

THE MURMUR

COPENHAGEN
EDITION

What to eat
during the
Copenhagen
Cooking
and Food
Festival

NGOs save
lives at sea
but stand
accused of
helping the
smugglers

How an
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to fear, bad
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AUGUST 2017 VOL. 4 ISSUE 7



Defending the rights of immigrants

Asrin Mesbah's legal aid organisation stands up to a compromised bureaucracy

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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THIS SUMMER, in the depths of cucumber season, Politiken managed to publish two opinion pieces that made me equal parts angry, frightened and nauseated.

The first contentious opinion piece was written by Ninka-Bernadette Mauritson – an entrepreneur and author of a bestselling lifestyle book – following an interview with tabloid BT in which she explained that she "cured" her son's autism by changing his diet.

The article in BT ruffled feathers. While at least one small study of 18 children found that changing the composition of a child's gut bacteria had some impact on their autism symptoms (bit.ly/autismdiet3) there is no conclusive evidence that diet can cure autism (bit.ly/autismdiet1).

But Politiken's debate editors decided to let Mauritson defend herself, and in her op-ed, she dismissed the criticism that no peer-reviewed studies have confirmed her claims by presenting evidence she alleged was being overlooked by the medical establishment.

What about the press release from Danish health authority Sundhedsstyrelsen warning against Mauritson's diet guidelines, which advised parents not to feed their children food containing milk or gluten? Well, they can't be trusted because of a few unrelated scandals.

"You can't use that Sundhedsstyrelse as any form of guarantee!" she scoffed.

Mauritson drew heavy criticism, including from the national autism association, Landsforeningen Autisme. In a press release, they stated that after Mauritson's interview and op-ed, the organisation had heard from the families of three children with autism that had all been advised by their municipal caseworkers to follow Mauritson's dietary guidelines.

The second contentious op-ed that Politiken published was written by a father who regretted giving his daughters the HPV vaccine that protects against cervical cancer. Not because his daughters have reported any side effects – on the contrary, his daughters are fine. Rather, he was concerned by media reports of

dozens of sick young women who attribute their illnesses to the vaccine.

Although these young women have been presented in the media as sufferers of vaccine-induced illness, both the WHO and the European Medicines Agency have cleared the vaccine. The vaccine is offered in virtually every European country, but only in Denmark is there speculation that it is making young women ill (see page 14 for an in-depth article on the subject).

In the op-ed, the father explains that the vaccines are dangerous because its manufacturer uses "controversial aluminium nanoparticles" that allegedly seep "deep into the brain and cause neurological damage." The father didn't present any sources for his claims.

Politiken was rightly condemned for publishing these two op-eds, and promised to change its policies to make it clearer to readers when they are reading opinions rather than facts, and to demand that writers provide evidence for their claims. That's good.

But why publish them at all? In defence of the newspaper's decision to publish, debate editor Ditte Giese's reasoned, "The voice of experience should not be excluded. On the contrary. Science is an authority that must be challenged just like any other – its conclusions must stand up to confrontation with the real world."

Here is the central misunderstanding of Politiken's debate editors: science is *not* an authority. Science is a *methodology* that is designed to bring us closer to the truth.

Yes, Ninka's son got better after she changed his diet. But that does not prove it was the diet that made the difference. Yes, there are dozens of sick young women who received the HPV vaccine. But just because their symptoms began after the vaccine doesn't mean the two are related. Correlation does not equal causation.

Scientific truths should be always challenged, but that can only happen by using the scientific method. And this methodology is designed precisely to overcome our tendency toward biased thinking and sentimental, anecdotal logic that tries to find connections between things that are not connected.

We cannot allow the Mauritsons of this world to sow distrust in the medical establishment that is tasked with keeping us healthy. And we cannot let them abuse scientific scepticism to provoke false hope and fear – especially when it concerns the health of children. **M**

There is a real threat of parents starting to question what is in vaccines and whether they are safe, when they actually are.

**LARS IGUM
RASMUSSEN, HEALTH
EDITOR AT POLITIKEN
NEWSPAPER. P14**



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MONTH IN REVIEW

Hate crime

A gay couple was subjected to a hate crime on a train this summer. After a kiss on the cheek, one of the men was spit on and assaulted. The 36-year-old foreign national was apprehended and sentenced to 80 days in prison.

Stop and search areas implemented across North Copenhagen

Increasing gang activity has compelled the police to place a large portion of Copenhagen under a stop-and-search order. Police say that the ambition of the zone – that covers Nørrebro, Bispebjerg, Brønshøj,

Husum and Tingbjerg – is to make the area safe for residents by stopping people from carrying or displaying weapons.

The move is supported by Lord Mayor Frank Jensen, who wrote on Facebook that

it would make life difficult for gangs operating in the area.

"Gangs should not be allowed to set the tone with their threatening behaviour, crazy driving, sale of cannabis and recruitment of children," Jensen wrote.

Panhandlers jailed

New laws came into force on June 21 that criminalised begging, following reports of a growing foreign homeless population. Three foreigners have so far been arrested and jailed for 14 days.

LABOUR SHORTAGE

One in three businesses attempting to recruit labour in the past year has been unsuccessful, according to the Confederation of Industry (DI). The survey of 3,335 companies shows that Danish businesses are struggling to find the staff they need to respond to Denmark's growing economy. In another survey of 464 businesses, around a quarter responded that they lost sales or orders because of a lack of staff. Many companies, however, have managed to cope by having other employees work overtime.

Peter Stanners

Police hold driver surveillance too long

The National Police keep data about drivers gathered from surveillance cameras for 30 days, which may be illegal, according to Information newspaper. 106 cameras on Danish roads and transport hubs collect the number plate information of all passing cars. If the police register a 'hit' – a car registered as stolen or lacking insurance, for example – police may keep the information for up to two years. If there is no hit, the data must be deleted within 24 hours. The police have confirmed, however, that they are keeping all information for 30 days, regardless of whether the number plates registered a hit.



Caleb George / Unsplash

STUDENT JOY?

In late July, 91,539 Danes found out whether they were accepted to university. The news was good for 65,165 of them, while around 20,000 were rejected and another 5,000 placed on standby. The most difficult course to get into was Academy Professional degree in Marketing Management at Erhvervsakademi Sjælland, which required a 12.3 average on a 12-point-scale, followed by International Business at Copenhagen Business School (12.2) and International Business and Politics at CBS (11.8).



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No summer

For the first time in 38 years, July temperatures did not once exceed 25 degrees in Denmark. According to DMI, this means that Denmark did not experience a single meteorological summer day.



Fake medicines taken out of circulation

Mentally ill patients may have been given counterfeit anti-psychotic medicines by mistake, reports Berlingske. The Danish medicines agency Lægemiddelstyrelsen has decided to recall the drug Xeplion 150mg, which has been sold on

the Danish market since the New Year. They discovered that although the drugs contained the correct active ingredients, they were distributed in counterfeit packaging, raising concern that the drugs had been stored inappropri-

ately. The agency says the risk to patients is low and that no adverse affects have been reported. It is, however, the first reported case of drugs packaged outside legal distribution networks ending up on the Danish market.

MASSIVE TSUNAMI Waves as tall as 90 metres were created by the June landslide in the Karrat Fjord in West Greenland, and were still 50 metres tall when they reached the other side of the fjord. These findings by a team of American researchers confirmed the enormous impact of the landslide, in which a 1100-metre section of mountain slid 300 metres into the sea. While the waves dissipated rapidly, a ten-metre tsunami hit the nearby town of Nuugaatsiaq, destroying eleven homes and killing four people.



c.by.kitty / flickr

Wolves breeding in Denmark

A photo trap has confirmed that a pair of wolves has had a litter of pups in western Denmark, south of Holstebro (the above photo is a stock photo). It's the first confirmed breeding pair since wolves were confirmed to have arrived in Denmark in 2013. The return of the large predators to Denmark's ecosystem isn't being celebrated by everyone, however, as farmers and locals expressed concern that the growing population of wolves might pose a threat to people and livestock.

Following a debate about whether the population should be controlled by hunters, the Danish Society for Nature Conservation contacted the European Commission, which confirmed that the wolf is a protected species under the EU Habitats Directive and may not be shot. While the environmental agency Miljøstyrelsen says that wolves present little threat to people and livestock, a majority of parties in Parliament are still interested in finding ways to regulate the population.



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CITY

Proposals to ban wood-burning stoves and diesel cars

In a bid to improve air quality in the city, a majority of parties in City Hall now support banning diesel cars.

"Every year, Copenhageners' lives are shortened because of pollution," Sisse Marie Welling of the Socialist People's Party (SF) told Berlingske. "It's like knowing that people die of asbestos but failing to act. We shouldn't have to put up with it just because we live in a major city."

It's a big win for Morten Kabell, Copenhagen's deputy mayor for technical and environmental affairs, who has been gathering support for the idea after proposing it earlier this year.

But for the ban to be approved, the government first needs to change environmental regulations. This looks unlikely under the current right-wing coalition government.

Paris, Athens and Mexico City have all promised to ban diesel cars beginning in 2025. The UK and France have announced similar bans on diesel cars from 2040.

"Even though the 'red' parties in Copenhagen want a diesel ban, we say no," environmental spokesperson for the coalition partner Liberal Party (Venstre), Erling Bonnesen, told Berlingske. "We are opposed to knee-jerk reactions that ruin everyday life for the many people who bought new and modern diesel cars, trusting the rules that applied at the time."

Up to 500 Copenhagen residents die from pollution every year. But diesel cars are far from the only source of the city's pollution. According to a 2015 study commissioned from Aarhus University by Copenhagen Municipality, cars, trucks and busses – not just those running on diesel – produce around 35 percent of Copenhagen's particulate pollution.

The 16,000 wood-fired heaters in private homes also produce around 28 percent of Copenhagen's particulate pollution. Welling, of SF, argues that they too should be banned.

"I hope producers in the future can create wood-fired stoves that don't [release] dangerous particles, but that's not the case now," Welling told Berlingske.



New advice has been drawn up for tourists in Copenhagen to help them avoid making mistakes on the busy cyclepaths.

Cecilia Lonning-Skovgaard, Venstre's mayoral candidate in Copenhagen's upcoming municipal election, argues that there is a better solution.

"We are entering budget negotiations with a desire to create a system that offers Copenhageners grants to swap out their old, polluting wood-fired heaters with newer and much cleaner models," she stated in a Facebook video.

Bikes should rule the road

Traffic infrastructure should favour cyclists rather than drivers. This is the less-than-surprising result of a survey carried out by Berlingske last month. They asked a representative sample of 647 Copenhagen residents whether City Hall should improve conditions

for cyclists, even if the changes degrade road conditions for drivers.

56 percent agreed with the statement, while only 24 percent disagreed. Asked whether the medieval city centre should be completely closed to cars, 49 percent agreed, and only 20 percent disagreed.

"It is so nice to see that a clear majority of Copenhageners support the policy to prioritise green and active transport over the black and passive sort," wrote Morten Kabell, Copenhagen's deputy mayor for technical and environmental affairs.

Younger people aged 18 to 35 were most in favour of prioritising cycle infrastructure, at 68 percent, while 36 to 59 year olds were 48 percent in favour.

Voters of parties belonging to the

left-wing 'red' bloc of parties were 65 percent in favour of the idea. But voters for the right-wing 'blue' bloc were less enthusiastic, with only 38 percent in agreement.

According to Copenhagen Municipality, 62 percent of residents cycle to work or school, 21 percent use public transport, and 8 percent walk. Only 9 percent drive.

Bicycle tips for tourists

Visitors to Copenhagen are often drawn to the city's bicycle culture. But riding on Copenhagen's cycle paths can be difficult for those not used to the fast pace, hand signals, and rules that dictate right-of-way.

The municipality wanted to address this issue, and reached out on Facebook to ask city residents for their best pieces of advice for visiting cyclists. According to Politiken newspaper, around 400 people responded with suggestions, from which five pieces of advice were derived.

- Stay to the right and bicycle in single file.
- Use hand signs when stopping or turning.
- Leave the cycle path to consult a map or take photos.
- Be aware of fast riders during rush hour.
- Remember that the pavement is strictly for pedestrians.

The advice will be communicated at tourist information and bicycle rental hubs, as well as on social media.

"We consider it an honour that Copenhagen's bicycle culture is now so well-known that it has become an attraction in itself," Marie Kåstrup, program leader of Copenhagen Municipality's Bicycle Programme, told Politiken.

She added that the city's bicycle culture is unique, so the advice is useful even for visitors who are already comfortable riding a bicycle in an urban environment.

"When I speak to people from Sweden, Holland and Germany, they think it's crazy that we put our hand out when we turn, or in the air when we stop," she says. **M**

Peter Stanners

Jon Ram Bruun-Pedersen / Copenhagen Media Center

[vrinsk]

English: *Neigh*
Japanese: *Hihiin*
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Jesper Raas

Butter fried frikadeller to be served with lightly sautéed wild summer cabbage with little gem lettuce, parsley.

Raising the Barr

You have to admire a restaurant that sets out its priorities so clearly from the get-go. At Barr, which opened this week in Christianshavn, you get three menus – each of them elegantly typeset and individually numbered. The first deals with beer, the second with food, and the third with yet more beer, plus a blink-and-you'll-miss-it wine list and a smattering of boozy cocktails. Good luck drinking this Barr dry.

The clue, of course, is in that word nerd's delight of a name – a playful pun, yes, but also an old Irish word for "crops" and old Norse for "barley". You learn that from the second menu, along with the fact that Barr "draws from the eating and drinking traditions of the European beer belt, building on the last decade's gastronomic development in Copenhagen."

And you can take the second half of that sentence literally. That's because you'll find Barr at Strandgade 93 – the address that used to house Noma, the restaurant that gave us new Nordic cuisine and put Copenhagen on the culinary map. (Unless you've been living under a rock, you'll have heard

that René Redzepi and his team moved out in February and plan to move into new digs later this year.)

Barr, you see, is the latest Noma spin-off, following the launch of 108 just around the corner last summer. And it has plenty going for it before you even put a morsel in your mouth. First, there's its iconic location in an 18th-century warehouse, with spectacular views of the harbour, reassuringly familiar to anyone who's ever dined at Noma. Then there's the design. The Norwegian outfit Snøhetta has turned the space into a kind of upmarket Scandinavian tavern. Think candles on tables, dried herbs on the walls, and smooth oak beams filling the gaps in the original timber-framed ceiling. Furniture fans will geek out, too. In addition to Finn Juhl chairs, there are custom-made stools in blackened steel, leather and oak, set up for the 15 countertop places that are available for walk-ins every day.

