were, unable to afford anything at all.





Maria Pedersen at home in Christiania.

This was right before school began, so it was very basic things like pencil cases, joining the school's milk program, school bags, and gym clothes."

Group members began gathering and distributing clothing, food and other household items to those who had expressed a need for something specific. As the network grew, some members started local sub-groups to make it easier to distribute supplies across the country.

**Honestly
I'm deeply
anxious
that I am
running the
errand of
liberalism.**

Those who are uncomfortable asking for help publicly are allowed to reach out to the group's admins to ask on their behalf anonymously. And those that do make public requests are shielded from being judged or questioned by other group members.

"If someone says 'I've got no cigarettes for the rest of the month', no one should reply with, 'well maybe you shouldn't ask for cigarettes when there are children starving'. Because of course you can need cig-

arettes if you are in a shitty situation and everything is falling apart, and you smoke. You shouldn't also have to be told that you should stop smoking."

Næstehjælperne also cooperates with social workers, who accompany unemployment recipients when they meet the municipality to discuss their welfare payments.

"It's interesting sitting with people in the municipality, and interfering mainly to say, 'Can you

please talk respectfully to this person?' When they ask, 'Who do you think you are speaking to?', I just answer, 'Well, who do you think you are speaking to?'"

TOWARD SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Næstehjælperne is also a protest platform, bringing together hundreds of people on the opening day of parliament in October to send a signal to the government about its constant cuts to Danish welfare. But Pedersen also fears that while volunteerism can make up for the withdrawal of government assistance, it may be counterproductive in the long term.

"We have to help. And that's why I think we'll see a lot more of these types of groups in the future. But honestly I'm deeply anxious that I am running the errand of liberalism by doing this."

Despite this, she still argues that people have a moral responsibility to help others. And Næstehjælperne's success rests on coming to the rescue of people before their lives spiral too far out of control. It is a project founded on dignity, equality, and respect, which helps at-risk people with material security, and supports them as they navigate the bureaucratic power structures back towards self-sufficiency.

"I don't think I'll ever be able to do anything this big again to be honest. So I feel both a sort of disappointment that it is necessary, and a pride that it really fucking works." **M**



Slow fashion with a social message

Danish fashion label Carcel has set out to make quality products that are socially responsible and environmentally friendly – made entirely by women in prison

THE FASHION INDUSTRY has seen a shift over the past few years. Unapologetic fast fashion is being frowned upon while conscious consumption gains traction.

Danish fashion label Carcel is leading the way with an innovative business model that eschews traditional sources of labour. Founded by social business entrepreneur Veronica D'Souza, she was inspired after visiting a women's prison in Nairobi, Kenya.

"I discovered that the majority of the women in the prison were ordinary, poor people from the local village. For most of them a lack of opportunities, poverty and desperate decisions had led to their incarceration," says D'Souza says.

"The women were sewing and knitting every day. But without good materials and a proper market to sell their items, they cannot rely on their work to provide a steady income."

After returning home to Denmark, D'Souza teamed up designer Louise van Hauen and together they created Carcel in 2016.

The concept behind the aesthetics is quite simple and familiar – luxury items that have a minimalist Scandinavian design.

Each item is handmade using only natural materials – the first collection from Peruvian inmates were made entirely using wool from baby Alpaca.

"No chemicals are used to process the material and very little water and dye is needed. Since it is a natural fibre, it is completely biodegradable," D'Souza says.

The approach itself, albeit innovative, has been around for a while. The most prominent proponents are the two major American clothing brands Patagonia and Eileen Fisher, who are some of the earliest defenders of environmental ethics and fair working wages.

"Witnessing the immense waste of valuable time and skills these women represented, became a driving force for founding Carcel. We saw a possibility to create a fashion product that could help solve a problem rather than creating one. Through fair wages and a new skill set, the women are able to cover basics

living costs in prison, like shampoo, clothes, sanitary pads, while saving up and having the possibility to send their children to school," D'Souza says.

Finding partners to collaborate with has been easier than they expect, and they are pleased with the outcome of the project in Peru.

