

UTRIKES PERSPEKTIV

The Student Magazine on Foreign Affairs

Nr. 4, December 2015



Interview:
**CAROLINE
WESTBLOM**

**UPF
Explores
Iceland**

In Focus:
MYANMAR

Theme:
DEVELOPMENT



ASSOCIATION OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS

LUND • EST. 1935



**ASSOCIATION OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

LUND • EST. 1935

EDITORS' NOTE

“...IN ONE WAY OR THE OTHER, DEVELOPMENT MATTERS

We are very happy to present to you a topic of universal importance, 'Development'. As individual spectators, we see development taking place in society, politics, economy and environment and as these areas affect us in one way or the other, development matters. For the darkest time of the year, our editorial team will take you through a multitude of development topics to shine light on the positive, while remaining alert of the negative.

THIS EDITION FEATURES a showcase of the UPF Travel committee's trip to Iceland this October. On page 37, is a feature of some of the pictures they brought back from the cold north. From the frozen shores of the Arctic, we will take you to the tropical climate of Myanmar. Their most recent election is covered on page 40, followed by a look into the jade trade of the nation on page 43.

THIS EDITION BEING the last one for our 80th anniversary at UPF, we bring you a brief historical piece on our Association on page 10. In the spirit of the anniversary, we will also take you back to 1965 to show you what the magazine, under the name *Utrikesnytt*, discussed back then. We look towards the future with eagerness and see if it brings us a better world than the one we have today.



*Wishing a Happy Holiday Season to All,
Arttu Närhi & Saahil Waslekar
Editors-in-Chief*

TEAM

Editors-in-Chief:

Arttu Närhi
Saahil Waslekar

Editors:

Johannes Ernstberger
Danielle Soskin
Krithi Venkat
Saahil Waslekar

Layout:

Elly Aardenburg
Tobias Adolfsson
Sofia Ekhem
Arttu Närhi
Dora Paulik
Kia Silvennoinen

Reporters:

Elly Aardenburg
Umut Can Adisönmez
Tobias Adolfsson
Christian Barsoum
Johannes Ernstberger
Kari B. Helle
Petra van der Kooij
Dora Paulik
Malte Plewa
Thomas Rogerson
Kia Silvennoinen
Danielle Soskin
Varintorn Thanvichien
Jamie Woodworth
Rickard A. Wählhammar

Foreign Correspondents:

Sandra Jakobsson

Cover Art:

Jamie Woodworth

Legally responsible publisher:

Arttu Närhi

Print:

Trydells Tryckeri AB

Edition:

750 ex

Contact:

Utrikespolitiska
Föreningen
Sandgatan 2
223 50 Lund
magazine@upflund.se

Detta material är helt eller delvis finansierat av SIDA, styrelsen för Internationellt Utvecklings-samarbete. SIDA delar inte nödvändigtvis de åsikter som här framförs. Ansvar för innehållet är uteslutande författarens.



10.



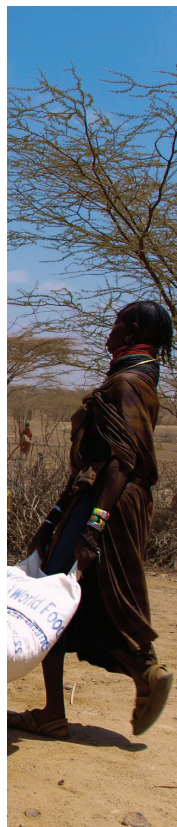
24.



34.



40.



52.



63.

CONTENTS

4. Presidents' Message

6. World Brief

8. Utrikesperspektiv
50 Years Ago

10. UPF Turns 80!

12. Foreign
Correspondence

18. Interview:
Caroline Westblom

21. Development 2.0:
From MDGs to SDGs

24. Adapting to
Climate Change

28. Editorial: A Question
of Quality and Quantity

30. Behind Stall Doors:
A Glance at Queer Civil
Rights

34. Letters from Iceland

38. Iceland and the EU

40. Behind Myanmar's
Historic 2015 Election

43. Myanmar's Jade
Trade

46. Editorial: Sustainable
Development, The Way
Out of Poverty?

48. The Fall of the
Capitalist Beast

52. Sub-Saharan Africa
and Foreign Aid

55. False Human Security
of the USA

58. Democracy in
South Sudan

60. Regeneration in the
North East of England

63. Copenhagen's
Vestbro in Transition

66. Review: The Girl
with Seven Names

Utrikesperspektiv is a bilingual member magazine of the Association of Foreign Affairs, published quarterly each year. The magazine has no affiliations with any political parties. Opinions presented are the writers' own.



PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE

Winter has come, but unlike the characters in *Game of Thrones*, many of us have looked forward to this time of year. It is a time of rest and of letting the scent of gingerbread fill the air before the spring term calls for our attention. Even though some of you may have exams on your mind, we hope that the company of family and friends will offer you some tranquillity during the winter holidays.

THE YEAR OF 2015 has been an exciting one for UPF. With our 80th anniversary celebration in February and a member count closing in on 700, we have most certainly had a very fulfilling year. Apart from our usual activities consisting of radio broadcasts, hundreds of published articles, many exciting lectures and inspiring seminars, we have an anniversary ball, a trip to Istanbul and Rwanda and colourful participation in the Pride Parade to look back upon.

WE LOOK FORWARD to an equally exciting 2016, with our old members deepening their engagement in UPF and our Get Active meeting giving us an opportunity to engage new ones. The theme of the year will be "Grassrooted Peace", as we hope to shed special light on the peace building being done on grassroot level all over the world. Aside from an opportunity to discuss these and other international topics with your fellow students through our eight committees, we hope to be able to offer our members a new and more dynamic website, as a fair representation of our continuously growing association.

AS WE PUT our 80th anniversary year behind us, wish you all a most joyous holiday and hope to see you all next year!



On behalf of the board,

Anahita Nicoobayan Shiri & Oscar Waldner
President & Vice President

BOARD 2015-2016

President:

Anahita Nicoobayan Shiri
president@upflund.se

Vice President:

Oscar Waldner
vice.president@upflund.se

Treasurer:

Marta Radinovic Lukic
treasure@upflund.se

Secretary:

Lisa Mehlin
secretary@upflund.se

Lecture Committee:

Sofia Höglund
Carsten Nommels
Stina Hinderson
lecture@upflund.se

PR committee:

Ludwig Bengtson Sonesson
Emelie Wendesten
pr@upflund.se

Activity Committee:

Ossian Olausson
Anna Olsson
activity@upflund.se

Utrikesperspektiv:

Arttu Närhi
Saahil Waslekar
magazine@upflund.se

Utrikesperspektiv.se:

Ebba Coghlan
David Wästlund
webzine@upflund.se

Radio UPF:

Anna Ekholm
Jessica Franzen
radio@upflund.se

Career Committee:

Frida Edström
Camilla Wedenstam
career@upflund.se

Travel Committee:

Martina Berglund
Jonas Asker
travel@upflund.se

UFS Representative:

Kajsa Fernström Nätby
lund@ufsverige.org



@upflund



/upflund



Want to *Get active* in UPF?

Come to UPF's Get Active meeting in the AF-building the 3rd of February to find out more about the organization and the different committees. More information can be found on our website www.upflund.se or at our facebook page.

The Arctic and its Wealth

The Arctic region has become increasingly political. Up until the most recent rush for natural materials, the Arctic hasn't been a topic of conversation since the race to the North Pole. With fossil fuels and other raw materials commanding an ever higher price on the world market, it will become viable to utilize the Arctic. This is not without risks though.

THE ARCTIC NATIONS are Canada, USA, Russia, Denmark, Norway, and Iceland with territory in and direct access to the Arctic Sea. Also Sweden and Finland have territory within the Arctic Circle, but have no Arctic coastline. Naturally, each of these nations (and others beyond them) lay claim to the Arctic wealth. As **CNBC** reported, the Icelandic president compared the natural resource wealth of the Arctic region to be the "new Africa". The exposure of these resources is directly linked to climate change. The melting of the Arctic ice-cap is making it possible for shipping lanes to be opened, and the prospecting of resources becomes easier, according to **Newsy.com**. However, this also opens up the chance to burn more fossil fuels that can lead to rapid changes in the Arctic and spell disaster for the nations who seek to benefit from the area.

MOREOVER, THE UNCLAIMED land masses that rise from under the melting ice could trigger future conflicts. Russia is keenly aware of this, and has been upgrading its Arctic military in recent years according to **Stratfor**. They have constructed new military bases all along the Northern Sea route, which could create tension as more nations recognize the value of this area.

WITHOUT A DOUBT, the Arctic is in a state of change. The coming years will redefine the countries in the area, along with their relationships for the foreseeable future. We can only hope that lessons from history will be taken to heart and not have this end in an armed power struggle.

ARCTIC TERRITORIAL CLAIMS

Canada: Claims entire Northwest passage, as it falls into their archipelago. Not been an issue in the past due to thick ice cover, but with the Arctic melt, has become more accessible.

Russia: First nation to submit an extended Arctic continental shelf claim in 2001. Parts of this claim disputed by Canada, Denmark, Norway and USA.

Norway: Submitted an extended Arctic continental shelf claim in 2006. Russia disputes part of this claim, unlike Denmark and Iceland.

Denmark: Claims Hans Island, as does Canada. Both claim it is a part of their continental shelf.

USA: Control of Beaufort Sea disputed between Alaska and Yukon (Canada). Commercial fishing has been banned in the sea since 2009.

SOURCE: Isted K., Sovereignty in the Arctic. 2009.

Photo: Anita Ritenour





Photo: Thomas Henrikson

World Water Week 2015

Stockholm hosted their annual World Water Week last August. This is the largest global gathering to discuss the issues around water and access to it. The report available at **SIWI's** homepage discusses the progress of the Millennium Goals, Sustainable Development Goals, water security and the importance of communication for development.

ACCORDING TO THE statistics on **Water.org**, around 663 million people in the world do not have access to clean drinking water. Furthermore, **UN.org** reports that 80% of illnesses in the developing world are linked to unsanitary water. Water is becoming more discussed and not just through a development context. Just this November, the state of California moved to extend its water restrictions for urban areas if the ongoing drought continues until January, according to **Time.com**. It is an issue that concerns the so called “developed” world as well.

THE QUESTION TO the world’s water crisis does not have a single answer. Demonstrating this is GE Global Research’s concept for a 3D printed desalination turbine. **Triple Pundit** reports, that the company offers this as a cost cutting solution for purifying water. All anyone needs is a 3D printer.

THIS MARCH, THE UN announced its dedicated water goals for 2030. The most important one is Target 6.1: “By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all”. Water might not be the highest price commodity. Yet, as a precondition for life, access to it must be secured by all means necessary. Whether it can be done with new technology, better infrastructure, improved logistics, or education is not the question. What should be asked is how do we create more conversation around it and make everyone who takes access to water for granted realize the importance of this issue.

DEN ALGERISKA KRISEN

Den algeriska krisen som kulminerade med kuppen mot Ben Bella i somras har lugnat ner sig och i Alger råder nu normala förhållanden. De nya männen har politiskt läget helt under kontroll. Men det är ändå nästan omöjligt att ställa någon prognos för den försatta utvecklingen. Den kommer i själva verket att bero på hur och med vilka medel överste Boumedienne och hans män lyckas lösa problemen och framförallt hur de klarar det ekonomiska krisläget.

Det är emellertid uppenbart att Ben Bellas efterträdare redan har återställt ett kollegialt styre. Boumedienne som är regeringschef och fungerar som tillförordnad statschef i väntan på att författningsfrågan blir löst, är ingen diktator. Det är inte han ensam utan regeringen som styr.

DET VAR LIKA mycket av praktiska som politiska skäl som den nya regeringen bestämde sig för att demokratisera styrelseskicket. Det har nämligen visat sig att enmansväldet hade gett upphov till en svår ekonomisk kris med växande arbetslöshet och sjunkande produktion. Hela den centrala förvaltningen hade fått förfalla.

BEN BELLAS SJÄLVTILLRÄCKLIGHET hade inte heller lämnat utrymme för kritik av något slag – inte ens från hans egen omgivning. Partiet hade dömts till total överksamhet och utnyttjats av Ben Bella bara i propagandasyften. Följden hade blivit en långt gående avpolitisering av den allmänna opinionen. Det

återverkade i sin tur på stämningen på arbetsplatserna.

I OCH FÖR sig krävde redan behovet av effektivitet ett radikalt regimskifte. Ben Bella hade levt kvar i ett slags revolutionsyra, predikat socialism och socialiseringarna, men allt hade fått gå mer eller mindre vind för våg. De omfattande socialiseringarna hade inte varit underkastade någon verklig kontroll. En av den nya regeringens första åtgärder blev att bannlysa de mest irriterande socialistiska slagorden.