But how about the nosh? Pretty good, as it happens. I seldom come out of a Copenhagen restaurant and immediately want to return to try the rest of the menu. But I'd gladly go back to Barr purely for the sourdough bread, churned butter and pork lard – a filthily fatty spread lent texture and bite by the presence of crispy onions and thyme. I'd

I'd gladly go back to Barr purely for the sourdough bread, churned butter and pork lard – a filthily fatty spread lent texture and bite by the presence of crispy onions and thyme.

James Clasper

also go back in a heartbeat for the frikadeller – that flattened Danish meatball that's about as unfashionable a dish as it gets. At Barr, they make their patties with pork neck, giving them an oozing, melt-in-the-mouth succulence that's a perfect foil to the crunch of the summer cabbage and kale that accompanies them.

Taking inspiration from the European beer belt – as you gather from the puppy-keen but well-informed staff – Barr's dishes have their roots in the British Isles and the Low Countries, as well as in Scandinavia. Among the standout dishes: new potatoes with lovage, goats butter and bakskuld – nibbles of dried and smoked flatfish whose saltiness gives the dish texture and balance – as well as a Dutch-style hen's egg with cured herring (a must for fans of "yolk porn": Google it at your own risk). Also good is a fillet of hot smoked salmon that comes with an umami-rich "Barrmitem" glaze – a nod to the always-divisive British condiment Marmite, which is made with brewer's yeast. (I can't get enough of the original, and reckon the salmon could have benefitted from a slightly thicker coating.)

For mains, Barr offers a choice of two meaty dishes to share: cod tail cooked on a Josper grill and rested on a blackened slab

Jesper Raib



Lightly sautéed wild summer cabbage with little gem lettuce, parsley (to be served with butter fried frikadeller).

Copenhagen finally has a decent restaurant that cooks unfashionable dishes such as frikadeller and schnitzel – Barr offers a modern, elegant take on **NORTHERN EUROPEAN COMFORT FOOD**

of sourdough; and côte du boeuf with salsify and sliced mushrooms. But after pigging out on starters, the smarter move is to share a schnitzel, another once-déclassé dish enjoying something of a revival in Copenhagen. A standout dish, the juicy pork cutlet comes encrusted in a delightfully crispy coating – our waiter kept shtum about its secret ingredient – and accompanied by a cute bowl of shaved horseradish, cream and spring peas in chive oil, as well as a classic dreng sauce of capers and chopped anchovies for drizzling over the schnitzel.

If you've got room for pudding, give the waffle a go. A specialty of southern Jutland – executive chef Thorsten Schmidt's home turf – it arrives looking like a giant communion wafer perched on a pinky-purple slab of strawberry ice cream and berries. You're meant to make a mess of it with your spoon, smashing the waffle like a toddler having a tantrum. Or – more likely at Barr – like a drunk diner. Remember menu number one, the beer list? It lurches from crisp lagers to hoppy saisons to chocolate-noted porters with cautionary names like Broken Dream, and includes five beers brewed especially for Barr. They have old Norse names too, like Eafæ, a farm-to-nostril IPA that sits firmly in the Tart & Funk section of the menu, a NSFW-sounding category that offers a se-

lection of "sour brews that show rustic, earthy and wine-like characters."

Beer geeks, as you might have guessed, will love this place. And it's certainly got more character than some of the beer-focused bars that have opened in town recently. Moreover, if you don't like fancy eating, there's an adjacent bar in which to enjoy a drink on its own. But look, Copenhagen has long lacked a decent restaurant unafraid to cook unfashionable dishes such as frikadeller and schnitzel. It now has a stunning spot offering a modern, elegant take on northern European comfort food. And despite its illustrious address, it doesn't have to break the bank. Choose carefully and you can get three courses and a couple of beers, and still come away with change from 400 kroner. In Copenhagen's ever-competitive dining scene, then, the Barr just got raised again. **M**

BARR

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POLITICS

LICENCE SYSTEM ESTABLISHED TO LEGALLY GROW CANNABIS

The commercial production of cannabis is being permitted in order to supply enough of the plant for a trial legalisation of medical cannabis in the New Year.

"The reason that the government is permitting the cultivation of medical cannabis in Denmark is to ensure that we can be self-sufficient during the trial," health minister Ellen Trane Nørby told Politik- en newspaper.

The decision to use the raw plant in the trial came despite opposition from the doctor's association Lægeforeningen and the pharmaceutical authority Lægemedelstyrelsen, which both argue that the plant has not been tested enough.

The government disagrees and has spent the last six months creating strict guidelines for commercial suppliers.

"The cultivation of medical cannabis is not as simple as growing plants in a field. It needs to take place under highly controlled and very sterile conditions. These are medicines for very sick people. The production conditions need to reflect their medical use. The dosage of the active ingredient needs to be completely stable, and cannot deviate from delivery to delivery," Nørby said.

The trial legalisation of medical cannabis starts in January 2018 and will address a select group of patients, including those suffering from chronic pain and sclerosis. **M**



Flickr / eggrule

MINISTER ATTEMPTED TO SABOTAGE NEW FISHERIES LAW

The food and agriculture minister used his staff to mobilise local politicians and fishing lobby groups against fisheries laws passed by the opposition

In the late 1990s, the Danish fishing industry was threatened by widespread debt and overfishing. A privatisation of quotas in the early 2000s revived the industry and allowed stocks to recover.

But in the process, the industry has become very centralised, and a few wealthy fishing barons have systematically bought up quotas for their large trawlers. Many fishing villages have seen their boats disappear, and younger fishermen find it impossible to afford to buy quotas and get a foothold in the industry.

To address these issues, left wing parties along with the Danish People's Party (DF) bypassed the government in December to pass a fisheries package of 25 initiatives to improve the sustainability of Danish fisheries and help decentralise the quotas.

This put civil servants in the Ministry of Food and Environment in a tough position, since they are obliged to implement the 25 initiatives that their minister, Esben Lunde Larsen of the Liberal Party (Venstre), opposed.

But according to documents obtained by Berlingske, Larsen mobilised his ministry's staff to find ways to disrupt the implementation of the initiatives. In one



Fishing boats in Gilleleje harbour.

Flickr / Guillaume Baylère

email, the ministry's permanent secretary laid out a strategy to mobilise dissatisfied fishery organisations and encourage them to complain publicly, giving the minister a reason to swoop in and demand changes to the law.

In January, this exact situation played out when fisheries associations, with the support of mayors in North and West Jutland, criticised the law, prompting Larsen to propose reopening negotiations.

Fisheries spokesperson for the Social Democrats (Socialdemokraterne) Simon Kollerup was shocked by the revelation and argued that the minister would have to work hard to reinstate trust with the parliament.

"That Esben Lunde Larsen used his civil service as puppets for violent personal attacks is reprehensible and far removed from the normal rules of the game," Kollerup told Berlingske.

This is just one more scandal for the minister, who admitted in April to keeping important documents from Parliament last autumn, when negotiations were underway to create a fisheries package to address the concentration of fishing quotas.

Although his staff had provided him with 16 suggested initiatives, he chose not to share them with the rest of the parties. After Berlingske revealed that he had kept the initiatives secret, he was forced to apologise and almost lost his job. **M**

MUSLIM SCHOOLS COULD CLOSE

One in four Muslim private schools is under government supervision after concerns that their teaching methods are anti-democratic and promote gender segregation

Lower-secondary 'free schools' may lose their state funding if more than 50 percent of their students have foreign heritage, under a plan proposed by the Social Democrats (Socialdemokraterne).

Under Danish law, communities can receive state funding to establish independent lower secondary schools, as long as they satisfy certain teaching requirements.

However, seven of the 26 independent Muslim schools in Denmark were placed under supervision this year over concerns that they were not preparing students to live in a Danish society with freedom and democracy. In one case, the Nordvest Privatskole i København was put under supervision after the discovery of Arabic teaching materials that discussed 'jihad'. Other cases were based upon unequal treatment of genders, violence toward pupils, and misappropriation of funds.

Dan Jørgensen, education spokesperson for Socialdemokraterne, says the new rule is intended to close these schools.

"Learning to read, write and do arithmetic is important, but it's not the only thing you learn at school," Jørgensen told Berlingske.

"A Danish school should also be a place where you learn certain values and become educated as a citizen. Regardless of how good you are at your times-tables and doing calculus, you are not an integrated member of Danish society if in your formative years you become indoctrinated that girls and boys should be treated differently."

The proposal may face legal difficulties, as the government is not allowed to differentiate funding on the basis of religion, race or ethnicity. But Jørgensen argues that selecting schools based on the relative make up of their student bodies will be allowed.

The number of pupils at Muslim 'free schools' increased from 3,300 to 4,800 between 2007 and 2015, according to the think tank Kraka. **M**

Au pair programme under pressure

Au pairs are simply cheap household labour for the wealthy and ought to be banned, argues the far-left Red-Green Alliance (Enhedslisten).

The au pair programme was started as a cultural exchange programme that allowed young people to stay with families in foreign countries in exchange for a small salary for household tasks.

Critics argue that the programme's cultural focus has given way to a commercial exchange of services.

"The big problem is that they don't have the same rights as other workers that are protected by collective bargaining agreements," Enhedslisten's employment spokesperson Finn Sørensen told TV2 News.

"It is work like any other. But because it is not recognised as such, they are effectively in the country for some pocket money."

The number of au pairs in Denmark dropped dramatically after new rules in 2015 increased their salary from 3,200 kroner per month to 4,150 kroner. Families also became obliged to pay for their travel as well as 5,000 kroner toward their Danish lessons.

In 2014, 1908 au pair visas were granted, compared to just 1349 in 2016. This year, the number is expected to be even lower.

No more marathons on motorway bridges

Denmark's motorway bridges are no longer to be closed for sporting events after transport minister Ole Birk Olesen argued that it is too disruptive to traffic.

A number of sporting events will be affected by the decision, including the Broløbet half marathon over the Great Belt Fixed Link between Zealand and Funen. The tri-annual event will hold its sixth and final run this September.

On Facebook, Olesen pointed out that the runs cause delays when drivers are forced to travel in both directions on one side of the motorway.

"I understand that a run over our incredible bridges is a great experience. But as transport minister, I cannot be responsible for accidents and hours-long delays on central and completely irreplaceable transport arteries," Olesen wrote.

"Traffic is increasing of late because of economic growth. This makes it even hard-

er to hold runs over the bridges without severely impacting traffic."

The minister referred directly to the two-hour delays that took place during the running of the Lillebælt Halvmarathon in May, over the new Little Belt motorway bridge.

The race organiser argues that the delays were caused by an unrelated traffic accident at the intersection of two motorways.

Per Hansen, chairman of the association behind Broløbet, said he was disappointed by the minister's decision.

"I think it's sad that we cannot run on the bridge because of traffic, because the traffic moves pretty smoothly during the run," he told DR.

He added that they had already made changes to minimise the disturbance, moving the run from June to September and holding it on an afternoon when the traffic is projected to be lowest.

Not everyone agreed with Olesen's arguments, including Karsten Hønge, transport spokesperson for the Socialist People's Party (SF).

"I cannot believe that the government is happy with the transport minister unilaterally deciding to introduce such a ban," Hønge told DR. "The transport minister is coming into direct conflict with a large number of volunteers and local communities who support these events."

While the Lillebælt Half Marathon will go ahead next year after it is moved to the old Lillebælt bridge – which is not a motorway – Denmark's longest bicycle race, from Aarhus to Copenhagen, can no longer be held.

Foreign minister condemns Donald Trump

In July, US President Donald Trump tweeted a video that depicted him in a wrestling match with a person whose head bore the logo of broadcaster CNN.

The tweet was a reminder of the President's distaste of media, but according to Danish foreign minister Anders Samuelsen, it was an inappropriate move for someone with his level of power.

Samuelsen took to Facebook to fire back: "Donald Trump should really pull himself together NOW, focus on the fight for freedom and reinstate respect for the presidency." **M**

Peter Stanners

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Search and rescue missions treat the symptoms of a broken asylum system

Tens of thousands of refugees and migrants have been saved from drowning in the Mediterranean by NGOs this year. While the Liberal Party argues that these missions only encourage smugglers, the opposition Social Democrats propose establishing refugee-processing centres in North Africa and the Middle East so refugees need not risk their lives at sea for a chance at asylum



EUNAVFOR MED

Refugees and migrants are picked up in the Mediterranean by the EU's Operation Sofia.

REFUGEES and migrants from around the world have gathered on the coast of Libya. They are pushed from home by poverty, war and insecurity, and pulled by the promise of a better life in Europe. So they pay smugglers to pack them into rubber boats and set off across the Mediterranean Sea toward Europe.

This year, more than 115,000 refugees and migrants have successfully used this route, while 2,361 have lost their lives. That the first number is so high – and the latter so low – is due to the search and rescue vessels that patrol international waters close to the Libyan coast.

Many of these boats belong to NGOs such as Save the Chil-

dren and Doctors Without Borders. But while the NGOs argue that their presence is vital to reducing the numbers of lost lives at sea, European governments counter that the NGOs are making the job easier for smugglers, while also encouraging more refugees and migrants to make the dangerous journey.

In June, immigration spokesperson Marcus Knuth for the ruling coalition Liberal Party (Venstre) argued that NGOs that carry out this type of work should no longer receive government aid.

"The aid ships create an incentive to take the perilous journey over the Mediterranean, and I am critical of that. That's why we should look at how these organisa-

tions get their support and if any of it comes from Denmark," Knuth told Berlingske.

The Danish People's Party (DF) supported the Liberals' proposal.

"Aid organisations are encouraging a situation in which people cram themselves into boats and risk drowning. We should ban the relevant organisations from operating in these areas," DF's immigration spokesperson Martin Henriksen told Berlingske.

But stopping search and rescue missions would have little impact on the pressure of migration from North Africa, the NGOs reply. Instead, solutions are needed that address the crises and poverty that have driven hundreds of thousands of refugees and migrants to

a failed North African state, where they undertake a risky sea voyage in search of opportunity.