"We have an official partnership with the Peruvian prison system. They are extremely positive towards our work in women's prisons and have been very helpful. We have a local manager who helps recruit the women inside the prison, and we are in daily contact with him because he helps the women and oversees daily production," she explains.

There have been some manufacturing challenges, however, and overseeing a production across the Atlantic has not always been care free.

"Everything from getting the right machines and equipment into the prison, but also more basic hurdles such as the lack of communication over phone and internet because this is not allowed inside the prison," D'Souza says.

Nonetheless, the fashion label has had a smooth start, winning the Creative Business Cup 2016 – the global initiative for entrepreneurship and innovation. D'Souza acknowledges that the fashion industry is undergoing a shift, and thinks Carcel has the potential to succeed outside Scandinavia too.

"We don't think this business model is limited to only fit a Danish market. Sustainable businesses with either social or environmental aspects, radical transparency, or all three, are present all over the world. Big as well as small," she says.

"We are a part of an on-going wave of sustainable initiatives and companies. Because really what we are doing is going back to analogue knitting machines, using local craftsmanship while tapping into an ancient resource of natural materials. The production set-up – of helping women in prison to a better daily life and future – is what has driven the work."

In other words, sustainable, conscious fashion is not a fad – green could soon be the new black. **M**

The majority of the women in the prison were ordinary, poor people from the local village. For most of them a lack of opportunities, poverty and desperate decisions had led to their incarceration.



Left and top: Some of Carcel's designs.

Above: Carcel has a partnership with a prison in Peru where they provide jobs for female inmates

Hana Hasanbegovic

I never believed in myself



In a spacious apartment, not far from the lakes in Copenhagen's Nørrebro district, lives Rasmus Littauer, one of Denmark's most successful young drummers. He answers the door and we pick up a thermos of coffee he has prepared in the kitchen, and retire to his bedroom for the interview.

"I finally cleaned up my room, so that I can sit here and think about things. This is a new period for me," says Rasmus as we walk into his room.

A drum kit is stored on top of his closet and his desk is a clutter of mixers and keyboards. He sits on his bed beneath a paper lamp that hangs from the ceiling and starts to talk about life as a drummer for some of Denmark's most acclaimed pop groups – and his decision to take some time off for his solo project School of X.

"I have huge ambitions with the art itself – the expression and vision inside of it. Right now I really am finding my own flow."

MUSICAL HERITAGE

A 27-year-old multi-instrumentalist, he was brought up in a family where guitars were toys, and the rehearsal room a playground. They always encouraged his dream of a career in music, and he continues to collaborate with his two brothers today – the three live on and off together in the Nørrebro apartment.

"I started playing drums when I was five and my feet finally reached the pedals," he says.

"My parents played folk and the blues so we had a rehearsal space at home where me and my brothers would spend all our time in. Me, Simon and Jacob started our first band called Blue Cheese when I was eight. I still remember our first show during the summer party at our old kindergarten."

This was in Aarhus, Denmark's second city, where Rasmus lived before moving to Copenhagen as a teenager with his friend Aske to live in his aunt's houseboat near the Danish parliament. Like most young people in Copenhagen, he had trouble finding a stable place to live, and was forced to move house often. At times he didn't have anywhere to live, so he stayed in a rehearsal space that he rented with some friends.

"For many years it was super tough and hard, economically speaking. But you know, when you are passionate about something, it doesn't really matter. When you're super young and you move to a new town and nothing else but doing what you love matters, then that's what it was about," he said.

ON THE ROAD

His life has changed since then and in recent years Rasmus has played around 100 shows a year all over the world as drummer for major Danish bands Reptile Youth, The Asteroids Galaxy Tour, and MØ. The latter artist, Karen Marie Ørsted, is a global superstar and appears on the second-most streamed song on Spotify, *Lean On*, with over 900 million listens.

He recently returned from MØ's North America tour and while he remains in the band, he hopes to focus more of his time on School of X, which he started almost a year ago. Despite his time as a touring drummer it feels like brand new territory, and when

Rasmus Liffauer has taken a break from travelling the world as MØ's drummer, to make music in his bedroom in Nørrebro for his solo project School of X. The goal is to fulfill his dream of being an artist, and to keep his passion for music alive

his first EP is released this spring it will mark a major turning point in his career.