MAN KAN TALA om en politisk tillnyktring som mycket snart måste ge resultat om den skall kunna fullföljas. Ekonomiskt och socialt betyder det ett hårdare klimat och höjda krav på insatserna inom näringslivet. I främsta rummet tvingas man att ta itu med de kollektivjordbruk, som inte fungerar. Men samtidigt måste man skapa och uppmuntra en mera öppen offentlig debatt och större yttrandefrihet, med andra ord: större politisk tolerans.

DE NYA LEDARNAS mer krassa eller riktigare uttryck mer realistiska syn på socialismen har här och där väckt misstankar om att Boumedienne och hans män inte skulle vara några riktigt övertygade socialister. De misstankarna har flitigt utnyttjats av kommunisterna och tycks även ha vunnit tilltro hos Fidel Castro.

MEN SOCIALISM ÄR som bekant ett mycket tånjbart begrepp inte minst i den underutvecklade världen. Det finns dock ingenting som tyder på att de algeriska ledarna tänker avskrika socialismen,

de vill däremot tydligen försöka förena den med en effektiv och rationell ekonomisk skötsel.

DET MEST IÖGONFALLANDE hos den nya regimen och dess förespråkare i Alger är den rent praktiska inställningen till dagsfrågorna. I förhållande till Ben Bella skulle man nästan kunna kalla dem teknokrater. De vill bygga upp en effektiv statlig förvaltning i stånd att behärska alla de problem, som nu har vuxit de styrande över huvudet. Och de vill skapa ett politiskt parti som kan tjänstgöra som forum för en levande politisk debatt.

MAN KAN NATURLIGTVIS säga att de står till höger om Fidel Castro och om Mao Tse Tung, och förmodligen många an-

rummet in på de egna behoven och de egna vitala intressena.

DET HAR SPEKULERATS i världspressen om en eventuell utrikespolitisk omorientering i Alger efter Ben Bella fall. Någon omorientering kommer inte i fråga. Det blir sannolikt ett mindre aggressivt uppträdande gentemot västerlandet och man tänker inte i tid och otid föra den andra sidans talan. Men man vill framförallt se till att inga främmande makter – och här har man väl närmast Förenade Arabrepubliken, Sovjetunionen, Kina och i viss mån Förenta Staterna i tankarna – direkt eller indirekt försöker påverka den algeriska hemmafronten. Där vill man ha rent hus.

REGIMSKIFTEN I ALGER har väckt oro litet varstans i världen, men ändå mest på den afrikanska kontinenten och i Mellanöstern. Vad man fruktade i väster var väl framförallt att kuppen den 19 juli skulle bli inledningen till en serie konflikter som med tiden skulle förvandla hela Nordafrika till en oroshärd. De farhågorna är inte aktuella just nu.

HOS DE AFRIKANSKA diktatorerna eller arabiska självhärskarna har revolten mot personkulten och enmansdiktaturen däremot uppfattats som ett direkt hot. Det är första gången sedan krigsslutet som pendeln i något afrikanskt land svänger åt det hållet. Och skulle Boumedienne och den generation av unga politiker som slutit upp kring honom lyckas skapa någon form av demokrati i förening med en effektiv styrelse, så kommer det på lång sikt att ge eko långt in i den afrikanska världen. ●

Av: Victor Vinde
(1965. Utrikesnytt: Organ för Utrikespolitiska Föreningen i Lund, Årg 4, Nr 4, pp. 2-5.)

Photo: Caleb Kimbrough

“DE TROR SIG HA MÖJLIGHETER ATT SKAPA SIN EGEN ALGERISKA SOCIALISM

dra. Men de invänder genast att de inte imiterar några utländska system. Castroismen passar Algeriet lika illa som Mao Tse Tungs kommunism. De vänder sig ju inte heller till Västeuropa för att importera socialdemokrati. De tror sig ha möjligheter att skapa sin egen algeriska socialism.

DET FINNS EN underton av nationalism eller av nationell självkänsla i alla uttalanden från ledande algeriskt håll just nu. Man kritiserar Ben Bella för att han flirtade med alla politiska vänsterregimer och lade sig i alla revolutionära rörelser världen runt. Algeriet kommer från och med nu att vara mera återhållsamt och om de nya ledarna blir sannspådda sätts alla krafter i främsta

Utrikespolitiska Föreningen 80 Years and Running!

UPF Lund has celebrated its 80th anniversary this year. Many events were held during the spring, along with a large sitting in honor of the Association's history. This chronicle is adapted from former President Emelie Muñoz's keynote speech.

1935 was the year UPF was founded, and Lund was transforming into a modern, vibrant university town. The formation of UPF was spearheaded by a few students and professors. The Association has been through a lot of changes since, but our spirit has remained the same. At its birth, UPF had 40 members in a single committee: the Lecture committee. They were the entirety of UPF for seven years. However, they soon realised that they couldn't run the organisation by themselves. The lecture committee needed help and the PR committee was created in 1942. Yet, at the beginning of the 1940's, the Association's activities remained minimal as a consequence of the war in Europe. UPF and Lundagård were the only associations taking a stand against Germany.

ONCE THE WAR was over, our Association wanted to develop their international focus further, so the UPF Travel committee was created in 1951. The first study trip ever made was to Paris in 1951 by train from Copenhagen. To further promote the international nature of the organization, the first exchange students were welcomed to join the Association in 1959. This is a continuing legacy, since today we are proud to be one of the most popular Associations among international students.

THE NEXT STEP was branching out into print media. In 1962, Utrikesperspektiv saw daylight under the name Utrikesnytt. UPF was relatively unchanged for 20 years, until the Board wanted to develop our social activities. In 1981, they moved to elect a "sexmästare" who got their own committee in 1996, named the Festmästeriet. They were responsible for organizing the association's social events. Nowadays, we know them as the Activity committee.

“WE ARE BUILDING ON A LEGACY OF INTEGRITY, OPEN-MINDEDNESS AND COMMONALITY

THE NEXT ADDITION was the Radio committee. They began their work in 1997 with weekly broadcasts on Sundays. In 2000, broadcasts were once a week with an additional replay on Sundays. From here, UPF media started skyrocketing. That same year, the Magazine saw growing interest in participation. UPF did not want to disappoint enthusiastic students who wanted to share their ideas and found the answer in creating the Webzine committee. Back then, they called their website Tellus. Nowadays, UPF Media is more cohesive than ever, as social media is becoming the Association's primary form of outreach to students.

THE ASSOCIATION'S YOUNGEST committee is our Career committee. It started as a cooperation between the Association and Lund's "Diplomatiska Klubben" (Diplomatic Club): former Lund students wanted to become mentors for current students. The venture was successful, and now the Career committee has a Prep Course and Mentorship Program.

UPF CONTINUES TO grow in members and in name. Associations in other universities are integrating, bringing like-minded students together. The future of UPF Lund has a strong foundation upon the work of old generations. We are all building on a legacy of integrity, open-mindedness, and commonality. These are timeless values; values which will keep our Association going for the next 80 years. ●

By: Arttu Närhi

Photos: Linna Fredström



Above: The Association's Anniversary Ball last February
Right: Former President and Vice President oversee the evening
Far Right: Head organizers of the Anniversary events Martina Berglund and Kajsa Fernström Nätby

THE WINDS OF RENEWABLE CHANGE: SCOTLAND AND THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH TOWARDS A FOSSIL FREE FUTURE?

Last Spring, students at the University of Edinburgh came together and demanded their institution to stand up for the environment after a decision of a prolonged partnership with companies using fossil fuel. The University is now set to divest from fossil fuel within six months.



Kirsty Haigh during the Occupation in the Finance Department building

Photo: People and Planet Edinburgh



Photo: People and Planet Edinburgh

Left: Occupation as seen from outside the Finance Department
Right: People and Planet Edinburgh's banner in the city center

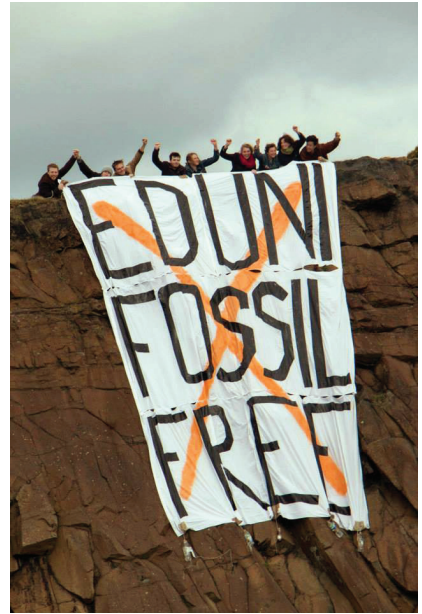


Photo: Huw Jones

On May 12th this past spring, the University of Edinburgh gathered to decide whether or not to divest from fossil fuels. Climate-activists, like the organization People and Planet, utilized frequent demonstrations in an attempt to influence the vote. However, when the final report was published, stating that the University would only divest from minor companies based on several vaguely phrased conditions, it met public outrage. The Vice-President of the University, Charlie Jeffery, stated in an article published in the Guardian that the university wouldn't "...withdraw their investments from companies involved in the extraction of fossil fuels." This pronouncement sparked the beginning of a ten-day long occupation.

JAMES HOLEHOUSE, a third-year physics student at the University of Edinburgh, was one of many taking part in the Occupation this spring. He stresses the importance of the University taking a stand in the question as being part of

their responsibility in society, "I joined the Occupation as climate change is a fact and we must change our ways. Universities have a morale responsibility as they are held at such a high level in society. Their influence will be imperative to societal change in the coming decades"

I GOT TO interview Kirsty Haigh, who is the spokesperson for People and Planet, the most prominent organisation taking part in the Occupation. She asserted the following:

"THE OCCUPATION WAS about the fact that for four years the University had ignored students and staff and refused to divest from fossil fuels or arms companies. We'd campaign inside and outside of the boardroom and everything including their own statistics had shown people wanted divestment. Our Occupation forced the University to properly address the issue by publicly shaming them for their shameful investments."

IN OCCUPYING THE Finance Department in Edinburgh, the protest did not only manage to gain national attention (with outspoken support from Naomi Klein among others) but also managed to pressure the University to alter their decision. The University now intends to divest from the three major fossil fuel providers within six months.

IN 2009, SCOTLAND decided to enact the Climate Challenge Act, which stated that the country would reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 80 % by 2050. The energy sector has played an essential part in the country's economy for a long time. The oil refineries in the North Sea and gas industries provide job opportunities for the country's citizens. Moreover, wind power based energy has increased as part of an attempt to reduce greenhouse emissions in addition to the country's reliance on fossil fuels.

THE UNIVERSITY'S DECISION can be seen as a success in two ways: it follows the directives within the Climate Act and also is a manifestation of direct democratic participation. I asked Haigh about this and about the extent to which the Occupation played a role in the new direction. Her response: "There's no doubt that the Occupation played a crucial role in forcing the University to divest from coal, tar sands and illegal armaments. For 10 days we were in the media and we had MPs, directors of environmental organisations and Nobel laureates all publicly telling the university to divest."

AS A RESULT, the University is now much more engaged with climate change initiatives as well as collaborative efforts between students and staff. Or at least, that is what one would conclude from an interview with Charlie Jeffrey by The Student in which he speaks highly of the new climate friendly agenda by the University, titled, the "Edinburgh Action for Climate". This agenda has been around since the beginning of the semester and will continue until the conference in Paris. In the interview, Jeffrey explains that the event is predominantly about harnessing expertise for the UN world summit, tackling challenges with the diversion and spreading a wider understanding of climate change.

**“THE DECISION
CAN CERTAINLY BE
SEEN AS AN
EXEMPLAR FOR
OTHER STUDENTS
ABOUT HOW THEY
CAN IMPACT THE
BEHAVIOUR OF
THEIR HOME
INSTITUTION**



So, how big will the impacts of this decision be? The University of Edinburgh is estimated to be a home and workplace for over 27,000 students and around 1300 employees each year, leaving little doubt that the reduction of energy use will have a dramatic positive impact. The decision to reduce the use of fossil fuels is most likely to play a considerable part in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. However, though this movement will face challenges, the decision can certainly be seen as an exemplar for other students about how they can impact the behaviour of their home institution.

Haigh has been involved in “People and Planet” since its inception, motivated by the conviction that the issue of climate change is too important to ignore. As she said, “there is nothing acceptable about funding war and climate change.” However, she is positive about the University’s initiative this autumn and points out that they are being hypocritical when promoting a reduction to fossil fuels and greenhouse gas emissions while simultaneously continuing to fund it.