MIGRATION ANXIETIES

Immigration and terrorism are the two most pressing issues facing Europe, according to the European Commission's latest study of public opinion, the Eurobarometer. But while European leaders attempt to address these anxieties through tightened immigration and refugee policies, they are mindful of the outrage that erupted after the publication of the image of the washed-up body of three-year-old Syrian refugee Alan Kurdi, when it became clear that allowing refugees and migrants to drown in the Mediter-

Peter Stanners

anean is not a viable deterrence strategy.

So European leaders are stuck with two questions. First, how do does Europe keep the number of irregular migrants to a minimum without allowing mass drownings in the Mediterranean? And, second, what is Europe to do with those that do arrive and have legitimate a claim?

In response to Venstre's proposal to sanction NGOs, immigration spokesperson for the Conservative People's Party (Konservative) Naser Khader articulated this ethical dilemma.

"Of course we have to save lives. But I also think that the NGO ships share the responsibility for the people who make the perilous journey across the Sahara to take a rubber boat from Libya. I think the NGOs need to withdraw their boats and use their energies to advocate for legal and safe ways to seek asylum in Europe."

This summer, the issue was again at the top of Europe's political agenda, as Italy struggled to manage the 80,000 refugees and migrants that landed on its shores – 85 percent of all arrivals in Europe this year.

The Italian government threatened to give more than 200,000 refugees and migrants visas unless it was offered more EU support and offers of resettlement. Austria responded by sending troops to its Italian border, which it threatened to close if Italy followed through on its threat.

In July, European foreign ministers in Tallinn, Estonia, addressed the escalating conflict, agreeing to prolong the anti-trafficking initiative Operation Sophia until the end of 2018. 25 European countries contribute to Operation Sophia, which involves patrolling international waters in the Mediterranean to capture and dispose of migrant and smuggler boats in hopes of shutting down trafficking routes.

While Operation Sophia has saved the lives of more than 30,000 refugees since it was established in 2015, the House of Lords – the upper chamber of the UK Parliament – released a report last month arguing that the operation was a failure.

"A naval mission is the wrong tool to tackle irregular migration which begins onshore: once the boats have set sail, it is too late to undermine the business of people smuggling. An unintended consequence of Operation Sophia's de-

struction of vessels has been that the smugglers have adapted, sending migrants to sea in unseaworthy vessels. This has led to a tragic increase in deaths – 2,150 in 2017 to date," the authors wrote in 'Operation Sophia: a failed mission'.

CHANGING STRATEGIES

According to the House of Lords' report, smugglers once used larger wooden vessels carrying up to 500 migrants and refugees, but these kinds of boats are now rarely seen. This is, in part, because of Operation Sophia's strategy of destroying vessels used to traffic refugees and migrants – replacing the large boats was expensive.

Instead, there has been a transition to rubber dinghies with outboard motors. Carrying up to 100 passengers – ten times more than they are designed for – the dinghies are unstable and are often launched without enough fuel to reach the European mainland.

But according to Tuesday Reitano, deputy director of the think tank The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime, this is a deliberate strategy.

In 2013, following the deaths of hundreds of migrants and refugees near the island of Lampedusa, Italy began the search and rescue programme Mare Nostrum, which patrolled much closer to the Libyan coast than before. Reitano argues that smugglers soon realised that their boats only needed to enter international waters and make a distress call, and the Italian coastguard would move in to pick them up.

"After the smuggling networks incorporated Mare Nostrum into their business plans, observers immediately saw an increase in rescue missions involving boats without a crew and without enough fuel to reach Italian shores," says Reitano.

A GROWING MARKET

The added benefit to using the rubber dinghies is that it keeps down costs, which makes it cheaper to buy a place on the boat. Reitano explains that smugglers have professionalised the business in recent years, with agents scouring refugee camps and slums for potential clients. They then offer potential refugees transport to Libya, where they charge them for a place on the boats.

The success of this strategy can be seen in the wide variety of nationalities arriving in Italy. The

A naval mission is the wrong tool to tackle irregular migration which begins onshore: once the boats have set sail, it is too late to undermine the business of people smuggling.

UK HOUSE OF LORDS: 'OPERATION SOPHIA: A FAILED MISSION'

largest number of arrivals was from Nigeria (17 percent), while Bangladesh came second, with 10 percent of all arrivals. The remaining top ten nationalities were from West Africa, with Eritreans in ninth place.

While poor, the majority of these countries are considered safe, making the chances of successful asylum applications low. In Italy, only 44 percent of asylum applications were successful in the first three months of 2017. And of the 8,300 positive cases, just over half were given not refugee status, but humanitarian visas.

POLITICAL SOLUTIONS

It was Italy's threat to issue humanitarian visas to all arrivals that frightened European leaders this summer. The threat worked, and the EU promised €35 million to help manage the country's strained refugee system. Leaders also agreed to introduce restrictions on the sale and export of inflatable boats and outboard motors "where there are reasonable grounds to believe that they will be used by people smugglers and human traffickers."

These are not viable long-term solutions, according to Danish foreign minister Anders Samuelsen, who doesn't support Venstre's proposal to sanction NGOs that perform search and rescue missions. Trafficking across the Mediterranean can only be stopped after Libya is stabilised, and repatriation programmes are signed with countries such as Nigeria.

"We need to solve the border problems south of Libya, because it is really there that Schengen's borders start. We need to make deals with the countries that border Libya. If we make some deals that allow us to send people back, it will send a strong signal, and ultimately end this situation," Samuelsen told Politiken newspaper, adding that NGO search and rescue missions were not the problem.

Refugees shouldn't have to make the perilous journey across the Mediterranean to apply for asylum, argue the Social Democrats (Socialdemokraterne), who proposed in July the establishment of refugee-processing centres in North Africa and south of the Sahara.

"It would mean that migrants don't have to use their families' savings to pay human traffickers, while also risking life and limb to

get to Europe," Europe spokesperson Peter Hummelgaard told Berlingske, adding that it would act as a deterrence to North African and South Asian migrants who currently use the same migration routes as refugees.

Socialdemokraterne have the support of the coalition right-wing government along with the left-wing Socialist People's Party (SF).

"We need to quickly get Europe's outer borders under control, and that's the responsibility of Frontex," SF MP Holger K. Nielsen told Berlingske. "Then we need to work toward ensuring that asylum applications are processed closer to the conflicts, and that we have deals with countries to ensure repatriations that limit the flow. We also need to ensure that refugees are fairly distributed across the EU."

MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

In the meantime, opposition to search and rescue missions is building in Europe. In France, the populist youth movement Génération Identitaire is campaigning against search and rescue, arguing that mass immigration from Africa puts Europe's cultural history and ethnic identity at risk.

This summer, the group launched a crowdfunding campaign that raised more than €140,000 to send a boat to the Mediterranean to disrupt search and rescue missions.

Pulling in the opposite direction are organisations such as Blaming the Rescuers, a group of researchers and activists who argue that Europe has a moral responsibility to help those who choose to head to sea.

"Considering the condition of migrants in Libya today, preventing migrants from departing from Libyan territory amounts to complicity with arbitrary detention, torture, sexual violence, forced labour and trafficking," the group states.

"As long as migrants are forced to resort to smugglers for lack of legal pathways, proactive Search and Rescue at sea will be a humanitarian necessity – whether it is operated by states or NGOs. Only a fundamental re-orientation of the EU's migration policies to grant legal and safe passage may bring the smuggling business, the daily reality of thousands of migrants in distress, and the need to rescue them to an end." **M**



Pan American Health Organization / flickr

More than 80 million young women around the world have been given the HPV vaccine, which protects from cervical cancer. Here a girl is vaccinated in Sao Paulo, Brazil, where more than five million girls will be vaccinated.

How Danes fell out of love with the HPV vaccine

A massive public information campaign has been launched in Denmark to rebuild confidence in the HPV vaccine after widespread – but unfounded – concerns about its safety

DIZZINESS, NAUSEA, chronic headaches, breathing problems and low blood pressure – these are some of the mysterious symptoms that have been reported by dozens of Danish girls over the past eight years. Their plight became a regular fixture in the Danish media, from tabloids to broadsheets, where they expressed grief and frustration at their ill health.

The medical establishment has yet to find a diagnosis that links the variety of symptoms the girls have experienced. But many of the girls and their families are in no doubt.

"We can see that the times when Simone has felt worse absolutely

Peter Stanners

correlate with when she was given the [HPV] vaccine," Mette Kenfelt, mother to one of the affected girls, told Politiken newspaper in 2013.

The medical establishment disagrees, and no evidence has been found to cast doubt on the vaccine's safety. Still, the vaccine has fallen out of favour. While 79 percent of Danish girls born between 1998 and 2000 have received two doses of the vaccine, the same goes for only 30 percent of girls born in 2003.

The health authority Sundhedsstyrelsen has now launched a massive campaign to dispel misinformation and encourage girls to get the vaccine. At stake are not simply the lives of women who

risk developing cervical cancer, but public faith in a vaccination programme that is in peril of being fundamentally undermined.

NO EVIDENCE OF HARM

The HPV vaccine protects against some forms of the human papillomavirus (HPV), which is carried by around 80 percent of the population. While some forms of HPV cause common warts on the hands, feet and genitals, others target the woman's cervix, resulting in cell changes and sometimes cancer.

Every year, 375 women in Denmark develop cervical cancer, and 100 die from the disease. Women of all ages can develop the cancer,

but it is most often diagnosed in women around age 35. About 9,000 women in Denmark currently suffer from the disease, and while there are good chances of beating it, survivors often contend with infertility, chronic pain and incontinence.

Anti-cancer organisation Kræftens Bekæmpelse says that since the vaccine was made available to 12-year-olds in 2009, about 1,400 incidences of cervical cancer have been prevented in Denmark, and 300 lives have been saved.

As with all vaccines, a small percentage of recipients will experience side effects. Around 2,400 women have reported suspected side effects from the HPV vaccine

through the end of 2016 – approximately 0.4 percent of the 600,000 women who have received the vaccine.

While the medical authority Lægemiddelsstyrelsen must register every suspected side effect, that doesn't mean that there is a connection. Of the 312 girls to apply for compensation for injuries purportedly caused by the vaccine, only three have won their cases.

A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS

The HPV vaccine's public fall from grace is attributed to fears that the vaccine is responsible for two relatively rare illnesses. The first is POTS, a form of arrhythmia, and CRPS, a chronic pain illness. A 2015 report by the European Medicines Agency found that POTS and CRPS were as prevalent among women who were vaccinated as those who were not. The World Health Organisation has similarly cleared the vaccine of suspicion.

Danes remain wary, however. The scepticism is so entrenched that 34 percent of parents surveyed by Sundhedsstyrelsen last year said they were in doubt over whether to give their daughters the vaccine.

There is no simple answer as to why Denmark is the only country in Europe with a mainstream mistrust of the vaccine. According to Lars Igum Rasmussen, health editor at Politiken newspaper, the phenomenon started with a group of sick girls who could not find a diagnosis for their symptoms.

"When doctors examined these young women, they could find no illness – no cancer, no asthma, no allergies. So there were patients with symptoms, but without a diagnosis, who were passed around in the system. Everyone agreed they were sick, but they weren't taken seriously, so they started to believe it was the vaccine," Rasmussen says.

In 2013, when Politiken published the first in a series of articles that suggested a link between the vaccine and severe side effects, doctors in the Synkopecentret at Frederiksberg Hospital were beginning to see a new group of patients. The centre treats patients who suffer from fainting disorders, which primarily affect the elderly, so the arrival of young patients was surprising.

With stories in the media starting to emerge about the possible connection to the HPV virus, doc-

tors at the Synkopecentret decided to investigate whether there was a physical basis for the young women's symptoms. In 2015, they published a study that suggested that there could be a connection between the HPV vaccine and the subsequent development of POTS.

The same year, doctors from Synkopecentret appeared in a TV2 documentary called "The Vaccinated Girls". Alongside moving testimonies from a number of young women who suspected the vaccination was responsible for their illness, the doctors refused to rule out a connection.

The documentary reinforced fears about the vaccine, which by this time had begun its precipitous decline. Although it was nominated for five journalism prizes at the prestigious Cavling Awards, the documentary has since been widely condemned by journalists and health professionals for building its case on anecdotes and inferences rather than facts and data.

"There are ugly scandals in the pharmaceutical industry – big scandals that have killed people," says Rasmussen. "All journalists want to find the next scandal, but in the health area it's very difficult to actually prove causality. Just because the girls became sick at around the same time as they got the vaccine, does it mean it was the vaccine? No studies show increased prevalence of these symptoms in a vaccinated versus non-vaccinated population. So there was no causality."

Leif Vestergaard, director of Kræftens Bekæmpelse, blamed the documentary for the falling uptake of the vaccine.

"The documentary materially contributed to the decline in the number of people taking the vaccine. The insecurity among young people and their parents is growing. The number of cervical cancer cases is growing," he told Politiken newspaper.

NOT THE VACCINE

New studies have further undermined the suspicions of the vaccine sceptics. This summer, the Norwegian Institute of Public Health released a study that found no connection between the HPV vaccine and chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), whose symptoms overlap with POTS.

The study showed that girls who were frequent users of the health service were more likely to be diagnosed with CFS than girls with

There's a lot at stake. If mistrust grows toward one vaccine, it might grow for all vaccines. This is the worst possible outcome for the health authorities.

LARS IGUM RASMUSSEN, HEALTH EDITOR AT POLITIKEN NEWSPAPER

a more normal interaction with the health service. A similar pattern emerged in a 2016 study by the Danish disease authority, SSI, which found that girls who reported suspected side effects from the vaccine were twice as likely to be in contact with the health service before they fell ill.

"We can see with clear statistical significance that they have had a greater use of health services and an increased number of symptoms reported at hospitals even before they received their first HPV vaccine," Kåre Mølbak, department head at SSI, told Politiken newspaper.

REBUILDING TRUST IN VACCINES

To restore trust in the vaccine and improve vaccination rates, a campaign was launched in May by Sundhedsstyrelsen, Lægemiddelsstyrelsen and Kræftens Bekæmpelse. 'Stop HPV – Stop Cervical Cancer' will run until the end of 2018, providing information that the organisations hope will increase uptake of the vaccine to 90 percent of the population.

"It is vital that we rebuild trust in the vaccine programme, because we know that the HPV vaccine can prevent cervical cancer," Sundhedsstyrelsen's director, Søren Brostrøm, said. "We know that the vaccine is both effective and safe, and that it is at least as safe as other vaccines."