"It's the first time in some years that I have actually finished something," he says, adding that he still managed to find time to make music while he was on tour, though there were limitations.

"When I'm on tour we would arrive at a venue at 11 in the morning and then I would have until five or six in the afternoon before the sound check to work. But I could only bring my laptop and a small mini keyboard with me, so it was very limited what I could do. At home I can grab a guitar and drums, which I find very intuitive to work with – I'm more of a musician than a producer. On tour I mostly create sketches, small melodies, one-minute songs," he says.

School of X has so far been well received by critics at leading music and lifestyle magazine Soundvenue. He was also selected to perform at one of Copenhagen's top venues, Vega, in their annual showcase event Vega's Udvalgte in January. Still, it's evident that Rasmus struggles to acknowledge his talent – both as a drummer and a songwriter.

"I have to prove to myself that I can continue writing songs. It's not about one, two, four, six songs – I have to be able to write 100 or more super good songs," he says.

"I never had high thoughts about myself in my professional career as a drummer. I never believed in myself – that I was picked because I was a good drummer. I always made excuses for myself – it was because I was nice or just looked good while playing. I have to get very far in what I do, before I believe that I am good at what I am doing. It really takes some convincing for me – I am still not convinced, but it's a process."

LUCK AND TALENT

Despite his creative anxiety, he seems to be happy at home and focusing on the writing. Not just because tour life can be physically exhausting, it can be emotionally and socially challenging too.

"Travelling and meeting people all the time is the best thing that ever happened to me. I've always tried to be open-minded and it helps when you talk to people all the time and see new places," he says.

"But some of the parties I went to while touring with MØ didn't feel very personal. Some people think too highly of themselves – I don't think success makes anyone more interesting. You need to stay true to yourself in this world," he says.

"I never really focused on success. What makes a really good song a hit is when it is written by someone passionate and who put their personality into it. It's about doing what you love – working hard and staying on the track. I had so many friends who had my same interests, but they had other interests too, so they ended up doing something else. But there was nothing else for me, just music, so I ended up naturally doing what I do. I've also been super lucky – it's a mix, of being at the right place at the right time. But you also have to work hard. Sitting on this chair in this room and making music – not trying to make a radio hit. It has to be – otherwise, your passion dies." ■

I have huge ambitions with the art itself – the expression and vision inside of it. Right now I really am finding my own flow.

Words:
Gabriele Dellisanti

Photos:
Aleksander Klug



The importance of being 'good' in a selfish world

National problems require global solutions, which aren't going to be found by building walls and turning our backs on globalisation, argues Simon Anholt, creator of The Good Country Index



Frits Ahlefeldt / flickr

"MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN," shouted Donald Trump. "Our Money Our Priorities," proclaimed Nigel Farage. "Defend our colours," demands Marine Le Pen. The message is clear: it's our country and our people who should be first.

Denmark, too, is not immune from nativism. The Danish Peoples Party (DF) have employed slogans such as "Our Denmark – there is so much, we must protect", "Give us Denmark back" and "More Denmark, less EU".

An experienced policy advisor for more than 30 countries, he can empathise with politicians and the duty they feel to put their own cit-

Emil Staulund
Larsen

izens first. But he argues that it's the wrong approach to take, if we really want to solve the problems the world is facing.

"Trump's 'America First' is not a mantra I have a problem with. He's the US President, so of course he should put America first. The thing I question is whether every other country has to come last?" Anholt asks.

He is responsible for the Good Country Index', which ranks countries on their contributions toward the common good of humanity. With criteria that include international peace and security, planet and climate, and prosperity and equality, the focus is not on what

each country does to help its own citizens, but rather what they are doing for rest of the world.

"The countries at the bottom of the index are not there because I disagree or disapprove of them. I just observe the fact that countries who have domestic problems don't think much about the rest of humanity. Is that a good or a bad thing? I think it's understandable."