When I ask her about their activism today, now that the “battle seems to be won” she stresses the fact that “our divestment campaign is still far from over and won’t be stopping until the University has divested from all fossil fuels and arms companies.” ●

By: Sandra Jakobsson
Exchange Student
Edinburgh

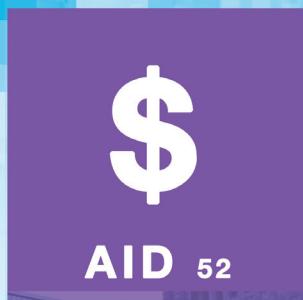
SCOTTISH ENERGY

- Renewable energy employs 11,000 people in Scotland today
- Scotland is estimated to have a quarter of Europe’s tidal electricity potential, and 10% of Europe’s wave energy potential
- Pentland Firth and Orkney are home to world’s first commercial scale leasing round for marine energy
- In 2013, Scottish wind power production was increasing at a rate of over 10% a year
- 25% of European offshore wind resources are in Scotland
- Scotland was among the first countries to harness hydroelectricity
- Scottish oil reserves are estimated to be 60% of the EU’s oil reserves
- Oil and gas production is estimated to have contributed £22 billion to Scotland’s GDP in 2012
- The Scottish oil industry employs 200,000 people directly and in related industries.
- The Scottish Government aims for “renewable sources to generate the equivalent of 100 per cent of Scotland’s gross annual electricity consumption by 2020”

SOURCE: The Scottish Government

Photo: Magnus Hagdorn







THIS ISSUE OF **UTRIKESPERSPEKTIV**
DELVES INTO THE TOPIC OF DEVELOPMENT.
WE TRY TO CAPTURE THE BREADTH AND
AMBIGUITY OF THIS THEME THROUGH A
MELANGE OF TOPICS, FROM FOREIGN AID,
TO CLIMATE RESILIENCE, TO TRANSGENDER
RESTROOMS. ALL TOO OFTEN, DISCUSSIONS
OF DEVELOPMENT ARE ACTUATED FROM AN
AFFLUENT, NORTHERN PERSPECTIVE. OUR
TEAM HAS SOUGHT TO CHALLENGE THESE
DOMINANT RHETORICS BY AUGMENTING
DEFINITIONS OF SUSTAINABILITY, GROWTH,
AND EQUALITY. LIKEWISE, WE ENCOURAGE
OUR READERS TO CONTINUE QUESTIONING
WHAT DEVELOPMENT MEANS, AND HOW TO
MOBILISE IT WITHIN A SHARED VISION FOR
THE FUTURE.

DEVELOPMENT

■ ■ ■ ■ MATTERS

INTERVIEW

CAROLINE WESTBLOM

Is the climate unjust, Caroline Westblom?

In the midst of her preparations for the international climate change negotiations at the COP21 summit in Paris, we met with Caroline Westblom, co-founder of PUSH Sverige, a youth-network on sustainability. Caroline has been engaged in several environmental NGOs, amongst others 350.org, and has earlier been observing COP18 in Qatar. In November, when we interviewed her, she was heading for Paris where she will represent PUSH as an observer delegate at COP21.

By: Johannes Ernstberger



Photo: Caroline Westblom

Caroline, what is climate justice?

I first realized that climate change is an issue of justice when I was in Qatar 2012 for COP18. The negotiations didn't seem to go anywhere and the deal that was on the table was just not ambitious enough. At the end of these negotiations, the Philippines were struck by a super typhoon. Their chief negotiator stood up and had a very emotional speech about how his country was already affected by climate change. His people are facing these issues every day and this was not reflected in the negotiations. He said, for me, this is life and death. I do not know if my family is alive right now. And we're sitting here and talking about numbers and money.

Historically, it is the western world who have caused the

emissions that we have, but the global South is now hit by the consequences. Instead of the industrialized world, it should be the people on the frontline that should be leading the talks and set the standard of what we have to do. However, this is not the case. It's the big industrialized countries that are leading the discussion. This is unjust. This is where the term of climate justice comes in.

In what way do the industrial nations take the lead in COP?

In theory every voice is equal. But in reality that's not the case. Just one example: The UN system does not have any rules for how big delegations can be. A country can basically come with as many people as they want. The US and even Sweden send huge delegations with 40, 50 and up to 70 people. Countries

such as the Maldives which are already facing impacts of climate change, simply cannot afford to send such a big delegation. They might not have the capacity or resources, so they come with maybe two people. At a COP summit, there can be up to 20, 25, or 30 different negotiations going on at the same time. If you're only two people, you cannot even cover that process. This of course is unjust from the very start. It favours the people who are already in power, who have the financial means.

What influence do corporations have on climate negotiations?

At the same time as COP19 in Warsaw was being held, there was also the world conference on coal going on. Many of the politicians were shifting between the two conferences. To

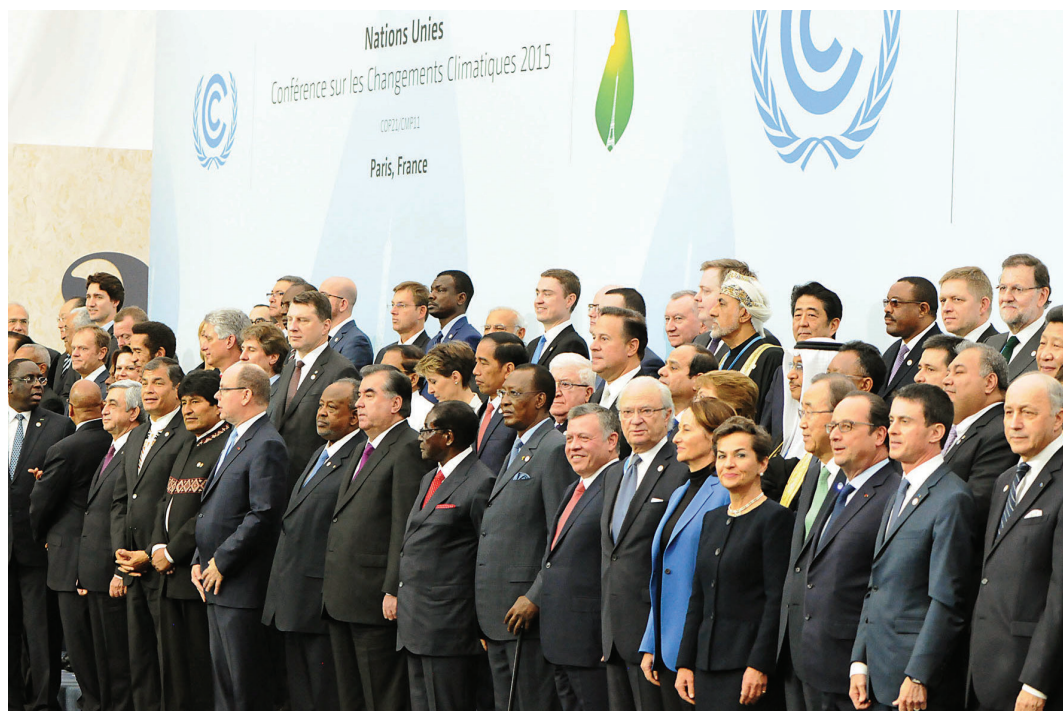


Photo: UNFCCC/flickr

add on top of this, the COP summit in Warsaw was sponsored by fossil fuel companies. It shows how corrupt this process is. We are letting big corporations with an interest in slowing down the negotiations do so. As observers, they are on the inside and have the same right to lobby the negotiators as we civil societies have. A trend has been that civil society delegated from NGOs have gotten less and less space whereas industry has gotten more. I don't think I can give you a proportion, but I would say at least the same, if not more are from industry.

As PUSH Sverige, what do you want to accomplish in terms of climate justice at COP21 in Paris?

A thing that we are pushing Sweden and other industrialized countries very hard for is on the issue of financing. Coun-

tries in the global South need financing not just for mitigation but already to adapt to climate change. When these super typhoons strike the Philippines it is the duty of industrialised countries to help and pay for that because it is caused by climate change. This is something that Sweden is acknowledging already but formally, the EU and many other countries, are not.

The new tool of the climate negotiations are the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs), which let each country decide themselves how much to contribute to climate goals. In which way do you think the INDCs would affect climate justice?

We see already now that countries that have not historically emitted almost anything, like some Caribbean countries and small island states, have put for-

ward goals of climate neutrality by the mid of this century. What various other countries such as the USA and EU are submitting is basically not enough. If we don't have legal requirements on these countries to submit higher ambitions, this of course becomes extremely unjust. Many argue that this is the only way to getting those countries on board, but it does not make it just.

By the mid of December, what would you like to read in the headlines of the daily newspapers?

“Paris delivered”, and I would like for that to not be a lie. Some people will argue for Paris being a success because everyone was there and everyone declared that we have to do something. But for me that is not enough. The climate negotiations should be about saving the climate but right now it seems they are more about saving the negotiations. Having everyone happy and cuddly together is of course great, but we also have to save the climate. ●



Photo: lightsinmotion/flickr

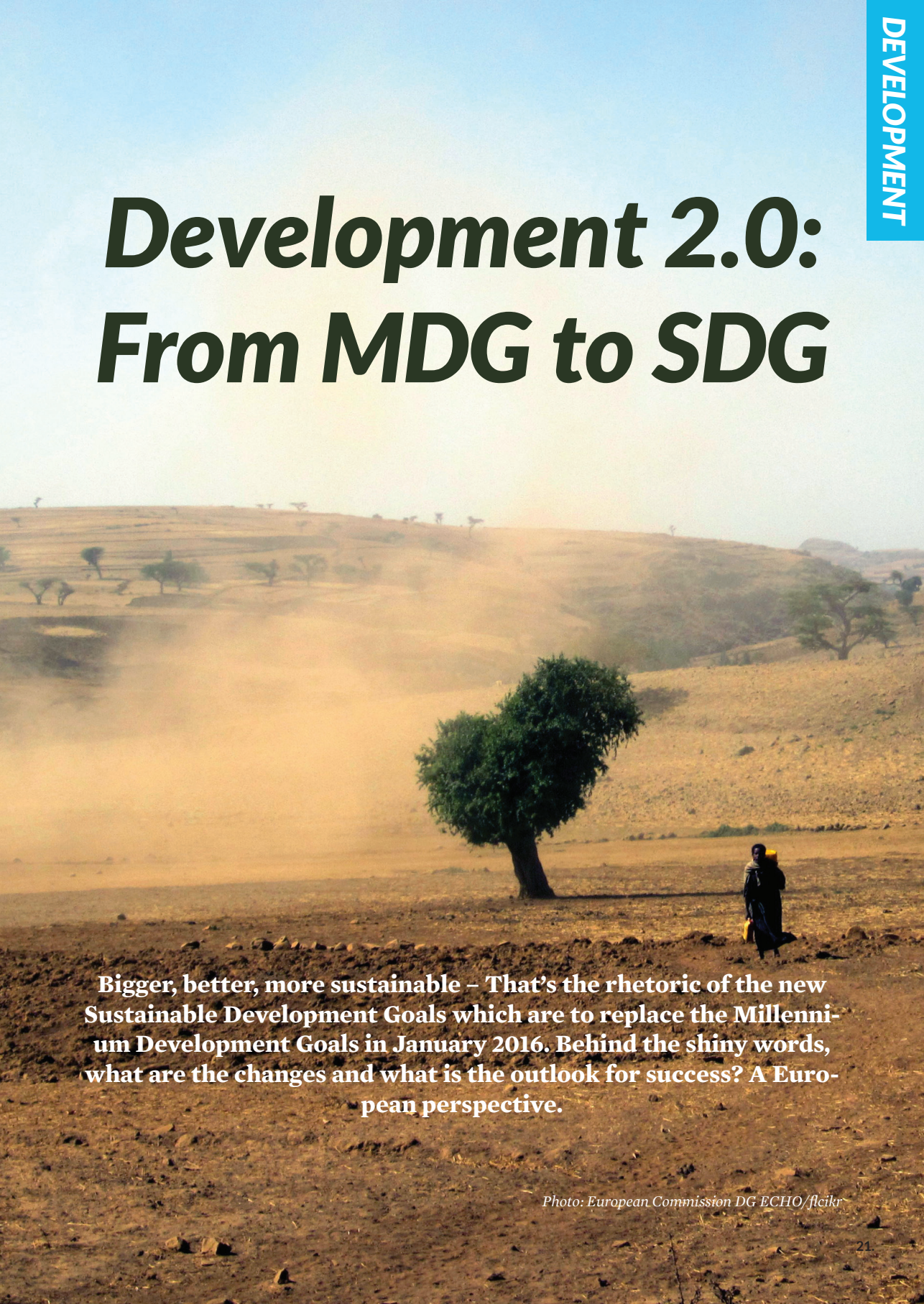
Caroline Westblom

Lund University Alumni (M.Sc. Environmental Management & Policy, 2013-2015)

Co-founder of PUSH Sverige

Official observer delegate to UNFCCC COP18 in Qatar (2012) and COP21 in Paris (2015)

Development 2.0: From MDG to SDG



Bigger, better, more sustainable – That's the rhetoric of the new Sustainable Development Goals which are to replace the Millennium Development Goals in January 2016. Behind the shiny words, what are the changes and what is the outlook for success? A European perspective.