As Sundhedsstyrelsen rolls out the campaign on social media with the hope of getting in direct contact with undecided parents, scepticism toward the vaccine remains deep. There are still a number of websites and Facebook pages dedicated to poking holes in official as-

sections of the vaccine's safety.

Rasmussen explains that the publicity campaign is designed not only to increase the uptake of the HPV vaccine, but also to ensure that fears about this vaccine don't morph into widespread scepticism of the vaccination programme as a whole.

"There's a lot at stake. If mistrust grows toward one vaccine, it might grow for all vaccines. This is the worst possible outcome for the health authorities. The child vaccination programme is the most important tool they have for controlling disease in the population. And while a small number of parents might not vaccinate, their job is to keep that number as small as possible. The problem is that we are forgetting about these diseases, and we only read about them now. So there is a real threat of parents starting to question what is in vaccines and whether they are safe, when they actually are," Rasmussen says.

He adds that it's important to remember that at the heart of the debate are a group of young women who are undoubtedly ill – even if their illness was not caused by the vaccine – and if the health service hadn't been so slow to give them the support they needed, the vaccine crisis might have been averted.

In May, Sundhedsstyrelsen acknowledged the role it played.

"These women were not properly helped in the health service," Brostrøm told TV2 News. "The health service is not perfect, just like science is not perfect, and the authorities are not perfect. They have been thrown around in the system without getting a proper answer." M

Facts about cervical cancer and the HPV vaccine

- At least 80 percent of all sexually active persons will be infected with HPV one or more times during their lives.
- HPV infection is most common among young people. Around 4 in 10 Danes under the age of 30 are infected with HPV right now.
- Every year, around 15,000 Danish women are diagnosed with cell changes caused by the HPV virus, and around 6,000 Danish women will have surgery to remove precursors to cervical cancer.
- Approximately 375 Danish women are diagnosed with cervical cancer annually – more than half are under 50 years of age. The most common age at time of diagnosis is 35.
- Denmark has the highest incidence of cervical cancer in the Nordic region.
- Every year, 100 Danish women die from the disease.
- The HPV vaccine can prevent 70 percent of all cases of cervical cancer.
- The WHO recommends HPV vaccination, which is offered to girls in virtually every European country.

Source: Sundhedsstyrelsen

ASRIN MESBAH and her team of legal aid volunteers work for free to secure the rights of refugees and immigrants with limited resources. She was shocked to find out how many cases are mismanaged and worries that it demonstrates the government's willingness to go to any length to limit immigration – even if it undermines core democratic principles

I don't want to decide how many immigrants come to Denmark. I just want the government to follow the law

I think it's scary that the government is so afraid of migrants and refugees that they are willing to risk our democracy and rule of law. It's very depressing and scary. Some days I get so depressed that I don't even go outside."

When Asrin Mesbah does stay home, she has a view overlooking the city from her sixth-floor student apartment. It's small for three people – her two teenage sons, aged 12 and 14, share one of the two rooms – but it's all the 38-year-old law student can afford. Because when she's not trying to finish her law degree, she works full time as the chairman of JuraRådgivningen, a legal aid charity for immigrants and refugees.

Over the past 18 months, she, 16 law student volunteers, and two retired lawyers have helped more than 2,000 people and closed more than 200 cases, mostly family reunification applications. In the process, they have discovered widespread mismanagement of casework by the Immigration Service – illegal rulings, lost documentation, slow-walking of applications.

"It was an awakening when I opened JuraRådgivningen and saw how improperly the cases were being handled. At law school, you learn that the authorities must talk to people in a manner that they can understand,

that they can't take applicants' original documentation, and that they have to process cases expediently. So I was really in shock. And I realised I can do something. I can use my education and do something. And I was also angry. How can they treat people like this? It's awful."

A CHANCE ENCOUNTER

Born in Iran, Mesbah came to Denmark at age five as a refugee with her mother and two siblings. They joined her father, who had already been in the country for a few years. His unwillingness to seek help for trauma he had experienced in Iran led to the breakup of her parents' marriage.

The small family lived in the Copenhagen suburb of Greve and integrated easily. Her siblings are now both university-educated while her mother worked for almost two decades in children's services at Frederiksberg Kommune, before starting a new job at the State Administration.

Mesbah first decided to study law after leaving her boyfriend, the father of her children. His refusal to accept the breakup forced her to move her sons across the city and, when he continued to seek them out, to call the police. In the absence of physical violence or threats, however, the police said they couldn't help. It was her first encounter with the limitations of

the law, and she was impelled to learn more.

Then two years ago, as she was starting her Master's in law, she encountered a 19-year-old Syrian man crying on the street outside the offices of the Immigration Service on Ryesgade, near her home.

"I asked what his problem was, and he said he had applied for family reunification with his mother. He had been rejected, but couldn't read the decision because it was in Danish. He spoke to someone at the Immigration Service who said they would come out and talk to him, but they hadn't. That was nineteen days ago. I invited him over to my house, where I made him some food, translated the decision and wrote a complaint."

Mesbah was moved by the experience, and thought there must be others who were having trouble finding the help they needed. So she wrote a post in a Facebook group for refugees and refugee activists called Venligboerne (the Friendly Residents), explaining that she was a law student and offering help. She was immediately inundated with phone calls.

"I was like, shit, what do I do now? I called two girlfriends and said, 'I think I've done something and now I'm in big trouble because I have a lot of cases and don't know what to do. Can you help?' They said they were going on vacation, but still offered to help. We took on nineteen cases and quickly discovered that

Words:
Peter Stanners

Photos: Christoffer
Rosenfeldt





there were lots of problems with the applications," she says.

Some applications were rejected on the grounds of incomplete documentation, even though the Immigration Service hadn't specified what documentation was needed. Another common problem was that applicants were left in limbo as their cases stalled in the authority's bureaucracy.

Mesbah found that many immigrants and refugees had been waiting years to be reunited with their families. Asylum applications are supposed to take seven months, but applicants frequently had to wait a year before the process could even begin. Once they were accepted, they faced another ten months' wait for their family reunification applications to be processed – often longer.

In early 2016, the issue became a hot political topic after Mesbah convinced the far-left Red-Green Alliance to take up the cause. Newspapers reported on the hundreds of asylum seekers who had experienced long delays to their cases and, after considering a complaint, the Ombudsmand asked the Immigra-

tion Service to change its procedures to prevent similar delays to future cases.

OVERTURNING BAD DECISIONS

After starting JuraRådgivningen two years ago, it didn't take long for Mesbah to earn some supporters. Six months later, they were given free office space in the meatpacking district Kødbyen, and last summer they received a 100,000 kroner grant from a private benefactor. Since everyone works for free, the money goes to helping refugees.

According to Mesbah, they receive calls from around the world from people in legal difficulty who have been referred by friends, lawyers, and sometimes even municipalities. After an interview, they assess whether or not they can take the case, which is not always possible. For example, unless a refugee is granted asylum because of political, social, or religious persecution, they must now wait three years before they can apply for family reunification – there's no way around that.

"Our experience is that it's not possible to change those judgements, so it's hopeless,"

I think it's on purpose – they hope the asylum seekers will leave. They just don't want to give these people family reunification, and they do everything they can to avoid it.

she says. "In practice, they end up without their families for five or six years."

But there are still plenty of cases for them to work on. For example, Mesbah's team has successfully reversed 20 decisions to deny family reunification to unaccompanied minors – asylum seekers under age 18 are considered a vulnerable group and can more easily be reunited with their families.

In other cases, the Immigration Service accepts family reunification with the child's father, but not their mother. According to Mesbah, these rulings violate article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and are often overturned on appeal.

So why does the Immigration Service get so many cases wrong? Mesbah has no doubt.

"I think it's on purpose – they hope the asylum seekers will leave. They just don't want to give these people family reunification, and they do everything they can to avoid it."

DEFENDING "GREEDY" REFUGEES

The vast majority of Danes voted for parties across the political spectrum that support tighter immigration regulations. But while the government has a mandate for its restrictions on family reunification and refugee rights, Mesbah is concerned by the government's apparent willingness to undermine the law to accomplish this.

"I'm not a debater, I'm a lawyer. I don't want to decide how many immigrants come to Denmark or not. I just want the government to follow the law – the Immigration Ministry, the Immigration Service, the refugees, everybody. I make that very clear," she says.

She lights her first cigarette of the interview when we broach the subject of Inger Støjberg, the Immigration Minister. A divisive figure, she is both incredibly popular and incredibly abrasive. For example, she suggested that Danes should inform the police if they hear foreign languages being spoken in the back rooms of pizzerias, in case the employees might be illegal immigrants.

Støjberg uses her Facebook page and blog on BT to draw attention to the dangers she perceives as coming from immigration, and expresses anger at refugees she considers insufficiently grateful for Denmark's hospitality.

A column last February dealt with the case of a Syrian family in Tårnby municipality. The nine-year-old daughter arrived first and was granted refugee status. Because she was a minor, she was granted family reunification. Her family all ended up living in the home of the girl's uncle – four adults and six children in an apartment that was perhaps suitable for half that number.

It was not an ideal situation, but when they asked the municipality for help finding a new home, they were refused. The municipality has a duty to find housing for the families refugees of once they arrive through family reunification. But the same obligation does not apply if the refugee is a child.

The remaining family members subsequently applied for and were granted asylum,

meaning that the municipality was now obligated to find them housing. Outraged, Tårnby mayor Henrik Zimino tipped off Støjberg, who wrote in her column that new rules were needed to prevent "benefits shopping".

"Of course, not all refugees are as greedy as they are. Many show humility and graciousness, but a family like this ruins things for many, many others," she wrote, adding in an interview with BT, "It's another example of how well-informed asylum seekers are about the situation in Denmark."

But Mesbah knew that wasn't the whole story, because the family in Tårnby were her clients. She was the one who had recommended the family seek asylum – they are war refugees, after all.

So Mesbah penned a response to Støjberg in Information newspaper – later shared almost 17,000 times – in which she accused the minister of not having actually understood the facts of the case.

She added, "That an integration minister and a Mayor in our community would use such a vulnerable family to justify a political agenda of implementing as many immigration restrictions as possible, I find frankly despicable."

EDUCATING THE MINISTER

Mesbah invited Støjberg to visit JuraRådgivning in order to see their work, and the following month, the minister visited the offices in Kødbyen. At the meeting, they told the minister that they were concerned that the Immigration Service took – and sometimes lost – irreplaceable original documentation, that cases were being processed too slowly, and that Denmark risks being found in violation of human rights laws for its family reunification laws.

Støjberg explained that there was a need for restrictive refugee policies, given the economic and social issues related to immigration. But Mesbah is tired of this generalisation.

"It's not OK that some immigrants don't work, don't have any education and don't do anything. But why do we allow the wives who came here on family reunification not to work and to live instead off money from the state? And why mix things up – refugees are one thing and immigrants are another," says Mesbah.

"But there is also a large number who are not like that. Almost all of us at JuraRådgivningen are immigrants. When Støjberg left, one of the volunteers said, 'Fuck that, she doesn't even have a university education'. And it's true – we were almost all immigrants, and we were more highly educated than her. It was very strange."

THREAT TO RULE OF LAW

Mesbah's concerns about Støjberg extend beyond the minister's generalised and persistent negativity toward immigrants and refugees – she believes the minister is willing to lie and break the law to get her way.

The clearest example is Støjberg's order last year to separate married refugee cou-

ples if one was under age 18, out of concern that they had entered into a forced union. 34 couples were separated following the order in February 2016 – the majority were female asylum seekers aged 16 or 17, with partners aged 17 to 23.

The policy was overturned the following July, however, after it was ruled that the blanket order was illegal. Danish law requires that a case worker make an individual assessment before deciding whether to separate a refugee couple according to the order, or whether extenuating circumstances allow the couple to remain together.

While Støjberg has insisted that the couples were separated on a case-by-case basis, there is no documentation to support her claim. There is also reason to believe that Støjberg was warned that her order was illegal before she implemented it, and that she decided to follow through with it anyway.

This lack of respect for the legal process is worrisome, argues Mesbah.

"The fact is that they did not follow the law. The law says that all relevant parties need to be consulted before an authority makes a decision – it's essential law. You learn this in the first year of law school – everyone needs to be heard. You cannot take people's children without first talking to them. You cannot separate a couple without first talking to them. She didn't hear these people. She broke Danish law," she says.

"We are losing our own democracy in the process and she doesn't get it. The rule of law is essential in a democracy, and if you don't respect it, then what do you have? We end up being no better than countries that don't respect democracy and the rule of law. It's pathetic and it just makes me so angry."

TO BE A DANE

Mesbah's work at JuraRådgivningen dominates her life. In fact, the reason she hasn't completed her Master's thesis is because of a 14-year-old Syrian orphan. The municipality rejected his family reunification application with his siblings, and placed him in a home among adults. Mesbah didn't think that was a constructive or safe environment for him, but her attempts to improve his living situation fell on deaf ears in the municipality, despite countless meetings. Until, that is, she was advised to seek custody herself.

"We had to complain a lot before we prevailed. And the boy is just a mess now, even though we won the case and they apologised. He said that everything he experienced in Syria was nothing compared to what he's experienced since coming to Denmark."

As the boy's guardian, Mesbah can decide which school he goes to and where he lives, which is currently with his uncle.

"I hang out with him two or three days a week. He comes and hangs out and eats food and can just be a child. He thinks it's so quiet here. So he doesn't say much, he just lies there and watches Netflix and I make him pancakes."

I am a world citizen, I've always had an identity crisis. I don't feel one hundred percent Iranian, and over the past few years, with the change in mentality and politicians, it's like I don't want to be Danish either.

Her sons face their own challenges in Denmark. In February, the government submitted a statement to Parliament expressing concern that ethnic Danes are no longer in the majority in certain parts of the country. The statement – which carries no legal consequences – was passed by a majority in Parliament, and seemed to suggest that the 170,000 Danes descended from immigrants were no longer considered Danish.

"My twelve-year-old son reads the newspaper every day, and one day he came home and said, 'Mommy, Mommy did you hear? We are not Danish anymore! Didn't you read the newspaper? We are not fucking Danish anymore!' He was in shock. But his big brother said, 'Fuck that, what's the problem? Why would you want to be Danish?' So we talked and I told them not to worry, that we are world citizens, and that it's not a problem. But he was very upset. He couldn't understand why Parliament would say this about third-generation immigrants – my children. They only speak Danish. They haven't seen anything else, they have Danish passports."

As for herself?