GLOBAL PROBLEMS & SOLUTIONS

Being good matters, not only because it makes the world a better place. Solving problems such as global warming and poverty can hinder terrorism and migration

disasters. And if your country has a good reputation, people are more inclined to trade with you, Anholt points out.

Erecting a drawbridge to the rest of the world, and the problems we share, is therefore a short-sighted solution says Anholt, who argues that almost none of the big problems humanity faces can be solved by individual countries – we have to address the shared root causes.

"The problems are beyond the capacity of the rich countries to solve. America can't fix the financial crisis alone, Mexico can't fix drug trafficking and EU can't fix migration. These problems are

globalised and if you try to push it down in one country it'll just pop up in another. The only way to resolve these big challenges is if countries work together."

It's not an issue of altruism or self-sacrifice, but rather 'enlightened self-interest', as solving domestic problems does not necessarily conflict with solving global problems, and vice-versa. But there is little incentive to pursue this approach, as politicians walk an incredibly narrow tightrope between taking international responsibility and maintaining domestic popularity.

"Germany Chancellor Angela Merkel tried to do the right thing by showing that Germany is open to all migrants. That was a wonderful thing to do and probably very good for the German economy in the long run, but it cost her an enormous amount of political capital," says Anholt.

A WORLD TURNING SELFISH

The election of Trump, and the UK referendum to leave the EU, demonstrate that voters in the West are attracted to protectionism. Anholt blames politicians for their poor management of globalisation, which manifested industrial decline and financial instability.

"They didn't do enough to prepare the population for the loss of jobs and influence, which globalisation was going to bring. People could see this 30-40 years ago, that globalisation was going to cost jobs and growth if governments didn't adapt to it. They failed and now we're paying the price of it."

Some of these problems could have been avoided if politicians had the courage to make structural changes to welfare systems, education and industries to prepare people for the effects of globalisation, he argues.

"A lot of governments have allowed big corporations to benefit enormously from the forces of globalisation. The gains of globalisation have not been shared very equally," says Simon Anholt, adding that politicians are not as good as they used to be.

"They have been less honourable people, they have told the truth less and less, so it's not surprising that people have decided that anybody who doesn't look like a politician is going to do better."

IN OR OUT

Tackling problems politically is made harder because the anti-establishment has been so success-

BE A GLOBAL VOTER

'Global Vote' is the newest invention of Simon Anholt. For the first time in history, anybody on earth can vote in any country on earth.

"We're trying to teach people to consider the international consequences of their election. Reminding the people who are voting, that their candidate will have an impact on the rest of the world," Simon Anholt explains.

If it were up to recent Global Votes, two women would have taken office in the USA and UN – Hillary Clinton and Helen Clark (Former New Zealand PM) respectively. Instead it was Donald Trump and António Guterres (former Portugal PM) who won.

ful at redefining the political rulebook. Young people especially do not relate to the traditional left and right wing spectrum, as they too are wooed by the narrative that it is possible to return to the days before globalisation.

It's a plan that many Europeans agree with, according to a recent poll from BertelsmannStiftung for Reuters. They asked Europeans whether they see globalisation as a threat or as an opportunity and in Austria – where Norbert Hofer recently was close to becoming the first far-right leader of European country since WW2 – 55 percent responded that globalisation is a threat. In France 54 percent agreed, while in Germany and the Netherlands 45 percent and 40 percent also held a negative outlook on globalisation, respectively.

But you can't press rewind on globalisation. There might be short-term benefits to withdrawing from international trade and cooperation, but in doing so countries lose the capacity to address global challenges such as global warming, terrorism and migration.

"You can try to pretend that you're not part of the global world, but I don't think it will do any good in the short or the long term," says Anholt.

He thinks there is a need for a new political paradigm that is built around whether people look inward or outward, and want to move backward or forward.

"I think it's better to look forward. Embrace globalisation and see it for what it is – an unstoppable and irreversible force that is mostly good. If only we can figure out to handle it better." **M**

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WHAT'S ON • FEBRUARY



FROST FESTIVAL
Combining music performances and light installations, the ambition is to provide a fresh and different perspective on art, while brightening the dark month of February.