Photo: European Commission DG ECHO/flickr

It does not happen every day that the General-Secretary of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon announces Pearl Jam. Actually, he encouraged people to “stand up for a better world”, not for the rock band. They just happened to be next on stage at the Global Citizen Festival that took place in September to celebrate the newly adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Pearl Jam was in good company expressing their support. Ed Sheeran, Coldplay, and Beyoncé were just some of the other appearances. People flushed into Central Park. In the midst of it all a reporter from the Guardian asks some audience members if they have heard of the global goals: After some noes and “Um ... I don’t think so”, eventually, it is an 11-year old girl who responds that it was all put up “to end poverty”. No doubt, that’s one of the SDGs’ 169 targets. But what are the others?

THE SDGS MARK the second round of global goals and follow the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which were adopted fifteen years ago to guide the world to a better 2015. The MDGs were a set of eight very ambitious goals, basically an enormous bucket list, with tasks ranging from halving hunger and extreme poverty, to providing basic education to everyone.

FOR THE PAST fifteen years, the MDGs have received very mixed feedback. Critics argued that the goals excluded many important aspects of development and, in the end, were not global at all. More than anything else, they divided the world into two categories: the ones which still had to achieve these goals, and the ones who were already there; the developing and the developed countries. It’s a much criticised divide, implying that one half of the globe is ahead of the other which has to ‘catch up’.

IN THE LIGHT of these criticisms, what have the UN changed for their second try on global development goals?

THE MOST APPARENT change is the sheer volume of goals. The UN scaled up, from 8 goals with 18 targets in the MDGs to 17 goals with a whopping 169 targets. Within the targets you can find a wide range, from ending discrimination towards women, to preventing marine pollution, or reducing corruption. While the UN has fought off the critique of a narrow set of goals, the large amount of targets has itself been questioned by some governments and NGOs for being unfeasible.

“THE ISSUE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IS A TRULY GLOBAL QUESTION AND NOT LIMITED TO EITHER PART OF THE WORLD

ONE WOULD THINK that 169 targets would be sufficient to cover more or less anything of importance. Still, it is the scope of the SDGs which has received the fiercest criticism. Nick Dearden, from the civil society organisation Global Justice Now, claims that there are still important components of development lacking, such as the role of corporate power: “They [transnational corporations] aren’t mentioned in the SDGs, yet the power of corporations is fundamental to the staggering levels of inequality which afflict the world”.

ON THE OTHER hand, the goals open up a lot of new areas. Alongside the idea of sustainability, the expansion of the goals sees the inclusion of environmental aspects with three specific goals on climate change, marine, and terrestrial ecosystems. This way, the SDGs differ fundamentally from their predecessor in terms of formulation. The issue of sustainable development is a truly global question and not limited to either part of the world. It requires “action from everyone, everywhere” as Ban Ki-moon, put it. The assembly managed to verbally, and in terms of content, navigate around the global North-South divide that has shaped the development discourse for decades.

THIS SHIFT RECEIVED much praise in the media who recognized an injustice in the top-down formulations of the MDGs. But it also means that countries without previous experience of the MDGs suddenly have far-reaching obligations. European countries now face the challenge to, amongst others, eradicate obesity, tackle nutrient pollution of their aquatic ecosystems, and to decrease the inequality between their richest and poorest citizens. Those aren’t easy tasks, considering that the three examples above have shown opposite trends so far.

WHAT REMAINS ARE many unanswered questions on how the goals are going to be implemented. The UN has left this a pending issue, to be solved, at the earliest, in the beginning of 2016 when the targets are equipped with indicators. Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah, from the civil society group Civicus, stretches the importance of implementation: “Without [it], this new global roadmap may not transport us very far from where the MDGs have dropped us off”. So far, European governments have not presented any concrete plans of how the SDGs are going to be implemented. Neither has media pushed for it. Both media and governments, it feels, have been most comfortable with expressing their hurrays to the possible end of extreme poverty instead.

THE TEMPTATION TO talk about poverty is great. After all, it’s a very concrete and very noble goal. However, simplifying the SDGs to poverty or hunger undermines all of the positive changes the goals incorporate. It is the largest obstacle to the SDGs’ success: To be truly global goals, governments around the world have to acknowledge that it’s not a question of charity anymore; it’s a question of committing to change at the national level in all countries. ●

By: Johannes Ernstberger



Photo: Elvert Barnes



Adapting to a Changing Climate: How the International Community is Missing one of the Most Important Challenges of Today

Disaster risk reduction policy is not common, and justifying it is hard. Especially planning for climate change related disasters is notoriously lacking across the globe. What the world needs right now, is comprehensive plans to combat these changes, before the damage becomes widespread.

In 2010, I was working on a development project in rural Mozambique. We established tree nurseries and helped local farmers diversify their crops so that in case of failure of one crop, it could be substituted with others to ensure income and food security. When the project was coming to an end, heavy rains started to hit the project area leading to major flood events, as the waters of the Limpopo River were rising dramatically. An early warning was disseminated for the region approximately 3 hours before the waters flooded the village, however, neither was there any evacuation procedures started nor any advice given on what should have been done. While luckily no fatalities were mourned, the project, alongside with many homes and infrastructural installation was destroyed.

THIS EXAMPLE IS just one in thousands each year where great efforts invested into development activities are being wasted by natural or man-made disasters. It seems to be a vicious cycle: development projects are being carried out and their results are subsequently destroyed by environmental disasters. According to the Intergovernmen-

tal Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the intensity and frequency of natural disasters will drastically increase in the coming decades. Fourteen out of the last fifteen years were the hottest the planet has ever seen; devastating droughts and associated food insecurity are a result. At the same time, more intense precipitation events and sea level rise have led to frequent and intense floods. Furthermore, due to an increasing complexity of technology, fresh threats are developing. The recent dam break in Brazil, polluting the Rio Doce is just one example.

THE QUESTION IS: if all this is known, why are disaster risk reduction activities not given more focus? Why are most of the funds available for disaster related policies flowing into the response phase, while preparation and mitigation could be much more efficient?

A MAJOR REASON for this contains a political nature. The ideal disaster risk reduction plan results in nothing happening, an unchanged situation. This is however politically quite hard to sell. It is never possible to prove afterwards, that without a specific risk reduction action, something very bad would have happened. During response activities, on the other hand, politicians can present themselves as caring public figures, travelling to the crisis area and helping people in need, milking the sympathy vote.

UNISDR

The United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction is mandated "to serve as a focal point in the United Nations system for the coordination of disaster reduction..." The UN adopted the strategy in 1999, and expanded it further in 2001. The office in charge of the ISDR works in co-operation with regional offices and other organizations to provide adaptable risk management plans.

Source: UNISDR

THE FIRST TARGET of the 13th sustainable development goal (taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts) is to “strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries”. This actually signifies a major policy shift from focusing only on mitigation action to climate change, to also adapting to its impacts. This shift must now be recognized in national policies and international development activities. A disaster happening in an urban area has the possibility to affect tremendous amounts of people and cause horrendous economic damage. Especially in an urbanized world, this poses a great challenge by mainstreaming risk reduction activities, including simple and cheap measures like river bank afforestation into planning procedures.

“MOST PROBABLY, THE TWO-DEGREE-TARGET IS IMPOSSIBLE TO REACH

LET’S CONSIDER SUDAN as an example. The country has practically been a war zone for the last 60 years since 1955 when the civil war broke out. The tensions between the recently independent South Sudan and Sudan itself, however, are still dangerous. Sudan belongs to the most corrupt countries on the planet. Also, a large part of the population lives in poverty. Additionally, the country is susceptible to several types of natural and man-made hazards, such as droughts, floods and epidemics. A recent assessment report by the Swedish Civil Contingency Agency and the Swedish Red Cross has shown that although the economic and human losses due to these disasters are a ma-

jor constraint to the country’s development, the government has basically no policy for disaster risk reduction laid out. Floods and droughts regularly destroy harvests, businesses, homes and infrastructure. Despite the presence of innovative forecasting technologies, the focus is on reactive disaster management rather than proactive disaster risk reduction.

LET’S TAKE THE White Nile Floods in 2013 as an example. 25,000 homes were destroyed, while more than 300,000 people were affected in total. Numerous fatalities had to be mourned. The government’s response was completely uncoordinated and has been globally criticized. But what is even worse is that it was uncovered that the government has been building residential areas in floodplain which were knowingly highly at risk from being affected by floods, without any sewage infrastructure. As the Sudan Tribune reported, several ministers responded to the criticism by accusing bloggers of being “seculars” and “not believing in the acts of God”. A recent conflict between the Sudanese Red Cross and the Government in Khartoum has led to a suspension of all Red Cross activities in the country, further worsening the situation for the civil population.

SCIENTIST HARDLY DENY anymore that the intensity and frequency of climate-related hazards will increase on a global scale as a result of climate change. However, the importance of preparing for disasters and adapting to the new circumstances has obviously not fully penetrated the global community. While there is at every climate summit, a horse-trading about who should reduce how much of their CO₂-emissions, no sustainable cooperation agreements on adaptation are

being made. Most probably, the two-degree-target is impossible to reach. This target is a politically favoured number, which has been adjusted multiple times. Most probably, even once this threshold has been reached, emissions will not suddenly stop. This means, the world will face tremendous changes in global climate patterns, which does not only mean temperature increase.

WE SHOULD NOT forget that today's refugee crisis can also partially be attributed to climate change. The Pacific Institute in California has recently published a research, suggesting that climate change effects have contributed a lot to the outbreak of the Syrian civil war. It is mostly developing countries who neither have the resources nor the expertise to adapt to climate change. Experts have been warning for decades that the generation of so-called climate-change refugees might become

one of the biggest challenges of the future. Climate change refugees offer a completely new challenge to the global community: while a person fleeing from conflict can go back home once the violence has ended, a person fleeing an increasingly hostile climate has lost her home for good.

ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE change, as stated by the IPCC, is clearly one of today's most urgent challenges. The existing climate change adaptation funds are however badly underfinanced, and the process of application for these funds is so cumbersome, that many states do not choose to do it. International cooperation is the need of the hour, where knowledge and expertise is being shared and climate change adaptation is being mainstreamed into development projects. ●

By: Malte Plewa



Photo: DVIDSHUB/flickr

US Navy assisting
in 2011 Thailand
floods relief efforts in
Bangkok.



LUND UNIVERSITY
Center for Middle Eastern Studies



As flowers begin to blossom in Sweden, revolutions and social movements continue to bloom across the Middle East and North Africa. The uprising will change the region forever but will also impact life and business in Sweden.

Stay informed by following CMES Reports or by attending our public seminars for comprehensive analysis on the Middle East and North Africa
www.cmes.lu.se - facebook.com/cmeslund

Photo: CMES, Finngatan 16, Lund

A QUESTION OF QUALITY AND QUANTITY

In general, one would tend to automatically assume that a developed country is also a rich country, and thus that a developing country is also a poor one. Evidence shows that we need to update this view.

Even though money is per definition a means for the achievement of various goals, it is often treated as an end in itself. This fallacy is made clearly visible in the question of national development, where GDP has long stood as the champion measure of standard of living. This is, in some respects, justified, but there is reason to believe that we are missing a fundamental point in what development means when using such a, as we will see, narrow measurement.

GDP HAS BEEN criticized for a long time. It has been said that it is unable to account for oligarchic gatherings of wealth in small concentrations and that its self-serving claim of "more is better" is far from compatible with a sustainable world. These are important allegations, but the issue I want to bring up, rather than GDP itself, is its relationship to our attitude towards development.

WHILE MANY ALTERNATIVE measurements exist, one has arisen that simultaneously grades countries and lets us see what GDP is really worth. The Social Progress Index (SPI) was created in 2013 with the vision to be a broad and complete measurement that gives countries a score based on all the things that constitute a good life for its citi-

zens. It covers everything from basic human needs such as access to clean water, sanitation and personal safety to access to advanced education, equality and ecosystem sustainability.