"I am a world citizen," she says. "I've always had an identity crisis. I don't feel one hundred percent Iranian, and over the past few years, with the change in mentality and politicians, it's like I don't want to be Danish either." **M**





CAPTURED

Peter Stanners

Copenhagen Open puts the city at the centre of the skateboarding world

SKATEBOARDING has long been an important component of Copenhagen's urban culture. In recent years, however, the city has become a global hub for the fast-growing sport

thanks to investment in state-of-the-art skateparks, such as the outdoor concrete park in Fælleparken and indoor Copenhagen Skatepark in Sydhavn.

Its public infrastructure, too, is popular among street skateboarders, who attack the obstacles with a mix of flips, grinds and slides. In the series above, American skateboarder Alex Midler tackles a rail on the new Inderhavns-

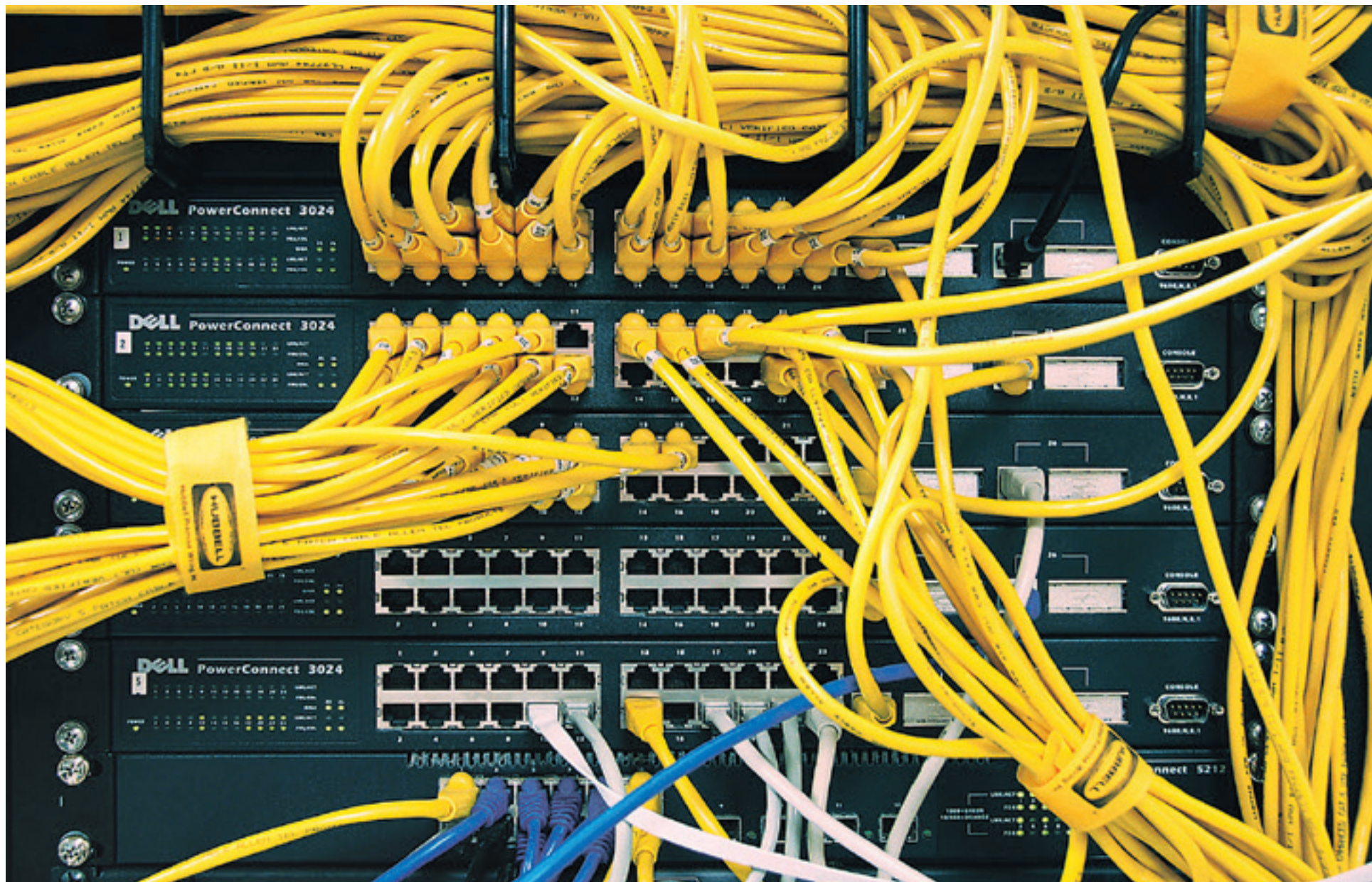


bro with a backside tailslide – which he first completed after a half-dozen painful failed attempts.

Midler was in the city to compete in the Copenhagen Open tournament, widely considered one of the world's best competitions. The competition, which is held over a week in

July, drew thousands of international spectators that, at times, brought the city to a standstill.

The winner of the final competition at Copenhagen Skatepark in Sydhavn was Ishod Wair, a 25-year-old professional skateboarder from the USA. **M**



Dave Herholz / flickr

The great surveillance hypocrisy

Denmark promotes democracy in the Middle East but sells cyber surveillance tools to oppressive regimes that stifle political dissent

NESTLED IN A NONDESCRIPT industrial park in the north Jutland town of Nørresundby is one of Denmark's most controversial tech exporters. Not that their products are available to the average consumer, mind you. They sell cyber surveillance software to governments around the world, and they are good at it. So good that British weapons manufacturer BAE Systems bought the company for 1.2 billion kroner in 2010.

Following the sale, the company changed its name from ETI to BAE Systems Applied Intelligence, and continued its development into an export success story.

There are always serious questions to be asked about the sale of surveillance equipment

**ANDREW SMITH,
CAMPAIGN AGAINST
ARMS TRADE**

Joshua Hollingdale

But after some dogged reporting, Information newspaper has revealed that BAE Systems has sold the company's cyber surveillance technology to some of the most anti-democratic and authoritarian regimes in the world – with the written approval of the Danish government.

"I fear that the equipment has been used to suppress the democratic opposition that Denmark should be actively supporting," stated Nikolaj Villumsen, foreign affairs spokesperson for the Red-Green Alliance (Enhedslisten), in a press release.

"We cannot combat hate and

extremism in the Middle East if we in Denmark and the West are helping the repressive regimes of Saudi Arabia, Oman and Qatar, which are notorious for exporting extreme Islamism."

BYPASSING THE CENSORS

In principle, Denmark should not be able to export cyber surveillance software to these countries. Following the Arab Spring, leaked documents revealed how European surveillance software had been used by regimes in the Middle East, including Egypt and Tunisia, to suppress dissent and disrupt pro-democratic movements.

New EU rules introduced on December 31, 2014, were designed to stop the sale to authoritarian regimes of so-called dual-use cyber surveillance software – tools that could have both civilian and military applications. The Danish Business Authority (Erhvervsstyrelsen) must now approve all export licences in order to ensure the software is not being sold to governments that would use it to spy on their populations.

Even after the new rules were implemented, however, Erhvervsstyrelsen still approved 14 export licences for cyber surveillance software to non-EU countries.

The revelation was made last year by Information newspaper thanks to freedom of information requests, though Erhvervsstyrelsen censored the identities of the intended recipients. Through a bit of digital trickery, however, Information was able to see through the censored lines to deduce that one of the recipients was the United Arab Emirates – a country with a powerful security apparatus known for silencing political opposition.

The permit allowed BAE Systems to sell surveillance and data analysis systems to the United Arab Emirates for use in "national security and the investigation of serious crimes." Specifically, the software allows the user to extract metadata and content such as audio, video, messages and attached files, and is also capable of outlining an individual's social network. According to Information, the software allows for mass and indiscriminate surveillance of an entire population.

Information then teamed up with the BBC to try and discover the remaining clients, and revealed in June that Saudi Arabia, Oman and Qatar had also purchased software from BAE Systems Applied Intelligence. The licences were for the same software sold to the UAE, which could easily be used to suppress political activity.

MINISTERS TO ANSWER TO PARLIAMENT

Following the revelations, opposition parties Enhedslisten and The Alternative (Alternativet) called for a parliamentary consultation – now scheduled for the autumn – with business minister Brian Mikkelsen and foreign minister Anders Samuelsen, whose ministries were involved in approving the export licences.

"I will use all the parliamentary tools at my disposal to stop these exports – and to identify the authorities and politicians responsible," stated Alternativet's peace and defence spokesperson René Gade in a press release.

Business minister Mikkelsen has defended the export licences, saying that the Foreign Ministry found no reason to oppose the export licences in its assessment of the potential human rights impacts of the exports to the Middle Eastern regimes requested by Erhvervsstyrelsen.

"[The Foreign Ministry] has the greatest expertise in evaluating the state of human rights. That is not something we determine in the Ministry of Industry, Business and Financial Affairs," he told Information.

Asked whether there was a risk that a state like Saudi Arabia could potentially use the technology to persecute political dissidents, the minister answered that he "did not know anything about that."

"That is why we have a system in place in which we ask the opinion of the Foreign Ministry. They are the experts," he said.

The freedom of information requests also uncovered email correspondence between Erhvervsstyrelsen and the UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). A senior UK civil servant wrote to Erhvervsstyrelsen that if the BAE Systems export application were submitted in the UK, it would be denied due to national security concerns.

Mikkelsen does not see any problem in the way the government has managed BAE Systems' exports, but he does want to have a look at the "grey areas" connected with exporting this kind of technology to potentially oppressive regimes.

"The rules in Denmark, at the EU level and on a global level are not crystal clear in this area. Of course we should not export technology that can be used to violate human rights. But with new technology, there are some grey areas. And that is where we need to try to look – where we can get better at finding those grey areas," he told Information.

Mikkelsen did not divulge what concrete initiatives might be needed on a national, EU or global level, saying that he needed to consult his colleagues in government.

LACK OF POLITICAL WILL

Claus Juul, a judicial consultant at Amnesty International, condemned the exports.

"Allowing Danish companies to sell mass surveillance equipment to countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Oman – states that have been watching their populations for years and who have brutally crushed any potential criticism of their anti-democratic, oppressive regimes – means we are helping despots and dictators

Allowing Danish companies to sell mass surveillance equipment to countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Oman ... means we are helping despots and dictators hold their people in an iron grip and preventing any real democratic opposition from emerging in these countries.

CLAUS JUUL,
JUDICIAL
CONSULTANT
AT AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL

hold their people in an iron grip and preventing any real democratic opposition from emerging in these countries. It is equivalent to selling arms to criminal regimes, knowing that these regimes will turn those arms on their own people," he says.

Juul adds that legally binding agreements should be made in the UN and the EU to prohibit the sale of surveillance systems to oppressive regimes.

"Furthermore, nation-states such as Denmark should make sure that national legislation is in place to ensure that the authorities – such as Erhvervsstyrelsen – can administer said legislation and actually enforce the rules, and not just see an opportunity for lucrative export. It is not like Erhvervsstyrelsen did not know that Saudi Arabia is a deeply repressive state that could be expected to use technology like this in aid of a dark cause."

Andrew Smith, media co-ordinator for the organization Campaign Against Arms Trade, agrees.

"There are always serious questions to be asked about the sale of surveillance equipment, particularly when it is to repressive regimes and those with appalling human rights records. This equipment could be used to intimidate or abuse activists. If these regimes cannot be trusted to observe the rights and liberties of their own citizens, then they should not be trusted with surveillance equipment that can be used against them," he says, adding that the issue cannot necessarily be fixed with more legislation.

"In a lot of cases, European countries have export criteria that should stop the sale of weapons and dangerous equipment to human rights abusers. Very often the main problem is a lack of political will. Governments that arm and support oppressive regimes are complicit in the abuses that they carry out. Campaigners need to do all we can to expose the dangers of the trade and mobilise public opposition to it."

HYPOCRITICAL POLICIES

The sale of Danish surveillance software to Middle Eastern regimes – which is thought to have started long before BAE Systems acquired ETI in 2011 – could have actively undermined Denmark's

own efforts to support democracy in the region.

"These intelligence agencies have systematically watched and persecuted human rights activists in a number of very authoritarian countries, so it is close to certain that the technology will be used for exactly that purpose," said former diplomat and author Mogens Blom in an interview on the P1 radio show Orientering.

"What is ironic – and regrettable – is that one of the main goals of the Danish-Arab Partnership Program (DAPP) is to promote Denmark's image and the view of Denmark as a democratic and inclusive society. And with something like this, you risk promoting a very different image of Denmark."

The Foreign Ministry launched DAPP in 2003, which has had an annual budget of 275 million kroner since 2012. Its stated goals include "[supporting] the reform and democratization processes in the Middle East and North Africa" and "building on the existing and important partnerships between Arab and Danish organizations that are working together to strengthen human rights, media and women's position in society, among other things."

For example, an article on the DAPP website from January 2014, "The fight for a free and fair press in Tunisia", outlines the oppressive tactics used by the Tunisian government to silence the media. According to the Tunisian Centre of Press Freedom, security services were responsible for 69 physical assaults on journalists.

Weeks earlier, in December 2013, a DR2 documentary reported on leaked documents that showed BAE Systems sold surveillance systems to Tunisia. Anonymous sources from inside the security services speaking to Information newspaper explained how the software was used by the dictator Ben Ali to suppress dissent before he was deposed in 2011.

"We focussed on all political opponents – there were no preferences. Everyone needed to be watched. Ben Ali wanted to know who his friends and enemies were. We had to inform on even sarcasm and jokes. All the politicians who are now in power were under surveillance." **M**



Hard time made harder

As violence against prison guards sharply increases, the Justice Minister Søren Pape Poulsen has warned that the Danish prison model may need a rethink. While he wants more focus on the prison's role as punishment, experts and the Danish Prison Officers Union warn that violence will only escalate if guards are discouraged from forming relationships with inmates.

"THAT GUY THERE – he is the world's best man," says A*, and points to the closed door. On the other side of it stands the prison guard who escorted A to the visitation room where he is now sitting.

"He's the one who motivated me to get off drugs. He said, 'Believe me, it'll help you'. And it did. I haven't smoked weed in three months, and I don't want to either," he says, nodding to himself.