Across Copenhagen
frostfestival.dk
February 4-6

ALL MONTH

GOSH! IS IT ALIVE?
Exploring the idea of 'hyperrealism', the sculptures in Arken's upcoming exhibition play with notions of the artificial and the real, amuse and potentially frighten, the viewer.

Arken
Skovvej 100, 2635 Ishøj
arken.dk
Opens February 4



WANG SHU
The Architect's Studio will be exhibiting the work of Wang Shu, alongside a more general introduction to the Chinese culture and philosophy that inspired him.

Louisiana
GI Strandvej 13, 3050
Louisiana.dk
Opens February 9

7

ABSALON ART LAB
The popular Vesterbro social hub encourages its participants to experiment with various forms of artistic expression. Spots are tight so remember to reserve a place.

Absalon
Sønder Blvd. 73, KBH
absaloncph.dk

12

AL MEDINA
Part of Cinemateket's bi-monthly 'Danish on a Sunday' film screenings, Al Medina tells the story of Yusif, who travels to Medina with the misguided hope of a harmonious life.

Cinemateket
Gothersgade 55, KBH
dfi.dk



LUCKY CHOPS
A brass band redefining the genre, Lucky Chops found huge popularity in March 2015 when a video shot on the New York subway went viral.

Pumpehuset
Studiestræde 52, KBH
pumpehuset.dk
February 19

21

DIAMANTENSEMBLET
Young star soloists and students from the Royal Danish Academy of Music premiere the guitar concert of in-house composer Wayne Siegal.

Black Diamond
Søren Kierkegaards Plads 1
kb.dk



Romy Olson

AGEING AND EVERYDAY LIFE
The University of Copenhagen presents a day-long conference on the way we interact with media and how online life affects the aging process.

Faculty of Humanities, KU
Karen Blixens Plads 8, KBH
humanities.ku.dk
February 22



LA LA LAND RELEASE
Having swept the Golden Globes with awards for Best Actor, Actress and Musical, and hotly touted for the upcoming Oscars, Damien Chazelle's mesmeric musical following a jazz musician and hopeful actress finally opens in Denmark.

Nationwide
February 23

23

FLAVOR OF JAPANESE FOOD
As part of the 150 year anniversary celebrations of Danish-Japanese relations, Professor Ole G. Mouritsen delivers a lecture exploring the characteristics of Japanese food, namely umami and mouthfeel.

Hotel and Restaurant skolen
Vigerslev Allé 18, 2500 Valby



THE DANDY WARHOLS
Known for their song 'Bohemian Like You' the Dandy Warhols, come to Amager Bio and bring with them their penetrating lyrics and indie-rock sound.

Amager Bio
Øresundsvej 6, KBH
amagerbio.dk
February 25

Emily Tait

26

AMADEUS
National Theatre Live has now broadcast over 40 live performances from the theatre in London internationally. This month they will livestream the iconic play 'Amadeus'.

Cinamaxx
Kalvebod Brygge 57, KBH
Kino.dk

WHAT'S ON • MARCH

1

HORISONT

This Swedish rock quintet have a distinctly retro sound; a throw-back to the early seventies, when music was moving away from the hippie movement to rock and roll.

Huset's Biograf
Rådhusstræde 13, KBH
huset-kbh.dk
March 1 & 2



TOVE LO

Ebba Tove Elsa Nilsson, better known by her stage name Tove Lo, is renowned internationally for her raw, even grungy, twist on conventional pop music.

Store Vega
Enghavevej 40, KBH
vega.dk
March 4

4

OUTLET MESSE

One of the largest outlet sales in Denmark, over two days it hosts over 100,000 different brands' surplus and sample stock with extensive discounts.

Bella Center
Center Blvd. 5, KPH
outletmesse.dk
March 4 & 5



CPH BLUES BROTHERS

This nine-man show band perform the hits from the cult favourite 1980 film Blues Brothers. It will be a night of soul music and rhythm and blues.

Kulturcafé Ludvig
Ingemannsvej 5, 4180 Sorø
kulturcafeludvig.dk
March 10

LETSGO

– CARSHARING IN COPENHAGEN

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