THE MOST INTERESTING thing that the SPI can teach us comes from seeing how a country scores relative to its GDP. First off, doing this lets you see wherein the virtue of GDP growth lies. For the worlds poorest countries the SPI gained from a small bump in GDP is huge. This tells us that to increase the standard of living at least some money is important. However, countries from all ranges of economic wealth can be seen both over-performing, having a high SPI despite being comparatively poor, and under-performing, not doing well on social progress but clearly having the material resources to do so. This can give a clue as to what really determines how a country develops.

LOOKING AT COSTA RICA, the number one over-performer, there are a few things that give a good hint. Most notably the

“WHAT WE CHOOSE TO ASPIRE TOWARD HAS GREAT IMPACT ON WHAT WE ACHIEVE

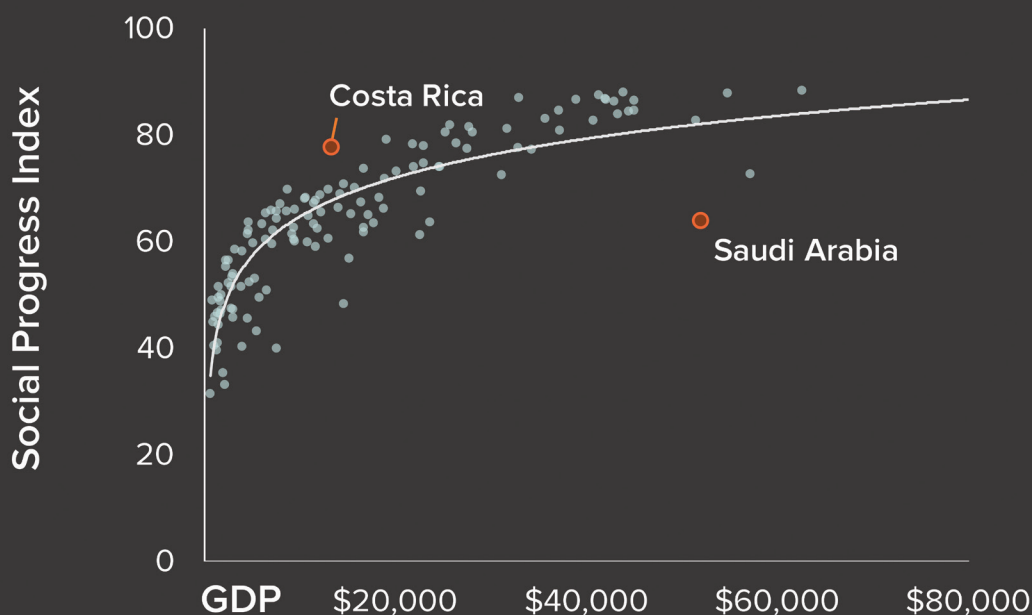


Photo: Social Progress Imperative

From all ranges of income there are countries which over- and under perform at SPI relative to GDP (shown respectively by those above and below the line).

abolishment of the army in 1949 made room for big spending on education. It also has a strong health care system with free and universal access and a strong democracy with a stable and politically independent judicial branch. Costa Rica also has the highest percentage of clean energy in the world, currently at more than ninety percent.

THIS STANDS IN stark contrast to Saudi Arabia, the biggest SPI under-performer. The country is a dictatorship, the courts follow sharia law and the schools focus primarily on religious teachings. The great economic wealth the country holds, which it has accumulated almost exclusively through oil exports, is not being used for welfare, as an estimated quarter of the population lives below the poverty line.

THE REASONS FOR the respective countries SPI score might seem obvious, but hide a simple truth. What we choose to aspire toward has great impact on what we achieve. If that would be economic wealth we are likely to become rich, but nothing says that we will also have a good society. In the same manner we can create a better living by striving for that. Not by ignoring the benefits economic growth can have upon develop-

ment, but simply by not using it as our primary guiding star.

REALIZING THAT DEVELOPMENT and economic growth is not the same thing is of chief importance. This gets clear when looking to the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the United Nations this September; a list of seventeen goals covering a wide range of areas to be achieved by 2030. The creators of the SPI conducted a predictive study using forecasts of global GDP growth for the next fifteen years to see how global SPI would change during that time, should we continue with the same patterns of development as we are today. The result was that we would come nowhere close to reaching the goal, even though global average GDP is expected to rise by almost 80%.

THESE THINGS ALL point to the indisputable fact that we are able to create better and more sustainable societies, should we want to do so. Following this idea could have dramatic consequences for our reaching the development goals. And as the university students of today will be the ones in charge tomorrow, adopting a more quality-oriented outlook might prove a well worth investment. ●

BEHIND STALL DOORS

A GLANCE AT QUEER CIVIL RIGHTS



AN ALTERNATIVE PORTRAIT OF
PROGRESS THAT'S FRAMED AROUND
THE FREEDOM TO URINATE

My favourite scene in the Wizard of Oz is when Dorothy indignantly reveals the identity of “the man behind the curtain” in the palace of the Emerald City. When Dorothy followed her skepticism, she took her power back. It’s a lesson applicable to a never-ending breadth of politics.

Here, I want to apply Baum’s metaphor to the topic of restroom politics, the intimate question of who we are behind the curtain, or, rather, behind the stall door. With all of the rhetoric being mobilised on the topic of equality after the legalisation of gay marriage in the United States this summer, an illusory curtain is drawn on the issue of Queer justice and gay rights.

INDEED, THE MARRIAGE debate exhumed a deeply historic conversation on civil rights. As President Obama said: “This ruling is a victory for America... It affirms what millions of Americans already believe in their hearts: when all Americans are treated as equal, we are all more free.” However, within this romantic language of equality and freedom, there is a lot of room for contestation. In many regards, I would suggest that the Supreme Court victory repositioned the Queer community into a cultural paradigm that renders them free in a normative way, and less free, if not overtly ignored, in other ways.

YOU CAN LOOK at it from this angle: marriage equality is a political agenda item that co-opts the gay movement into the heteronormative hegemony of the state; which, in effect, creates and fortifies a new standard of ‘homonormativity.’ The popular feminist scholar, Lisa Duggan, elegantly defines homonormativity as:

“A politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions -- such as marriage, and its call for monogamy and reproduction-- but upholds and sustains them while promising the possibility of a demobilised gay constituency and a privatised, depoliticised gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption.”

OR, SIMPLY PUT, our Queer population is given rights insofar as those rights are complicit within the conservative parameters of what American civil rights have come to mean: the freedom to be a part of a domestic, consumptive family unit. So, Queer people are allowed to join the marriage club, but the acquiescence of true dignity, in so many ways, is incomplete. Dignity isn’t something that is achieved through normativity. It is something that is achieved despite normativity. Indeed, in many ways, the American gay culture has “internalised the homophobia” that has been used to legitimate Queer oppression throughout history. This sexual normalisation “drives wedges in between communities that might otherwise work together,” and the constituency of Queer-identifying individuals becomes bifurcated into the acceptably normal, and the “still shameful.”

FOR THIS REASON, I want to discuss “Queer civil rights”—politics about sexual identity including but not limited to

homosexuality—through an analysis of shame, an analysis of restroom politics, instead of through normative victories, like marriage. Shame offers much more insight into how we confer humanity to people “in despite of,” rather than “because of.” Therein, this commentary reframes social development within the language dignity, rather than equality. Too often the language of development is underpinned by a severely limiting, normative agenda for human rights. National concepts of development would look very different if they were premised on legitimating the dignity of different citizens, rather than subsuming them into a formal network of civil acceptability, which doesn’t really address enduring undercurrents of institutional exclusion and violence.

POINTEDLY, WHEN YOU look at history, “bathrooms and the fight for civil rights go hand in hand.” Think about Jim Crow laws—African Americans fought one of America’s most iconic battles during the civil rights movement to equalise public spaces, like restrooms and drinking fountains, among much more. The stall is a powerful symbol; it’s a place where all people, despite identity, feel vulnerable. Thus, the restroom, as transgender luminary Janet Mock says, “is a powerful equaliser for all of us.” The greatest illusion about the restroom is, because of its universalism, also a common resource—when, in reality, the restroom is a privilege denied to many. Moreover, it is a space

“NATIONAL CONCEPTS OF DEVELOPMENT WOULD LOOK VERY DIFFERENT IF THEY WERE PREMISED ON LEGITIMATING THE DIGNITY OF DIFFERENT CITIZENS

that is centred on the “phantasm of the normal body,” which tacitly shames and denaturalises the individuals who cannot access it.

FOR NON-CISGENDER persons, the vulnerability of urinating is heightened to a level of terror in many instances. According to one study, 70% of transgender-identified individuals have reported the verbal attack and 10% have reported physical assault. Often, transgendered persons are forced to use facilities that do not align with their visible gender identifications, which leaves them susceptible to antagonism.

They are mired in a legal stalemate—most states in the U.S. require people to use the restroom that matches the sex on their birth certificates, while at the same time, individuals are not allowed to modify their legally designated sex. In essence, the civil agency of non-cis persons is ignored, along with the violence they endure in consequence of institutional inertia.

INTERESTINGLY, WHEN YOU look at transgender politics more globally, a legally disparate picture emerges. While there is a high degree of structural discrimination against trans communities in the West, Asia is breaking new ground. Although many of these countries are “culturally conservative,” they display more formal open-mindedness on the topic of gender non-conformity in their institutions. For instance, in 2007, Nepal became the world’s first country to introduce a third gender category in its census as well as their passports. In 2009, Nepalese voters then achieved an independent voter designation for the third gender category. That same year, Pakistan began issuing identity cards with the third gender category. In 2013, Bangladesh afforded legal status to the third gender category of “hijra,” in all formal documentation. And, in 2008, the first secondary school in Thailand was equipped with gender-neutral restrooms, one school among several other higher education establishments in Thailand that have safe restrooms for trans persons. I am not trying to

lionise the accomplishments of Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Thailand by polemicising their politics against the United States. Rather, I am merely trying to open Western minds to a different realm of institutional possibility that may actually have more structural impact on humanising the lives of Queer identifying individuals.

LIKEWISE, I BRING up this global perspective to elucidate a more holistic picture of Queer civil rights and draw your skepticism to where nations recognise formal victories in their narratives of social progress. This summer, the United States celebrated what nobody can deny as a landmark achievement. Hereby, many couples legally legitimised their partnerships—that is meaningful. However, as legislators were pasting a tiny rainbow into America’s book of civil rights, a curtain was drawn. Gender politics goes beyond the vocabulary of “gay rights,” and “gay rights” go beyond the vocabulary of the heteronormative agenda. We can’t let the rainbow stop at the stall door. We can’t acquiesce to the politics behind the curtain, as they are. ●

By: Jamie Woodworth

LETTERS FROM ICELAND

Stories concerning Iceland's development, gathered within forty eight hours, have provided insight as effective as an extra hour of sunlight.

Roughly 10:15 am, 2nd November, 2015, just after a tour of the Parliament, Reykjavik: We, student members of the Travel Committee team to Iceland, walked across Austurvöllur, the public square facing the Alþingishúsið (Parliament House) to meet with Hanna Birna Kristjánsdóttir, the current head of the Foreign Affairs Committee of Alþingi.

HANNA BIRNA KRISTJÁNSDÓTTIR HEAD OF THE PARLIAMENTARY FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Dear Students,
I HAVE HELD position as the former Minister of Interior for over a year in between 2013-2014 and the former Mayor of Reykjavik from 2008-2010. Through these official posts I have seen the dynamics of Iceland shape and form to what the country is as of today. I would like to share stories and experiences, to provide you with an insight.

ONE CONSEQUENCE OF the financial crisis was that it became affordable to come to Iceland. There was a boom in tourism. With regards to tourism, there was too much, in too short a time. We were not ready. By far, this was one single reason we are back on our feet. It also saw the emergence of Airbnb locally, which contributed towards housing for tourists, hereby, creating the 'common capitalist'. Financial crisis led to 15% unemployment rate, seen for the first time.

WE EXPORT FISH, making money off fisheries through taxes. We do not subsidise the Common Fisheries Policy. After tourism, fishing industry is the second largest, followed by aluminium smelters, contributor to the Icelandic economy.

WHILE THE GOAL of the European Union is to have 27% renewable energy by 2030, 80% of our energy source is renewable, between hydro and geo-thermal. It has created a clean energy slogan abroad showing Iceland is sustainable. We also do not have street lights in many constituencies in order to cut down on unnecessary costs. Talks have reached a point where we are exploring the possibility of exporting electricity to Brittan. The remaining 20% is oil import utilized in cars and ship fleet.