The visitation room at Enner Mark Prison has a large window that looks out over two grassy fields separated by a three-metre-high fence. On the other side, by a building, a guard and an inmate stand and smoke cigarettes. They don't appear to be aware of each other either – just two guys smoking and staring into their own space. The inmate finishes and goes back inside. The guard blows out another smoky breath and remains, leaning against the wall.

Prison guards do more than simply ensure that criminals serve their sentences without harming themselves or each other – guards in Danish prisons also function as motivational rehabilitators by developing relationships with the inmates in their care.

This relationship is now up for review, however. With increasing gang activity across the country and a steep increase in violence against prison guards last year, justice minister Søren Pape Poulsen is drawing up new guidelines and priorities for the prison and probation service. Among his ideas is reducing the resources spent on resocialising hardened criminals.

"We need to reconsider whom we choose to resocialise," Poulsen told Information newspaper.

"I want to look at how we split the resources between resocialisa-

I want to look at how we split the resources between resocialisation – education and work – and the security situation for the inmates. Being in prison should be hard – it shouldn't feel good.

JUSTICE MINISTER SØREN PAPE POULSEN

Simone Nilsson

tion – education and work – and the security situation for the inmates. Being in prison should be hard – it shouldn't feel good."

While the proposals are not expected until the autumn, he has told the Danish Prison Officers Union Magazine that he wants a greater degree of separation between punishment and rehabilitation. Guards in closed prisons – such as the one A is in – could end up focussing much more on punishment, and less on forging relationships with the inmates.

GUARDS UNDER PRESSURE

The idea hasn't garnered much support, however, especially not from Kim Østerbye, president of the Danish Prison Officers Union.

"The more we distance ourselves from the inmates, the more the violence will increase. Basically, it's harder to punch someone if

you know them," he says.

Østerbye is outspoken about the challenges facing the Danish prison system, which is understaffed and suffering from high levels of sick leave among staff. The latter issue may be related to the 50 percent increase in violent incidents directed at prison staff between 2015 and 2016, when over 500 violent incidents were reported.

Despite these challenges, the Danish prison system is relatively successful, and only 25 percent of inmates reoffend after release. Østerbye argues that guards help motivate the inmates and reinforce good behaviour, which keeps recidivism low. In Norway, which employs a similar rehabilitation system, reoffending is even lower, at 20 percent.

By contrast, in countries where prison guards keep a greater distance from inmates, such as France

and the UK, recidivism stands at around 40 to 45 percent.

"Developing relationships is what we excel at in Scandinavia," Østerbye says. "The inmates need motivation if they are to change their behaviour, and you can't motivate negatively. If the only relationship you have is negative management of your behaviour, the only thing we will see is a negative spiral that will turn against us."

NO PIZZA PARTIES IN PRISON

A knows a lot about hardened prisons – he was held on remand in Turkey while waiting to be picked up by Interpol.

"They walk around with whips there," he says, and leans over the table.

"I'll tell you, I'd never consider jaywalking in Turkey. They cram you in with 300 other people. It's horrible." He shakes his head. "But in

Combatting violence against prison guards

In 2016, the Prosecutor's Office provisionally registered 621 episodes of violence or threats against its staff, of which 202 involved the use of force. The figures cover episodes both inside and outside prisons.

In total, there were 220 more episodes of violence registered last year than in 2015. As a result, justice minister Søren Pape Poulsen established a Task Force in January to propose ways to strengthen the security of the country's prisons. In May, the Task Force presented 17 recommendations.

Among these recommendations is a pilot project involving body cameras for officers and dashcams in service vehicles. Both types of cameras are considered to have a preventive effect on violence and threats while also allowing for the subsequent evaluation of specific episodes. This can aid in the implementation of safety measures.

The task force also proposes stricter punishment for violence, threats of violence and inappropriate use of language. Inmates must also be easier to transfer from open to closed prisons.

The Task Force's recommendations include:

- Stronger disciplinary measures for use of violence, threats and inappropriate language by inmates. Possibility to transfer inmates from open to closed institutions.
- Fewer random urine tests, and more targeted drug testing where there is grounds for suspicion.
- More knowledge collection from abroad.
- Video surveillance of common areas
- Bodycams and dashcams
- More training in methods of transport during prison officer training
- Protection of employee identities
- Working group to study the role of mental illness in prisoner violence
- Better collegial and management follow-ups after episodes of violence

Source: The Ministry of Justice

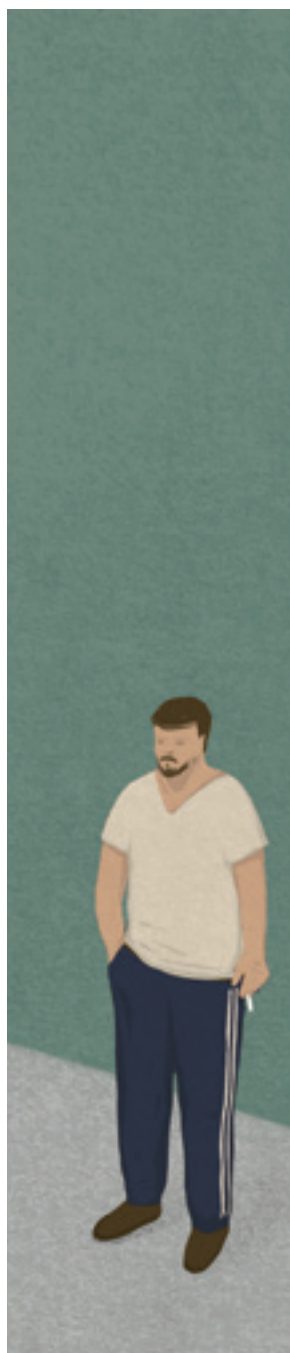
Turkey, there's hatred towards the system. They don't try to help you, only scare you. Here they want to help you be a better human being."

The Scandinavian prison model is recognised around the world for its focus on treatment and rehabilitation rather than punishment. Inmates are given work duty, and can use the money they earn to buy a wide range of food and convenience products. They can even buy yeast they can use to bake bread in their kitchens.

A works in the carpentry workshop, where he makes furniture used in the prison, including here, in the visitation room.

"It's much better than the guys who get to put tiny screws in little plastic bags all day," he says and laughs. "But it's all still work, even if it only pays ten kroner an hour."

Rehabilitation programs such as these can reduce recidivism, according to a report prepared for the Justice Ministry in 2015. The report also found that tougher sentencing does not reduce the likelihood of reoffending, and can



even increase criminal behaviour.

The low rates of recidivism in both Norway and Denmark are a testament to this fact, says Østerbye.

"For some reason, it just so happens to work better our way. And it's not about sharing pizza with the inmates," he says.

"Some people practically think that that's what we do, and that's just nonsense. It's about making people stop committing crime, by showing them that they can't beat up the old lady in the grocery store when she bumps into them, but that they should manage their anger instead. That's all we do. It's not some fancy system."

SYMPATHY IS SECURITY

Assistant Professor Lise Billund of the Institute of Communication and Psychology at Aalborg University wrote her PhD on the dual role of prison guards as both rehabilitators and enforcers of order and security.

"The guards are expected to be able to balance security and order on one side, and support and moti-

vation on the other. It's obviously very complex," she says.

"The guards feel the work they do in terms of relationship-building is extremely important to the safety dynamic."

She is concerned that an increased focus on punishment will only result in more aggression and anger that will not only increase violence against the guards, but also jeopardise the rehabilitation of the inmates.

Instead, prison guards should have more comprehensive training in how to handle their dual role of control and rehabilitation.

"The guards are well-educated in safety measures, but when it comes to the supportive relationships they develop, they are mostly left to their own convictions of right and wrong as well as to the culture of the place," she says. "The role of the guards is extremely complex with its two opposing dimensions, and they need the correct tools to be able to carry it out."

NO PROMISES

Justice minister Poulsen now says

he is happy to have initiated a debate about the prison system. He says he plans to take the push-back from Østerbye and other experts into consideration in the autumn when negotiations about the future of the prison system begin. But he also declines to make any promises.

"There's a reason someone is in prison. We have to focus on the victims of the crimes, and being incarcerated shouldn't be a bed of roses," he told The Murmur. "I may have spoken harshly about it, but I don't believe in coddling inmates."

Outside the window of the visitation room, the smoking guard is long gone.

A sees a group of inmates walking on the grass.

"They must be going to get groceries," he muses, and buzzes the intercom on the wall.

"We're done in here!"

"All right," a guard's voice responds, and the door swings open. **M**

A is not the prisoner's real name.



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If he calls you a herring, should you be pleased?

40
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"Digitalisation has focussed too much on what technology can do, rather than on what people need"

IMRAN RASHID wants us to unplug from our devices and reconnect with our surroundings. Not giving into the instant gratification of a digital existence can be hard, the doctor explains, but a better life awaits if we do

It has become impossible nowadays for some people to switch off and actively recognise that we are supposed to set boundaries for ourselves when it comes to the use of technology," says Imran Rashid. "It is really transforming our lives."

A doctor and specialist in general medicine, Rashid has worked

as an IT entrepreneur for a number of different startups. As innovation manager at Aleris-Hamlet Hospitals, Denmark's biggest network of private hospitals, he started to explore the relationship between patients and their tech habits.

"It was the combination of humans and technology that made me

wonder about the effects of digitalisation on our lives, especially when hearing about recurring problems such as stress and sleep disorders," Rashid explained.

Rashid is the author of *Offline - the art of survival in a digital world*, (a bestseller currently only available in Danish: 'SLUK') that explores the impact of ever-pre-

Gabriele Dellisanti

sent technology on our everyday lives. The idea arose after his seven-year-old daughter asked for an iPhone, which led Rashid to wonder about the long-term consequences of the ubiquity of this type of technology.

"I think we have a problem here. The push toward digitalisation has primarily focussed on what technology can do, but we have never focussed on what, as humans, we actually need," he observes.

He argues that popular interest in technology has driven companies toward the constant development of incredible new features, be it vast data storage, finding a date wherever you might be in the world, or unlocking your device with a fingerprint.

But what tech companies have failed to deliver is technology that meets real human needs.

"My question is: does technology make you a better human being, or are we simply helping tech companies get bigger? That's what I would like people to consciously think about."

CULT OF INSTANT GRATIFICATION

Our smartphones distract us even when we are not using them. Researchers at the University of Texas divided 800 smartphone users into two different groups and discovered that those who did not have their smartphone in sight performed significantly better at mental tasks.

"The brain is constantly busy fighting the urge to take the phone and use it. Sleeping with your phone next to you, for example, just destroys your sleep," says Rashid.

"What we lack is an understanding of the depth to which digital technology is transforming us, especially in terms of its impact on our self-control."

Notifications are largely to blame, he argues. Whether it's for a like on an Instagram photo or to let you know someone has sent a message on Snapchat, our inability to say 'no' and postpone the instant gratification is what makes technology so disruptive to our focus, sleep and relationships.

"Technology is unconsciously turning our approach into 'why wait?' Why work on a relation-

My question is: does technology make you a better human, or is it us making technology into bigger companies? That's what I would like people to consciously think about.

ship when there's always Tinder?" Rashid observes.

INTERRUPTING OUR FOCUS

The fact is that most people had a hard enough time trying to focus before smartphones came along. The concept of multitasking is mostly myth – the human brain isn't able to perform multiple tasks simultaneously. Rather, what most people understand as multitasking is actually task switching, and each switch from one task to another costs time.

"When you divide your focus, you miss out on details, because data loss is higher when switching back and forth. This means that you put less focus on one ac-

tivity because you are forcing your brain to do two or more tasks at once," he says.

This is bad, according to Rashid, because when our focus is divided between more than one activity, our performance on each individual task is worsened.

"We are getting to the point where technology is constantly breaking into our conscious thoughts and forcing us to do what it wants. And when that happens, we are no longer in control of our own lives. We are not fully living our lives when we get distracted every 5 minutes by a screen lighting up."

Ultimately, Rashid argues that time we spend on technology is

time taken from our friends, families and lovers. So minimising the time we spend on our mobile devices can translate into a richer and more connected life with the people we surround ourselves with.

"My suggestion is to reflect on what we have gone through in the last ten years, a time dominated by a focus on the possibilities of technology. Over the next ten years, I would like to see a digitalisation of society in which we primarily focus on what people need and want. This is what it means to put the focus on human beings, which is exactly what we have consistently been missing out on in the past decade." **M**



TOP TIPS FOR TAKING BACK CONTROL FROM TECHNOLOGY

CHARGE YOUR PHONE OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM

Sleeping without the phone in the room can do wonders for your sex life.

REMOVE APPS

Delete apps that give you a dopamine kick, such as games, social media, and news.

PLACE YOUR PHONE COMPLETELY OUT OF RANGE

When mobile devices are in visible distance, our brains are constantly fighting the urge to pick it up. Put your phone in another room if you need to focus.

LEAVE YOUR PHONE AT HOME WHEN YOU GO ON A TRIP WITH YOUR FAMILY

If you need it to take photos, put it on either 'do not disturb' or 'flight mode'.

TURN OFF NOTIFICATIONS

Apps are cleverly designed to keep us returning to them, but doing so means constantly interrupting our attention on the moment. Turning off notifications restores your control over when you choose to use your mobile device.



FOOD FEST FEVER



THE COPENHAGEN COOKING AND FOOD FESTIVAL

is one of the highlights of the foodie calendar – and this year's extravaganza is no different. Once again the programme is packed with exciting events and experiences, from cooking demonstrations and workshops to pop-up meals and exclusive dinners

AUGUST 18 - 27 // COPENHAGENCOOKING.COM

ASIAN HOT POT CULINARY EXPERIENCE

The Japanese call it shabu-shabu, while in Thailand it's known as steamboat. Either way, the hot pot is one of the most popular dishes in Asia – and potentially one of this year's highlights. Guests will gather at a large table in Israels Plads – the festival's HQ – for what organisers have billed as an "interactive eating experience". That's because you'll get to prepare your own hot pot, which is all part of the fun. Start by choosing either a spicy or mild base before adding up to 14 Asian vegetables and ingredients to the pot. And if it proves too spicy, quench your thirst with some Asian juice, beer, sake or wine.

22 August, 14:30–22:30, 249 DKK.

THE ULTIMATE BARBECUE PARTY

Carnivores shouldn't miss the barbecue in Israels Plads on opening night. Top chefs will be manning the grill, including Morten Falk, Denmark's representative this year in the prestigious chef's competition Bocuse d'Or; former Noma chef Karlos Ponte; and Henrik Jyrk, formerly of Kødbyen's charcoal-grill restaurant Kul. They'll cook a gourmet barbecue dinner and serve it under a circus tent with a range of Jacobsen beer – including Nordic Jam, a festival exclusive made with barley from Denmark and Norway and lingonberries from Sweden.