“**THE POLITICS OF ICELAND NEED TO CHANGE. I WOULD LIKE TO SEE MY TWO DAUGHTERS GROW UP IN AN ICELAND FREE OF DISTRUST...**

WE EXPERIENCE POLLUTION of the sea which is a threat as we live off the fish. One of the biggest problems associated with such pollution is the pollution from cars. People here drive everywhere. Few solutions towards reducing pollution have been mentioned in the Green Steps for Reykjavik document, to cycle and walk more, a yearly plan addressing environmental issues. The idea is to communicate that 'if you try to be environmentally friendly, you will

benefit from it'. It would be great to make the city centre car free although people will say 'no'. In that sense there is a generation gap. The old think that this (no car) is a human rights issue.

RIGHT WING POLITICS of Iceland, which includes my party, the Independence Party and Left-Green Movement party do not want to join the EU. Right wing approach is to ask people if they want to apply to the EU. The three left wing parties want to join the EU. The new government withdrew interest and now it is no more a highlight topic of debate and discussion.

IN ICELAND, GENDER equality requires extra work. The consensus between men and women is to explore how is equality defined. For instance, the Women's List, a political party until 1999, dissolved into the Social Democrats Party. Many of those party members went on to join the Left-Green Movement.

IT IS STILL 'a man's world' in Icelandic politics where different values have not melted in practice and women are 'considered guests'. In business, only 10% of CEO's are women and in comparison to world trends we consider this to be way behind. In judiciary, we have had only one female justice of the Supreme Court of Iceland, namely Greta Baldursdottir. Even the police force is male dominated. I entered politics due to gender politics. The structure of politics has made it a difficult field for women. As a result fewer women take part.

THE POLITICS OF Iceland needs to change. In the future, for my two daughters, I would like for them to grow up in an Iceland free of the feeling of distrust. Lack of trust has made it nearly impossible to be in politics. Icelandic population believe greatly in the power and to create change through voting. I would like to see this change by the time I have grey hair.

PREVIOUSLY, WE WOULD never have the need to lock our houses, there was genuine trust in neighbours. Additionally, media is partly to blame. It would be nice to see a happy approach towards solving the distrust issue through joint efforts made by politicians and people.

HAVING PROVIDED ALL of you with a background of Iceland, I encourage you to make keen observations on the remaining part of your visit to Iceland.

Featured here, and on the following pages, are photos by the Travel Committee of their trip. Along with meeting academics and politicians, the group got a good amount of time to explore the unique natural beauty of the arctic island.



Photo: Henry Fängell

THE FOLLOWING DAY, we met with Pia Hansson, Director, Institute of International Affairs, University of Iceland and Arni Finnssoon, Chairman, Iceland Nature Conservation Association. Both these experts in the field of Arctic and Icelandic environment shared a common note.

ARNI FINSSOON ICELAND NATURE CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

Dear Students of UPF Lund,
ICELAND, AN ISLAND state in the Arctic is very concerned about the impacts of climate change. For us, Nordic cooperation, through the Haga Process is very important. Although, currently there appears to be challenges in this region.

CHINA, AN OBSERVER country to the Arctic Council, has obtained licence for oil exploration in partnership with two Icelandic oil drilling companies by the Government of Iceland. Our Prime Minister appears to be pro drilling and considers this to be a way out of the financial crisis. Imagine, if tomorrow there would be oil drilling activity in Greenland.

THE RESULTS WOULD be devastating and irrevocable. There has been a trend of coastal countries to dominate Arctic politics. In my understanding, as an educator, it is important that students understand these issues. In totality, it is students like you who will shape Arctic governance of tomorrow.

I WISH YOU all the best with your studies and in your future endeavours.

PIA HANSSON INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND

Hello everyone,
BEING PART OF the environment movement in Iceland since 1997 through INCA, I have observed few distinct characteristics of Iceland's work dynamics in the field of environment.

CONSERVATION IS PART of Iceland's infrastructure. Although the decision to build new power transmission lines across highlands, will prove to have a negative impact on the ecosystem. Iceland is already facing ocean acidification and private media is pro-drilling. For instance, Davíð Oddsson, former governor of the Central Bank of Iceland went on to become and currently is the Editor of Morgunblaðið, a right wing newspaper, one of the largest in Iceland. The damage to the environment is happening.

ICELAND POLITICIANS ARE not very accountable. In the last six years, post financial crash, there has been an increase in referendums. Our efforts in battling environmental degradation is through processing appeals to the ruling committee and teaming up with land owners.

IT IS BEST if Iceland took note of its actions before ever increasing tourism robs us off the pleasure of having gigantic minke whales in our immediate waters. ●

By: Saahil Waslekar

***Note:** The above text is the result of face to face interactions and hand written notes with the three individuals.*

ALÞINGI

- The Icelandic Parliament (Althingi in English) consists of 63 members
 - Its origins go as far back as 930AD, making it the oldest parliament in the world
 - Einar K. Guðfinnsson of the Icelandic Independence Party is the current speaker of the Althingi
 - In the 2013 Parliamentary election, over 80% of the electorate turned out to vote
- SOURCE:**
Althingi.is

PHOTOS FROM ICELAND



Photos: Jonas Asker, Stina Zinsmeister, Saahil Waslekar and Kajsa Fenström Nätby

Iceland and the European Union

After the “close call” following the financial crisis in 2008, many Icelanders wanted to seek safety by joining the European Union. This political debate has been toned down in recent time, but is still an important topic in Icelandic politics.

During the UPF visit to Iceland in the end of October, the Association got to visit the Parliament, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Swedish Embassy, all of which had their own take on the topic.

AFTER THE COUNTRY almost went bankrupt in 2008, the Parliament at the time decided to apply for a membership on the 16th of June 2009. However, the country was not united in making this decision, and in September 2013 the Government dissolved its accession team and suspended its application to join the EU. On March 12th 2015, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Gunnar Bragi Sveinsson, claimed that he had sent a letter to withdraw the application, but this was not approved by the Althing, the Icelandic Parliament. The EU stated that the application had never formally been withdrawn and per status quo Iceland has had an application that has been on hold for six years. Nevertheless they are a member of the European Economic Area (EEA) along with Norway and Switzerland.

ICELAND IS A small island nation. With 330 000 inhabitants, equivalent to the population of Malmö, the political situation has a way of changing rapidly. One of the economic interests is tourism, which is also one of the main sources of income for Iceland. Many Icelanders

will argue that when they were close to going bankrupt, the salvation was the tourist industry. According to The Department of Foreign Affairs, tourism has exceeded the fishing industry and is the country's main source of income. This is not so strange, considering that the number of foreign visitors exceeds one million yearly. Suddenly, the economy was good again, and so it seemed people had lost interest in joining the European Union.

“ICELANDERS WANT TO HOLD ON TO THEIR NEW-FOUND FREEDOM AND ARE SCEPTIC TOWARDS BEING RESTRICTED BY EU REGULATIONS

“OF COURSE THE economic upswing in tourist industry has had a huge impact in the EU-debate, but it is also in the Icelandic mind-set. We want to maintain our independence”, mentions former Interior minister, Hanna Birna Kristjánsdóttir. She explains that Iceland is a relatively new state and that they just got their independence from Denmark in 1944. Because of this, she believes that most Icelanders want to hold on to their newfound freedom and



Photo: Wikimedia Commons



Photo: Juanjo Marin

Left: The Icelandic parliament building, where the Althing meet.

Right: Anti-EU poster in Reykjavik.

are sceptic towards being restricted by EU regulations. She even tells us that if Norway is to join, then the country will probably reapply.

THE SWEDISH EMBASSY had the opposite opinion, and is pro-EU. When asked about what their main tasks were, they brought up the EU application. The Swedish Embassy had seen the Icelandic application and was one of the main driving forces to push Iceland into joining the EU. “We want Iceland in the EU with us for economical reasons and trade, but mainly for joining us being a stronger Nordic force. We are known in the EU as “The Nordic Mafia”. The Swedish Embassy also believed that if we went to the Norwegian Embassy, we would have a whole different case.

THE DEPARTMENT OF Foreign Affairs explains that, despite its size, Iceland aims to be an influential nation. Iceland wants to maintain the image of a self-sufficient country in terms of energy. They are also proud of being the oldest parliament in the world, and want to promote gender equality in politics and in other arenas. They consider themselves being a proof that a state can work without an army. The Depart-

ment of Foreign Affairs referred to important trades with, for example, China as being an important reason for maintaining independence. With EU regulations, these trades might be restricted.

FOR NOW IT looks like the EU debate will continue to be on hold. Economic considerations as well as the freedom to trade remain important reasons for not joining. But what seems to be the most major factor is the Icelandic mentality, their will to keep their independence and to continue proving that they are a small, but strong nation. But what happens if another crisis hits? Maybe they will change their minds about the membership, or maybe these Viking descendants believe they can overcome anything by themselves in this ever-changing country? ●

By: Kari B. Helle



Behind Myanmar's historic 2015 election

Myanmar's recent election underlines the positive trend of democratization in the "middle" of the transition period after half a century of isolation. What's more important is not only the landslide victory of the opposition party, but also the political "will" of the old elites to "allow" this "freest" and "fairest" election to happen.

Much has not been said in both domestic and international media about the main 'driver' and the 'conditions' behind the recent successful general election in Myanmar. It is imperative to take a step back and place the recent election within the Myanmar political context where a road to democracy has been taken by the quasi-civilian government ending half a century of military rule, economic backwardness and international isolation. The key actor at this critical juncture on the middle road of democratic transition is the outgoing quasi-civilian government led by President Thein Sein.

SINCE MYANMAR POLITICS is generally driven from the top-down, "strong commitment" and "political will" toward democracy made by President Thein Sein and elites surrounding him become 'vital' paving the way toward this freest and fairest election in Myanmar's history. Serious steps toward the democratic reform happened since the early 2011 after the 2010 election. Freedom of expression is the prominent exemplar of political reform taking root in Myanmar political landscape. Print media, outlets and newspapers are liberalized and given their own voices providing public space for policy debates. Freedom of assembly and association are also undertaking as seen in citizen engagement in public protests and

forming of trade unions on grounds. This rapid development has been generally accepted by international community and proven strong commitment and political will have been adopted by the elites at the top of Myanmar politics.

POLITICAL WILL AND commitment toward democracy under President Thein Sein

“MYANMAR'S CHALLENGE IS A DEMOCRATIC MOVE WHICH IS NOT TOO SLOW AND NOT TOO FAST

have largely differed from the previous regime. This could be explained in his leadership style. In contrast to General Than Shew, the former President, Thein Sein, coming from a younger generation, has a less autocratic leadership style and before becoming the president he was described by prominent Myanmar analysts as a humble and decent individual. His prime concern was the plight of the poor. As the international community has seen there is

no story of his personal corruption and abuse. Importantly, he has made his efforts to collaborate with various groups to rebuild the country particularly his close works with a democratic force led by Aung San Suu Kyi.

ALONG WITH LEADERSHIP change to President Thein Sein, the shifting role of the military known as *Tatmadaw* is crucial to understand Myanmar's politics because the military has played a central role in Myanmar politics since the nationalist struggle for independence from the British in 1948. Their respective role as the 'guardian' of state always ties up to protect the three causes of national security issue including non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity and sovereignty. Post 2010 elections explain the change in their role in Myanmar politics since security situations from various threats perceived by military including from ethnic minorities, opposition groups and the outside world have been alleviated and stabilized. This resulted in weakening of the military's opponent groups and the promulgation of the 2008 Constitution which ensures a strong government to emerge and military control in key security-related aspect of government being safeguarded by the reserve of 25 percent of the

parliamentary seats for them. Hence, the relinquishment of their power in politics to the people through election is made possible.

THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC concern becomes another key impetus for democratic reform and the then recent election to happen. There is a sense within the elites and the military that the country is exploited by their powerful neighbor, China as well as the previous market-oriented economy under the previous regime of State Peace and Security Council (SPDC) has served no one in the country since it could not be fully implemented under the condition of international sanctions and isolation. With the vitality of the economy as the main engine for nation's survival in the elites' perspective, the adoption of the political reform toward democracy and liberalization of economic development is simply to promise the better



future for their own interest and the country.

PERCEPTIONS OF MYANMAR'S reform and democratization process vary greatly and expectations for Myanmar's socio-economic development are great. What does the future hold for Myanmar? One of the most frequently asked questions after the recent election. The answer is apparently clear when we simply look at the history of democracy. Democratization in Myanmar only began in the early 21st century. Deep rooted authoritarian and military rule cannot be reformed overnight. Democracy in Myanmar is still very young and it is in a transition period. What we can hold on to is simply the 'direction' of change and 'commitment' to change. Therefore, be realistic and be fair to Myanmar.