18 August, 17:30–22:00, 595 DKK for a welcome drink, four barbecue dishes and free beer and water till 20:00.

KLØR & KLEZMER AT ISRAELS PLADS

Similarly, fans of "everything good from the sea", should chart a course for fishmonger Fiskerikajen's takeover of Israels Plads on 25 August. Guests will enjoy live klezmer music, oysters and Champagne, followed by a "shellfish orgy" that includes boiled Greenlandic prawns, crab claws, fried Argentine prawns and lobster.

25 August, 16:00–23:00, 450 DKK.

SPIRIKUM 2017

Snaps has long been seen as Scandinavia's answer to gin, and is enjoying something of a revival. To see why, head to Spirikum. Billed as the world's first snaps festival, it'll bring together more than 25 of the world's best snaps and aquavit producers at Copenhagen Distillery's new headquarters. With local breweries also showcasing their wares, expect it to be a boozy affair. But there should be plenty of grub, too. Several acclaimed restaurants – including Palægade, No.2 and Nabo – will offer their take on contemporary street food.

26 August, 12:00–22:00, from 395 DKK, incl. 5 free samples



SPONSORED CONTENT

DOGGY STYLE

When readers of Danish newspaper Berlingske's AOK website recently voted for their favourite Copenhagen street food, the award went to District Tonkin – a Vietnamese restaurant serving the best bánh mi in town. And the best meal on a budget, readers decided, could be found at Kiin Kiin Bao Bao, a Vesterbrogade restaurant specialising in traditional Taiwanese steamed buns.

It's a sign of the times, surely, that Asian street cuisine and other exotic fast-food options have muscled out the classic hotdog – for years, the go-to snack for hungry Danes. Hundreds of pøl-sevogne (hotdog vans) once graced Copenhagen's street corners – today they are reduced to mere dozens.

All the more reason, then, to check out the Topdog Charity event taking place at Israels Plads on August 21. The unofficial World Hotdog Championship, the competition pits eight top chefs against each other to demonstrate the gastronomic potential of the humble hotdog. Indeed, participants include top yakitori chef Hideto Takeda, three-time winner of Greenland's "chef of the year" Inunnguaq Hegelun, and South African forager Kobus van der Merwe. So there shouldn't be a boiled sausage in sight.

The rules are simple: each chef is given a classic street van and must prepare 100 "dogs". The winner will be chosen by a jury that includes two chefs with three Michelin stars: Anne-Sophie Pic, of Maison Pic in southeast France, and Rasmus Koefoed of Copenhagen's very own Geranium. Hungry visitors can buy vouchers to taste any of the hotdogs and pick their own favourite. And if last year is anything to go by, the competition should be very special indeed. Hiroki Yoshitake, head chef at Sola, a Michelin-starred restaurant in Paris, made hotdogs with lobster; top Norwegian chef Knut Lake drew long lines with his grilled lamb sausages; and a team of chefs from the Danish island of Samsø, representing Kurdistan, snagged first prize with their "Middle Eastern shish dog" – lamb's heart kebab with hummus, yoghurt, crispy garlic and spicy aubergine. Dish of the day, though, was the "Hot Love Dog", created by English chef Douglas McMaster and the two founders of Copenhagen's nose-to-tail restaurant BROR. Reflecting their shared philosophy of leaving nothing to waste, the hotdog was made using bull's testicles and topped with cherry-glazed cow's uterus, crispy fried bull's penis and candied rose petals. It certainly wasn't to everyone's taste – but it proved there's life in the old dog yet.

This year's Topdog Charity event takes place on Monday 21 August, from 5–7pm, in Israels Plads (with music, drinks and children's hotdogs from 3pm). Vouchers for single hotdogs cost 100 DKK, with all proceeds going to the humanitarian charity CARE Denmark, to support its work in Laos.



Words: James Clasper

Photos: Rasmus Flindt Pedersen



WINE UNDER THE BRIDGE

Rosforth & Rosforth shouldn't require any introduction to Copenhagen's oenophiles. The company sells wine commercially to many of the city's restaurants – and, in the summer months, runs a popular wine bar underneath Knippelsbro. In August, however, they're heading in the opposite direction – turning Knippelsbro's newly opened Culture Tower into a pop-up restaurant for the duration of the food festival. Guests will enjoy several glasses of natural wine, shared snacks and marvellous harbour views from the 13-metre-high, 80-year-old copper tower.

18–27 August, two sittings per night, from 500 DKK.

A CELEBRATION OF GASTRONOMY AND AGRICULTURE

Finally, one of this year's most interesting events is taking place outside Copenhagen. Michelin-starred chef Christian Puglisi is hosting Seed Exchange at the Farm of Ideas – an organic farm he founded last summer in Lejre, 40 minutes west of the capital, in order to provide ingredients for his Copenhagen restaurants, which include Relæ and Bæst. Puglisi's ambition is to make the Farm of Ideas a "melting pot for innovation, gastronomy, and organic agriculture." And to showcase his thinking, Seed Exchange will include a range of activities "for curious souls of all ages" – including an exchange of seeds and an opportunity to meet local farmers, producers, seed collectors and chefs such as Esben Holmboe Bang of Maaemo in Oslo, René Redzepi, and Carlo Petrini, the founder of the international Slow Food movement. Expect live music, talks, workshops, and plenty of food and drink, too – including a harvest feast.

19–20 August, free.



Scenes from the biodynamic farm Birkemosegaard in north west Zealand. Photos: instagram / @birkemosegaard

A dinner party with a difference

KOST and biodynamic farm Birkemosegaard are hosting a joint dinner during the Copenhagen Cooking & Food Festival. The guests will eat a menu created with the day's produce that will only be chosen in the hours before they arrive. We caught up with Martin Mo Kvedéris from Birkemosegaard, who attempts to demystify the biodynamic philosophy and why it's gaining traction

IN THE LATE 1960S, some dairy cows on the Birkemosegaard Farm in northwest Zealand wandered into an adjacent field and ate the tops of beets that had been sprayed with pesticides. Many of the cows fell sick, and several pregnancies were lost.

The incident prompted the farm to immediately reconsider its ethos, resulting in a decision to returning to organic and further upgrading to biodynamic principles. Birkemosegaard is now a self-sufficient and entirely chemical-free enterprise, producing enough grass to feed its cows, who in turn produce enough manure to feed its vegetables.

Similar to organic, biodynamic farming is an alternative type of farming where the emphasis is placed on improving the soil and nurturing the land, rather than just maximising output by any means necessary.

While some of its methods have been criticised for being closer to magic than science, Martin Mo Kvedéris, who has been working at the farm for four years, says he is convinced the approach works.

"In a biodynamic approach, your goal is to make the soil better and better year after year. So even though there may be a lot of brouhaha around the methods themselves – especially when it involves burying cow horns for a year

The New Nordic trend is over, but now the desire to eat fresh, to forage, and to eat locally is becoming mainstream which is what makes the real change.

Emily Tait

– in practice, you see the sense in it. When you dig up the contents of the cow horn, and use it on the plants, they literally flex towards the sun and you see wow, it works, and those little things make a difference," says Kvedéris.

He adds that while Birkemosegaard remains a traditional 'cabbage and potatoes' farm, it also seeks to educate and inspire chefs and Copenhageners alike with its successful application of biodynamic philosophy.

"The biodynamic farm is a closed system with its own biosphere – there are always a lot of people and a lot of animals, for social as well as practical purposes. We have ten or eleven people, one who's been here for 40 years, one for three weeks. It's all about biodiversity, from the soil to the farmhouse."

According to Kvedéris, interest in this method of farming – which is based on the teachings of Rudolph Steiner – is no longer limited to elite chefs and niche restaurants.

"The New Nordic trend is over, but now the desire to eat fresh, to forage, and to eat locally is becoming mainstream which is what makes the real change. There are now many more households and organic restaurants who want to buy seasonal ingredients directly from Danish producers."

Birkemosegaard is working to

satisfy this demand by making its produce as widely available as possible through daily deliveries into the city. They are also participating in the Copenhagen Cooking and Food Festival this August – guests will be transported by bus from the heart of Vesterbro to the farm for a five-course tasting feast in the surroundings where the food has been harvested.

The dinner is being produced together with renowned chef Peter Nøhr and food historian and TV host Asmus Gamstrup from KOST. They recently closed their shop in Vesterbro, and have instead moved out to Refshaleøen where they hope to push Danish food culture and try and reach a wider audience through events, such as talks and workshops.

"It will give people the opportunity to see where their food is coming from. At the farm, you can eat a potato in the field where it was grown and see the water where the fish was caught. It's a well-known saying that wine tastes best in its own terroir, and it's the same for food. When you harvest food it doesn't necessarily die, because it keeps breathing in a sense, like a tree, unless you wrap it. We believe you can really feel the difference. Some people call it energy, atmosphere, call it whatever you want – we don't need to explain it, but it's there."

Events like this are also a window onto a more seasonal and slow-paced lifestyle. Kvedéris observes that people are increasingly stepping away from the high-stress city lifestyle in search of a life that makes more sense.

"For the first time in my life, I'm really looking forward to the autumn and the winter, the time of the year when you kind of hole yourself up. But instead of it being sad and grey, autumn makes sense, it's necessary for the plants and for the humans too. On the farm there's really nothing I do that doesn't make sense, and you become part of a much bigger rhythm, from the church bells everyday at four – clichéd as it sounds – to the passing of the seasons. And here you can experience it rather than know it in theory, you experience it in your body." **M**

Birkemosegaard and Kost invite you to dinner

- August 18, 17:00 – 23:30
- Sparkling apple cider on the bus
- Five courses, served both plated and family-style
- Drinks (with or without alcohol)
- The bus leaves from Sønder Boulevard 52 in Vesterbro, and transports guests back after the meal.
- DKK 450
- Tickets: bit.ly/dinner_bmgaard

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Clockwise from top left: Barok A'mokka, Mester Sanger, SilentZone, Bajadser (the Danish name for 'Pagliacci')

Bringing OPERA back to the people

This August THE COPENHAGEN OPERA FESTIVAL returns for its ninth year, and its first with internationally-acclaimed tenor Peter Lodahl at the helm. It is a festival determined to uncouple the genre from the formal etiquette of the opera house, moving it into the streets (and even canals) of Copenhagen, where it hopes passionate expression and sheer vocal skill will find a new audience

It is a common misconception that a night at the opera is musty with the clichés of black tie dress codes, formal decorum and shushing audiences. No matter how affordable the Royal Opera House makes its tickets, or how contemporary and experimental the stage direction gets, it can be difficult to attract new audiences because of the perception that opera is a 'high art' focused on antiquated characters in archaic stories – a frustrating oversimplification of a popular art form that was borne of comedy, passion and excess.

The Copenhagen Opera Festival is determined to reassert opera's popular appeal by extracting it from the theatre and bringing it to the streets. A dominant characteristic of this year's programme is intimacy, both in terms of content and staging – a quality that can often get lost in enormous auditoriums.

Receiving its world premiere

this year is Louise Alenius' new chamber opera *The Silent Zone*, a piece that is set in the present day and showcases the genre as a powerful medium for contemporary storytelling. Though the story wrestles with an ancient motif of the incest taboo, it takes place in a modern family in which a father is trying desperately to reconcile with his children. The performance even challenges the opera medium itself – the two abused children are unable to communicate conventionally, with one resorting to drums and the other performing in falsetto.

Another experimental piece is the 'opera collage' *Il Letto* (The Bed), by the British opera company Helios Collective. Two sopranos and a pianist use Giacomo Puccini's music to express the passion and heartbreak of Puccini's personal life, including the jealousy of his wife and ultimately the suicide of a young maid in

his house. It's a chance for those familiar with Puccini's work to see his music through a new, biographical lens.

The opera conflates Puccini's fictional and biographical worlds, and challenges the theatrical convention that frowns upon looking too closely 'behind the scenes' of a performance. But this ability to view opera within its context is an important part of the festival – allowing opera lovers to learn more about the stories and the mechanics of the performances. A further example of this is the vocal masterclass that will be taking place during the festival on the stage outside Torvehallerne and at Sct. Andreas Church, where festivalgoers can eavesdrop on professional singers' lessons with renowned voice teacher Gregory Lamar.

The festival is an unpretentious enterprise with a 'more the merrier' approach. One of the more tra-

This is a festival that seeks to redraw the boundaries of a wild and exciting art form that often seems corseted by the misconceptions of those who have yet to experience it.

Emily Tait

ditional performances, Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, a tragic love story in which western imperialism meets eastern mysticism, will be staged at Store Vega, appropriating the rock venue for the more acoustic exertions of Italian verismo. Even Copenhagen's waterways will play host to musical performances, with the 'operetta boat', the stalwart of the festival, setting sail every day with a selection of lighter favourites.

This is a festival that seeks to redraw the boundaries of a wild and exciting art form that often seems corseted by the misconceptions of those who have yet to experience it. The Opera Festival liberates the passion and the vocal mastery of opera performance from its darkened auditorium and instead fills waterways, nightclubs, boats and power plants with music, replacing bow ties and shushing with picnic blankets and the hum of the city. **M**

"OPERA IS A VERY PHYSICAL EXPERIENCE"

DANISH TENOR PETER LODAHL took over as Artistic Director of the Copenhagen Opera Festival this year. He discusses his transition from the stage to administration, what his must-see events are, and how he hopes to take opera out of the opera house and into bikes, boats and bars, and ultimately, into schools.

This is your first year as Artistic Director of the Copenhagen Opera Festival. What first drew you to this role?

Throughout my time as a tenor, I've always stayed engaged with cultural debates and discussions, so when this opportunity arose, it was a chance to turn that talk into action. To actually have a part to play in keeping opera from being an elite sport and bringing it to the people again – because opera started out for everyone, and it's important that we reclaim that universal appeal.

The Copenhagen Opera Festival puts a strong emphasis on accessibility – taking opera out of the opera houses and into the streets. What are you doing to encourage further engagement from the public?

A venue such as the Royal Opera House is in a privileged position, in that people go directly to it. But for people who don't ordinarily choose to go out and watch opera, we can't just wait for them to come to us. We have to invent new formats and find new venues, from old power plants to bars, and take opera to the people.

This year we are literally taking opera onto the streets with two bikes, creating public 'pop-up ope-

ras' for free. It will be an immediate, free and open experience – a 50-minute glimpse into the genre. It's all about finding new ways to present these wonderful performances.

Given that this is your first year, what mark have you made on the programme, and what do you aim to achieve with it?

In my eyes, opera is a vocal sport – and I'm always looking to bring the focus back to the singing. We have a small series called Star Recitals, in which we are bringing big names to Copenhagen before they get commercial contracts. For audiences, it can be very interesting to learn the name of an upcoming star at our festival and then begin to follow them through the rest of their career.

I'm also very engaged in the artistic side, and this year it was a great privilege to commission a new opera called *The Silent Zone*, and think about what a contemporary opera could be, given that most 'modern' works are 100 years old at least. It's one of many chamber pieces we are featuring at the festival, and though the small scale may seem like a limitation, it's also an opportunity to make precise and interesting art.

If someone has never been to an opera before, what would you recommend?

With all our performances, the setup is going to be very unsnobish. Even something like *Lakmé*, a spectacular French romantic opera, will be performed outside, and you can just walk in from the street. The only part of our festival that remains elite is the very

high level of performance, but in the communication with the audience it should be very accessible.

What about your background as a tenor have you brought to the festival?

To me, opera is very physical experience, and in any venue we want to maintain the magic, the real vibrations of people singing live, and the audience being close to the action. Sometimes you can't even explain the power of an operatic performance. If we succeed, you get this 'wow' – you are in the middle of the hurricane, the pressure of acrobatic and artistic voices combined with dramatic and theatrical power.

What do you hope that the opera festival can achieve? Do you have any long-term aspirations for the festival?

The festival is in really good shape right now. I want to maintain the high level of prominent singers we are known for, and I want to go even farther to bring a broader audience in. We'll go out to immigrant communities or to any group you wouldn't expect to engage with opera – it must be for everybody. I also hope to take opera into schools to give students their first glimpse of opera, and ideally to develop workshops run by young professional opera singers where children can actively participate in the art form. If we do this, we can create the next generation of artists and build them up into an army of little opera singers. **M**

**The Copenhagen Opera Festival
July 30 – August 9
operafestival.dk**

If we succeed you get this 'wow' – you are in the middle of the hurricane, the pressure of acrobatic and artistic voices combined with dramatic and theatrical power.

What to do at the Copenhagen Opera Festival

Be serenaded at NIMB Bar by Lonely House

Artistic Director Peter Lodahl recommends this performance for anyone new to the genre. He dubs it "an opera collage about loneliness, playing with the cliché of lonely men confiding in a bartender." But rather than presenting it onstage, at a distance, the audience will also have a drink as they become guests at the same bar where the three professional opera singers mingle among them, performing music from the 20th century.

Get a glimpse behind the scenes at a 'star shaping' vocal masterclass

Gregory Lamar is one of the top voice teachers in the world, and during the festival he will be hosting public masterclasses for selected local singers where you can see how opera's most important instrument is shaped and honed by an expert teacher.

Lakmé

'Lakmé', the French romance, hasn't been performed in its entirety in Denmark since the 19th century, but on Friday, August 4, it will be brought back to life by the Malmö Opera in a concert guest performance. The festival prides itself on unearthing hidden treasures, and this will be a great opportunity to experience the opera's famous flower duet.

Highlights Concert

On the final Sunday of the festival, August 6, Peter Lodahl presents and celebrates the best of the fest in an outdoor concert on Ofelia Stage, overlooking the opera house itself. It will be a dramatic and engaging affair with performances by this year's Young Opera Talent, Elsa Dreisig, the pop-up 'bicycle opera' Pagliacci, and many more.

Take a trip on the Operetta Boat

It's impossible to draw up a to-do list without mentioning the Operetta Boat. Since the festival began, the Operetta Boat has sailed round the canals of Copenhagen with two sopranos and a pianist on board. Operetta is a lighter form of the genre with spoken dialogue – the European precursor to American musical theatre. It will be a collage-type performance, with some of operetta's greatest hits tied together with the spoken word. The programme includes popular pieces from 'La belle Hélène', 'Landmandsliv', 'The Gypsy Baron', and 'Countess Maritza'. Even the American classic, 'Oklahoma!', will be featured. And don't fear the rain – if it starts to drizzle, the show will continue under one of the bridges!



Who should really be ashamed?

All too often victims of domestic violence are asked, "Why didn't you just leave?" while rape victims are told, "Maybe you shouldn't have worn such a short skirt." This is victim blaming and it has to stop

ABOUT HALF A YEAR AGO, I made the most heart-breaking realisation of my life: I was a victim of domestic violence. The person I loved and had married had just attacked me with a pot of boiling tea. The undeniable truth was written on my arms and chest in second-degree burns.

It was time for me to get out of the relationship and break the spiral of violence that I was caught up in. It was an invitation to let go of everything I had fought for up to that point, as well as my dreams for the future. I was in shock and exhausted, but I also felt alive in a way that I had forgotten was possible. That is the gift of a crisis – it forces us to live in the present. I was free, and I recognized freedom because I came from captivity.

As I came to terms with my situation, I broke my silence to my friends and network. It was a relief. Most people overwhelmed me with the love, care and support that I needed. However, I was also met with comments and questions insinuating that I bore some of the blame for the assaults I had suffered.

THE QUESTIONS ARE HARMFUL

"Why didn't you just leave?" is the question I heard the most, and one I still get asked. It is important to understand that the question is useless. It is a rationalisation after the fact of an immutable past in which I thought I was doing the right thing. The first step in showing respect to a victim is to acknowledge this – so do not tell me that I could have seen it coming.

Because no, you don't actually see anything before it's too late. The relationship can also hold a lot of good and beauty that is worth fighting for, and that makes you stay. It's never only bad things that

If we really want to help the victims and take their fight for a dignified existence seriously, we must first recognize that there are never degrees of assault. It is violence, and violence is criminal.

Hanne Marie
le Fevre

you turn your back on. It is about love, and in the name of love, you see what you want to see. I never asked to end up in the situation I ended up in. I fell in love with a person who turned out to be abusive, yes. But I never said, "Hello, violent psychopath - will you marry me?"

As a victim of violence, it frustrates me when victims are not acknowledged as powerless and blameless. Just the fact that I am asked 'why' it happened, when that's a question that can be answered by no one but the abuser. And I can guarantee that that is one of the first questions that pops into a victim's head. It is the question that leads many victims to believe that they deserve the pain being inflicted upon them. So ask yourself first: what answer are you expecting to get?

"WOMEN WHO LOVE TOO MUCH"

When I started looking for self-help groups for victims of domestic violence, I found only one, entitled "Women who love too much". If this title does not raise a red flag, I will tell you why it should.

First of all, what does it mean to 'love too much'? When has love in its essence ever been harmful? If what we thought was love turns out to be harmful and even violent, it is not love. This was, ultimately, the toughest thing for me to accept: that while I sincerely loved my partner, what he called love was in fact a mix of power hunger, low self-esteem and lack of empathy.

Second of all, the title implies that if only the woman had not loved 'too much' (which is impossible), she would not have been subject to the violence she was victim to. It implies that she bears part of the blame.

It is important to recognize that victims of domestic violence are not people who make the mistake of fighting for their love for another human being. It is not their giving the abuser 'too much love' that causes the abuse to occur. On the contrary, it is the abuser who takes advantage of the committed, wholehearted and trusting person who is their partner.

A VICTIM IS A VICTIM. PERIOD.

By presenting these examples, I want to shed light on a trend I hope to do away with. What they have in common is a complete lack of reflection, empathy and humility for the people they are dealing with. They come from a place where the perpetrator is taken out of the equation, and contain an implicit misunderstanding that says violence can be justified, and victimhood mitigated.

It cannot be said often enough: no one is in control of what others subject them to. There is no valid excuse or rationalization for violence. The shame that often accompanies physical and mental scars belongs to the abuser – never the victim.

So, if we really want to help the victims and take their fight for a dignified existence seriously, we must first recognize that there are never degrees of assault. It is violence, and violence is criminal.

CALCULATING THE CONSEQUENCES

On the day that my divorce was finally official, I was congratulated by a family member with the remark, "Well, I guess you won't be doing that again."

Do what? I thought. Love wholeheartedly again? You can bet I will. Because as I continue onward with an unhappy ex-

perience that has undoubtedly changed my life, I refuse to compromise the values that I want to affect and shape my life and the world I live in. I am no longer a victim. I am a survivor.

My greatest sorrow is when I meet former victims of domestic violence who still bear a sense of guilt for the things they were subjected to in their past. They are troubled by thought patterns of self-reproach, or they keep on asking whether they could have done anything to avoid the violence.

All these destructive patterns are linked to a culturally-determined perception that domestic violence is taboo, and that those who suffer abuse have somehow asked for it. I find it deeply unfair that victims are punished again as being culturally stigmatized as weak and stupid because another person has harmed them.

We must not live less wholeheartedly simply because there are risks to loving. If we start to analyse the consequences, we might convince ourselves that we are more likely to be subjected to domestic violence than not. We might end up compromising on the values most of us want to be the building blocks of the society we live in, and want to see our children grow up in.

I now know that anyone can end up where I did. So let's try and change the cultural attitude that misplaces responsibility for the guilt and shame that I – and many other women like me – have been subjected to. **M**

Christian Balvig has pointed out that he can be confused as her assailant. We stress that it is not Christian Balvig that has committed the above mentioned spousal abuse.

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2700 Brønshøj

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2300 København S

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Jernbane Allé 38
2720 Vanløse

Nørrebro Bibliotek

Bragesgade 8b
2200 København N

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Blegdamsvej 9, Afsnit 4102
2100 København Ø.

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1758 København V

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1599 København V

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WHAT'S ON • AUGUST

ALL MONTH

MARK LECKEY
Born near Liverpool, artist Mark Leckey brings his recollection of the ramps underneath the M53 motorway in 1970s Britain to Copenhagen's National Art Gallery as part of a nostalgic installation in the gallery's x-room.
Statens Museum for Kunst
Sølvgade 48-50, KBH
smk.dk



NATURE (RE)TURNS
Arken's outdoor exhibition this summer incorporates the work of artists Nanna Debois Buhl and Tue Greenfort, and their site-specific works explore the relationship between mankind and nature.
Arken
Skovvej 100, 2635 Ishøj
arken.dk
All month

1

SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
This year's Shakespeare Festival will open with HamletScenen's first international, in-house co-production of Shakespeare's tragedy.
Kronborg Castle
Kronborg 2 C, 3000 Helsingør
hamletscenen.dk
Ends August 19

3

MAGNUM PLEASURE STORE
Those passing through Magasin will be able to build-their-own Magnum at the specially designed stand where visitors can select ice-cream, chocolate dipping and all number of topping.
Magasin Du Nord
Kongens Nytorv 13, KBH
magasin.dk
Ends August 31



CARCEL POP-UP SHOP
Copenhagen-based fashion label Carcel is officially launching during Copenhagen Fashion Week, with their alpaca wool designs produced in Cusco's women's prison in Peru.
Kinfolk Gallery
Amagertorv 14, KBH
Carcel.co
August 8-10

10

EGMONT FESTIVAL
Denmark's largest festival for college students promises to be a fantastic weekend for students, ex-students and friends, boasting a line-up including Marvelous Mosell and Bikstok.
Egmont Festival
Nørre Allé 75, KBH
Ends August 12



HAVEN FESTIVAL
It promises to be a reimagining of the whole festival genre, one large artistic installation created in collaboration between the international brewers, musicians, chefs and performance artists.
Refshalevej 151, kbh
havenkbh.dk
August 11-12

11

STREET FOOD FESTIVAL CPH
After the success of last year's event, the street food festival returns to surround the lakes with all manner of diverse and freshly made dishes, and a specially designed beer from Nørrebro Bryghus.
Søerne, KBH
Ends August 13

15

COPENHAGEN PRIDE WEEK
Copenhagen Pride Week encompasses far more than just the pride parade on the 19th, and now includes a drag night, fantastic music evenings and finally a chillout day at Kødbyen with food, rainbows, drinks and music.
Pride Square
City Hall Square, KBH
copenhagenpride.dk
Ends August 20



FOOD AND IDENTITY
Photographer Steven Achiam exhibits photographs about food and identity. The photographs of child refugees and their favourite dishes was first published in the book 'Liv Ret', created with Brendan Killeen. Free entry.
Israels Plads, Copenhagen
August 18-30

24

CPH SOUL WEEKENDER
Four days of soul set in the heart of the city with 22 top international and local DJs playing their best original vinyl for your dancing pleasure. Events at Absalon, Søpavillionen, Lygtens Kro and Mesteren & Lærlingen.
Locations across Copenhagen
bit.ly/cphsoul
Ends August 28

Emily Tait



CODE ART FAIR
The fair spotlights work from the Scandinavian region while also exhibiting work from around the world. The exhibiting galleries present thought-provoking presentations alongside a Film, Talks and Performance Program, ArtReacts.
Code Art Fair
Center Boulevard 5, KBH
codeartfair.dk
August 31 - September 3

WHAT'S ON • SEPTEMBER



COLIN STETSON

Feeling dispirited that Copenhagen Jazz Festival has come to an end? Colin Stetson's should provide some respite when the saxophonist returns to Jazzhouse with his rich and avant-garde music.

Jazzhouse

Niels Hemmingsens Gade 10

jazzhouse.dk

September 1

1

CHART ART FAIR 2017

Chart Art Fair is the leading Nordic contemporary art fair building on the Nordic tradition of collaboration and presenting the invited galleries in unison within the historic halls of Kunsthall Charlottenborg in Copenhagen

Kunsthall Charlottenborg, KBH
chartartfair.com
 Ends September 3



Copencold Hawaii

The ISA World Standup Paddle & Paddleboard Championship will be taking place just outside the Royal Danish Opera House in Copenhagen – a perfect weekend spectator sport.

Copenhagen Opera House

Ekvipagemestervej 1, KBH

copencoldhawaii.com

September 1-3

1

GNUCCI

The Serbian-born, politically charged, feminist rapper Gnucci brings her powerful bass-oriented music to Vega at the start of September.

VEGA

Enghavevej 40, KBH

Vega.dk

COPENHAGENCARD

SEE MORE. PAY LESS.

COPENHAGEN CARD APP

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



Free access to 79
museums and
attractions

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

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

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

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