THE REAL CHALLENGE ahead for Myanmar's democratic transition lies in how to make a democratic move which is not too slow and not too fast. Political will and strong commitment to move things forward at a reasonable pace should be sustained by the new government. The result of the recent election provides the democratic force of the National League of Democracy (NLD) party led by Aung San Suu Kyi a majority in the legislative power to select a new President and form a new government. Her negotiating skills and management is therefore critical in compromising with old elites in the Union Solidary and Development Party (USDP) of the

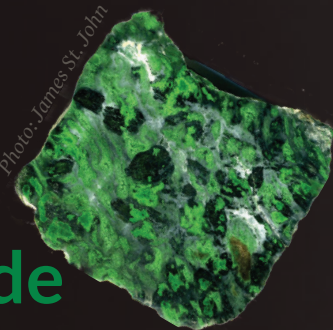
outgoing President Thein Sein and the military force for the future of Myanmar politics.

SIGNIFICANTLY, 'INCLUSIVENESS' ESPECIALLY the voices from various ethnic groups which have long been the main security problem in the country is the key element to make this democratic transition work smoothly. A power sharing regime if managed well by Aung San will pave a smooth democratic transition but if not, a bumpy road can flash back into Myanmar's political landscape. ●

By: Varintorn Thanvichien



Photo: James St. John



Myanmar's Jade Trade

The stolen wealth of the Kachin People

Myanmar has been praised internationally for economic reform and its emergence into the global economy. But domestically, sectarian violence and discrimination still plagues the people of the Kachin state. Now, the mass excavation of Jade by military controlled companies and foreign businesses is leaving a devastating environmental and humanitarian toll on the region.

"That is why the government won't invite representatives of the jade business to join the discussion [about EITI] because they are afraid that all the corruption and misery will come out and the world will see."

— Jade industry representative

In 1962 the military of Myanmar staged a coup d'état that overthrew the government. For the next 49 years Myanmar was under direct or indirect military rule. However, following elections in 2010 it appears, at least superficially, that the Burmese military is taking steps towards establishing a democracy and righting the wrongs of the past. The recent release of Aung Suu Kyi, the political prisoner, from her over 15 years of house arrest and the establishment of a National Human Rights Commission appear to be steps in the right direction. However, due to international sanctions, which began in 1993, and the long standing internal conflicts; which have been described internationally as the "world's longest civil war," Myanmar's development has lagged far behind the rest of the world. Myanmar has one of the widest income gaps in the world, contributing to its ranking of 150 on the Human Development Index, placing it at the low end of the spectrum.

LUCKILY, MYANMAR'S KACHIN state has rich deposit of a highly sought after

and highly valuable commodity. Jade. Global Witness released a report, the culmination of a yearlong investigation, at the end of October 2015 which estimated that the country's official Jade production in 2014 was over the US\$12 billion imported by China and is in fact closer to US\$31 billion. This is equivalent to 48% of Myanmar's GDP. With such a high demand of a locally sourced product, one would expect the lives and wealth of those in the Kachin region to be undergoing a major transformation, a change that would spur development in the rest of the country.

SADLY, THIS IS not the case and the Global Witness report highlights the dark underbelly of the Myanmar Jade Trade. The report exposed the military's shadow control of the government and Jade industry; this control is leading to an allocation of Jade mining licenses and a syphoning off of the precious stone in a way that financially benefits foreign businesses and the military's shadow companies. One insider's description of the process claimed "if there is a big hat involved [in a bid], they will surely get it." Global Witness lists several families of prominent figures from the blood soaked junta rule, including ex-dictator General Than Shwe's family and former commander of Kachin state Ohn Myint's family. Between them and Maung Maung Thein's family, they accumulated a total of US\$220 million worth of

Jade at the emporium in 2014. While these former rulers prosper, the local Kachin population and the region's environmental landscape are being destroyed.

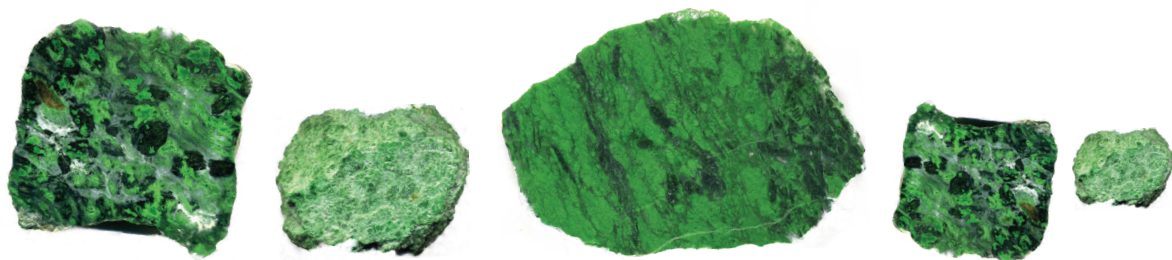
THE BURMESE CIVIL War, counting from the coup d'état in 1968, constitutes several internal conflicts, one of which is between the Kachin Independence Army and the Myanmar Army. In 2011, following a 17 year cease fire, the conflict restarted as result of discontent amongst the Kachin people for what they saw as exploitation of their people and resources due to the government's decision concerning the Jade trade. Since then, thousands have perished and there has been extensive use of landmines, child soldiers, institutionalised rape and torture by the Myanmar Army as, reported by the Women's League of Burma. The intersection of

this deep rooted conflict, with the new stream of wealth leaving the Kachin region, adds fuel to an already tense relationship. One Kachin resident described the anger felt by Kachin people at the profiting of the military and pro-government companies from the Jade mining as "the tree is in our garden, but we are not allowed to eat the fruit." In this, the corrupt Jade business is prolonging a devastating armed conflict by bypassing the Kachin.

FOR EXAMPLE, ONLY a handful of Kachin companies are granted licenses to mine the Jade in their own region. Instead, large corporations are hiring workers from outside the Kachin state to mass mine the Jade. This is coupled with governmental restrictions on the transportation and cutting of Jade rocks by the locals. This criminalises the Kachin people's ability to even possess Jade. Without licenses to mine, and without government permission to possess the valuable stones, the Kachin people are losing out on massive revenue.

**“SYPHONING OFF
OF THE PRECIOUS
STONE IN A WAY
THAT FINANCIALLY
BENEFITS FOREIGN
BUSINESSES AND
THE MILITARY'S
SHADOW
COMPANIES**

ENVIRONMENTALLY SPEAKING, EXCAVATION companies are instituting short term, low cost exploration processes that involve deep, unsustainable, excavations which creates reservoirs. During the heavy rains, these reservoirs overflow and flood the Kachin region, destroying homes, killing cattle and bringing disease and injury. On November 24th a mud slide in the Kachin district took the lives of 113 Kachin miners by destroying their sleeping huts, a further 30 were buried beneath the soil. Thus, in the quest for Jade, forests and natural resources are being destroyed and the air pollution caused by dynamite mining is leading to severe health related issues



for the population. When one considers that the US\$31 billion revenue from the Myanmar Jade trade is equivalent to 46 times what the government spends on healthcare, one can see the devastating effect that the corrupt Jade trade is having on the development of the country.

HOWEVER, THERE IS a glimmer of hope in the form of the Government's signing the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). This is an internationally respected process with the aim of creating greater transparency in industry. It would allow the public to view which companies have mining licenses, who owns said companies, the amount of revenue and tax collected from the industry and other important details. This would hold the government and the corporations accountable could be a positive step towards ending corruption and helping to develop the economy. Surprisingly, steps have been taken by government officials and the Htoo Group, owned by the most famous con-
 erty tycoon in Myanmar Tay Za, to provide sales revenues and data on policies and practices. Although, local groups have expressed concerns about the practical benefit the EITI would have, these steps seem promising.

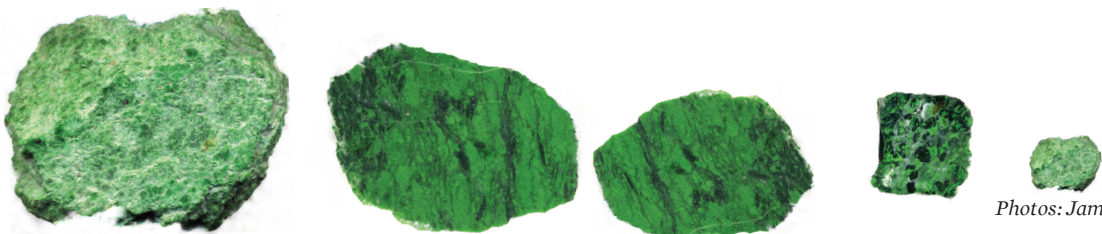
UNFORTUNATELY, ANY LONG term benefits may be overshadowed by a prolonged subjugation of the Kachin people. Any legitimate reform that provides greater rights to the Kachin people could be heavily opposed by former leaders from the junta years. Global Witness argues that the international community's involvement with the nation, encour-



Map of Myanmar, with Kachin highlighted

aged by the positive steps Myanmar has taken with the EITI, could be used to pressure the government to take seriously the plight of the Kachin people and the environmental effect of the mining. With the results of the November elections the National League for Democracy has won with a "landslide" and relations between the party and the military, at least for now, seem peaceful. Thus, it is possible that with the changes domestically and the perception of Myanmar on the international stage; the Jade trade, the Kachin people and Myanmar's development can expect a change for the better. ●

By: Danielle Soskin



Sustainable Development:

*the way out of poverty
or the reinforcement of inequality
and ecological destruction?*

Often discussed through a thick layer of ideological assumptions, sustainable development might not hold up to the promises being made in its name.

The recently presented sustainable development goals (SDGs) form together a universal set of targets and indicators to strengthen universal peace, eradicate poverty and to heal and secure the planet. The agreements on the SDGs by all United Nation Member States and acknowledgement of the ecological crisis together with the urgency for sustainable development can be the start of a promising new era of sustainable development. But when sustainable development is not understood in the normative and complex reality of different discourses, cultures, and powers in which it is embedded, real progress may remain a far cry.

THE TERM “SUSTAINABLE development” was coined in 1983, by the Brundtland Report *Our Common Future*, referring to: “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” In 1983 when the report was written, the dominant discourse on development was featured by a neoliberal ideology. Based on the assumptions that the market would effectively reduce poverty and the belief that economic growth will automatically lead to development. The pathway to

sustainable development among mainstream development institutions is then not surprisingly one that builds on the growth paradigm in which development is understood as material progress and that a developed society is one in which we can consume unlimitedly.

SIMILAR IDEAS ARE still present in the United Nations and the SDGs which should be leading in the agenda on sustainable development. Yet, as much as I agree on all the single goals in its aim to create a better world, so much I am worried about the idea that dominant understandings of social progress and a better world are equal to modern Western (ecologically impossible) standards. My worries come forth out of the normative and contested character of the concepts development and sustainability. Meaning that the terms are understood differently by so many people in various contexts that it is hard to speak of one universal pathway to sustainable development.

**“ NOT
QUESTIONING THE
GROWTH PARADIGM WILL EVEN BE
DESTRUCTIVE**

DIVERSE UNDERSTANDINGS OF achieving sustainable development can be illustrated by different framings of the ecological crisis, what its causes are and thereby what the forthcoming solutions to the problem will be.

SOME ARGUE THAT the crisis has its origin in the Industrial Revolution and the high amount of fossil fuels that have been burned ever since. One way to deal with the ecological crisis then is from a rationalist viewpoint in which progress and prosperity are equated to economic growth. This is the mainstream interpretation as understood by the powerful development institutions, such as the UN. The solution in that case will be a techno-fix based on providing clean energy that is price-competitive. Thus, we will keep living our current (Western) lifestyles and aim to transfer them to other parts of the world. But will this really contribute to “a better life” for everyone while saving the planet from climate change?

JUST FOCUSING ON technology is not enough and not questioning the growth paradigm will even be destructive, because this discourse leaves out the political and socio-cultural dimension. The ecological crisis is really about, what made possible for humans to burn fossil fuels in such large amounts as we nowadays do. Namely, unequal exchange and the idea that humans master nature to realise Western lifestyles.

UNEQUAL EXCHANGE IS what made it possible to establish the modern Western lifestyles, which are highly dependent on the exploitation of other parts of the world. To give an example, the ecological footprint from an average Swede can be almost six times as big as what the earth can bear per person. To sustain these lifestyles there is a high demand for resources which requires land surfaces in excess of what is nationally available, at least if it should also be economically profitable. From a neoliberal

perspective the Swedish lifestyle is seen as one of human progress. Yet, when taking into account the socio-cultural dimension in which flows of resources or technologies are needed to sustain this lifestyle, it is one of inequality and destruction.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WILL become problematic as it just refers to development which additionally takes the environment into consideration, and as long as development remains based on an increased standard of living in the name of economic progress. Development for everyone and ecological sustainability in that case will be impossible, precisely for the reason that prosperity and the ecologically unsustainable lifestyles that are created are only possible on behalf of unequal exchange and marginalisation of lifestyles and ecologies elsewhere.

THEREFORE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT needs to be reconsidered from other perspectives. It should be built on new foundations. The underlying assumptions and false beliefs of the neoliberal approach are to be scrutinised by a debate on the moral dimension. We need to ask ourselves what “sustainable development” should mean if the desirable aim is to create a world of social justice and ecological sustainability. ●



Photo: Petra Van Der Kooij



The Fall of the Capitalist Beast

La perspective d'une plus belle époque (the prospect of a more beautiful era)

While a big part of the earth's population acknowledges the gravity of climate change and the ensuing need for action, other issues related to development remain largely unexposed. We (deliberately) fail to see them despite or paradoxically because of their clearly visible and thorough effects on our day-to-day lives, resulting in a missed opportunity to profoundly change this world we live in.

As a student of Development Studies (DVS) I notice how the situation of people in the Global South takes centre stage in DVS. The literature is full of phrases describing this situation as 'less developed', 'underdeveloped' or 'developing'. What is problematic is the sole equivalent established for countries in the North: developed. Apparently, DVS researchers see the severity of having inadequate access to food, drinking water, sanitation, healthcare and education—but when countries reach sufficient levels of these resources and services, their attention fades away. As

a consequence, problems like obesity that arise due to overdevelopment in the Global North are not nearly recognized to the same extent as their Southern opposites. The gaze of DVS researchers is only captured when such issues negatively affect the economies of developing states. The main example here is climate change. This logic continues to apply as long as the commonly held definition of development in terms of infinite economic growth remains unchallenged.

MEANWHILE, THIS CAPITALIST understanding has globally resulted in ever-higher levels of production and

Right: rain water, heated by a solar panel, is used for washing and showering in Can Decreix

Degrowth according to Research & Degrowth (R&D)

- A downscaling of production and consumption in order to ...
- ... increase human wellbeing,
- ... improve ecological conditions,
- ... achieve a more equal society through new, direct forms of democracy.
- *R&D is one of the leading academic organizations in environmental sustainability.*

consumption. While this trend should perhaps be applauded in the Global South where hungry mouths need to be fed, it certainly should not in the North. After all, who is truly getting happier from the increasing amount of pasta sauces to choose from in the local supermarket? Some believe these luxury problems should not be addressed by DVS researchers who are supposed to deal with more pressing issues related to underdevelopment. Although fighting poverty should remain at the core of DVS, it is time to start questioning contemporary overdevelopment in ways that emphasize but are not restricted to its environmental effects.

I SAY ‘TO start’, but significant contributions are already being made, for example in Can Decreix. This small ‘degrowth’ community located in the southern tip of France collectively creates and implements environmentally smart ideas, resulting in a lifestyle that minimally impacts nature. Humans in-

stead of machines do most of the work and no resources are brought into Can Decreix without thinking about their second life. Only time is being excessively consumed, while simultaneously being abundantly available. This stands in sharp contrast to our everyday lives, which are embedded in time-efficiency and constant internal and external pressures to reach optimal individual results—whether that means picking the best pasta sauce, receiving the highest grade in university or getting most done within one day. What however is the value of such life? Do we ever reach satisfaction if we keep raising our ambitions, while the variety of pasta sauces continues to expand?

TELLING IN THIS respect is a passage from a book called *The Precariat* by Guy Standing. Somewhere in the middle, Standing questions the way we work on our “manufactured CVs, in the dispiriting effort to impress, to sell oneself and to cover as many bases as



Photo: Julian Wortmann

possible". This practice not only "takes up a huge amount of time", it also creates a bubble. A space of nothingness that we blow up in order to uplift us to a dream job that might turn out to be less desirable than we expected it to be. An example includes a 56-year old well-paid marketing director who had become sick of having to deal with work-related issues at home. His possibly self-produced drive to do more made him quit his job in order to become a postman. Now, he can leave his work at 1 p.m., only having to think about it the next morning. Stemming from this example, people appear to internalize and adhere to values on infinite growth and individual progress—until their bubble bursts.

A DIFFERENT MENTALITY is present amongst the residents of Can Decreix. Although no distinction is being drawn between work and leisure time, feelings of depression as experienced by this former marketing director are unlikely to arise. Instead of aiming for the capitalist 'maximum', people are satisfied with enough—thereby leaving their bubble intact. After they wake up in their dormitories, entirely made of natural materials, they think about their tasks for the day. Crops need to be harvested. Shampoo should be prepared. Bread needs to be baked. After those tasks have been collectively fulfilled, simultaneously leading to a stronger sense of community and belonging, the work is in principle done. While enjoying a vegan dinner made of various ingredients that have been assembled during the day, some might bring up ideas to improve a certain way of doing things in order to become more environmentally friendly and efficient. These ideas will perhaps be implemented and tried the next morning, but they are of no concern right now when the light is fading out and the night is creeping in.

ONE MIGHT CONSIDER this degrowth lifestyle a radical departure from more fa-

“EVER-INCREASING CHOICE AND INDIVIDUAL WEALTH DO NOT MAKE US HAPPIER

miliar ways of living in which access to washing machines, dryers, fridges, microwaves and electronic stoves is readily available. Yet, there is a charm and necessity to degrowing our economies. Numerous studies have shown that ever-increasing choice and individual wealth do not make us happier. Besides that, the majority of people are unable to understand the continuously changing technological mechanisms driving the world around them—which is rather frustrating. Phones, laptops, trains, electronic payments: how do they precisely work? Would it not be beautiful to be part of a small-scale community in which one is invited and encouraged to engage in the production of everything that is necessary to sustain their lives, thereby opening up the possibility to fully grasp and value every part of it? Would that not result in a Plus Belle Époque: an era that is characterized by true freedom, happiness and joy? ●

*I would like to thank **Julian Wortmann**, student in human ecology at Lund University, for sharing his experiences with me on his two-months stay in Can Decreix.*

By: Elly Aardenburg

La Belle Époque (The Beautiful Era)

- 1871 – 1941,
France

- Heydays of capitalism: flourishing economy due to technological, scientific and cultural progress

- But: huge economic and social inequalities

Right: solar ovens for cooking in Can Decreix



SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA AND FOREIGN AID

A COMPLICATED RELATIONSHIP

Intuitively development aid is something good, a sharing of the wealth with those who need it more. What easily goes unnoticed is the counter-productive harm it can cause to a country's hopes for long term development.

The understanding of what it means for a country to be undeveloped is, by no small measure, a hard-defined task. However so, we may yet acknowledge some commonly defined features of such a nation. In order to see the prospects of development, an examination of the deficiencies needs to be settled. As with the case of Sub-Saharan Africa, recent years have more sternly brought together some of the notions we commonly assume to be indicators of an undeveloped country. These are poverty, hunger, disease, corruption, militant groups, and so on.

FOR THESE WE have unfortunately come to blame what we perceive to be the whole spectrum of what destructive nature the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa are comprised of. Popular media has pushed this even further and almost made it clear that there is no saving Africa, that their situation is a fruitless one and that all they need right now is more support in terms of aid. In order to examine why this is a tremendously faulty accusation, we must first understand what impenetrable terrain seems to divide the undeveloped nations from the developed ones.

WHAT TYPICALLY MARKS a developed nation is indisputably its ability to coordinate, build, uphold and sustain its infrastructure. Shops supply necessities, hospitals treat the sick, energy consumption is regulated and the public can influence politics. Simply put, demands are met with a proper supply. The reason for why a country stays in poverty is not the lack of willpower, knowledge or initiatives but rather the missing foundational tools for change and progress, such as dynamic infrastructures. Here we might like to ask ourselves why some countries, such as Niger or Zimbabwe, have yet to build productive environments.

SOME ANSWERS TO this dilemma is the lack of resources and their regulation, corruption and illiteracy. These claims

“ IN ORDER TO SEE THE PROSPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT, AN EXAMINATION OF THE DEFICIENCIES NEEDS TO BE SETTLED

are, of course, true to some extent. With a wealth of knowledge and resources, climbing out of poverty is likely. These conclusions however fail to address their own sources: where are countries supposed to obtain this capital? Aid is a likely solution to this. Aid that will feed the people, heal the sick and be the monetary means for sustainable investments. These are of course sound means that indeed do help poverty-struck areas, and are of great benefit if disasters of any sort occur.

FOR EXAMPLE, WITHOUT the international support for the African countries the spread of the Ebola virus would have caused an unprecedented catastrophe, bringing down many of the countries to their knees. As humans, we are inclined to do what we can in order to aid a starving child, a village or a whole nation. What our charity on the other hand misses is to face and eradicate the problem of un-development at its roots. Where are all these complications arriving from?

AN ANSWER TO this lies in our moral urges themselves. The aid we are sending to undeveloped nations is, in some regard, crippling them in a larger extent than it is aiding. There is a fundamental problem in ignoring that these subsidies undermine the people from sustaining themselves. A local farmer will not invest time and energy to grow crops and sell them to locals when foreign aid is handing out food for free. Neither does aid give a reason for politicians to carefully invest their money, as they are



Photo: Ethleen Lloyd, CDC



Photo: Kashif Pathan



Photo: Oxfam East Africa

Top: Scientists testing samples of the Ebola Virus.

Middle: Solar panels in South Africa.

Bottom: Two women carrying a food bag from the The World Food Programme.

certain they will receive more. There is no incentive to stand on one's own feet when all is handed to and nothing can be learnt from the very faults that chain you.

IN ORDER to help these countries develop an environment of self-sustainability, we need to reconsider the economic impacts foreign aid has on them. Groups such as Power Africa have come to understand what it means to build long-lasting solutions. Their goal is to aid in the productions of power facilities and energy suppliers, which supplies the regional cities' demands and employs the local population. They provide an excellent example of sustainable long-term investment; something more NGOs should be inspired by. In the long run, investment in infrastructure should be prioritized, in order to broaden a countries tools for develop-

ment. With this, an exponential growth out of poverty is bound to happen.

It is, of course, evident that completely cutting aid, and in short notice, will not bring about a desired end. We need to keep in mind that many people are currently dependent on foreign aid in order to sustain their lives. However, it does more harm to continue this act of robbing incentives and innovation, than it does good. We need to reformulate the acts we do out of morality, as they have shown to be counter-productive. Our hope is that undeveloped nations will someday stand proudly on their own feet, supported by stable grounds. In order for this to happen, we may need to reconsider aid. ●

By: Christian Barsoum

Ugandan anti-corruption poster.





Photo: Pete Souza

FALSE HUMAN SECURITY OF THE US: (UN) SUSTAINABLE PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The common denominator of the three most recent world politics despots: fine words and flithy deeds.

The concept of ‘Sustainable Peace’ has recently entered the United Nations agenda with other sixteen development goals. Previously, such ideas were used by the US to justify its ends in Iraq under the idea of ‘human security’. Currently, this notion has changed its shell under the ‘Sustainable Peace’ goal. Nevertheless, what has materialized in the Iraq War is still happening in today’s Syria.

We live in a world that is progressively divided. While certain regions benefit from sustained peace and security notions, others suffer from vicious circles of conflict and violence. Such high levels of violence and insecurity have a destructive impact on a country’s development, affecting economic growth and often resulting in permanent social complications that can last and evolve for generations. Sexual violence, crim-

inality, corruption and torture appear as side effects in a conflict environment where the democratic rule of law is not internalized. However, this problematic structure is by no means inevitable and can be addressed collectively. At this stage, the Sustainable Development Goals aim to diminish this anguish through governmental legislation and attempt to find long-lasting solutions to conflict and insecurity.

STRENGTHENING THE RULE of law and promoting human rights is a key to ensure the process as it reduces the flow of illicit arms and solidifies the participation of both developed and developing countries in the institutions of global governance like the UN. Owing to this outlook, promoting peace and democratization are perceived as a foundation to engage in sustainable development holistically. Right after the concept ‘17 Global Goal’ entered into the UN’s agenda, it was agreed that, to materialize peace and justice, an integrated approach which calls for the operation

of crucial actors was crucial. From this perspective, I would like to unpack USA's failure to bring about sustained peace. It has alleged itself as a 'promoter of world peace'.

THE PRELIMINARY VERSION of the Sustainable Peace and Justice framework was implemented in US political agenda by the Clinton administration. As a prominent actor in the global sphere, Clinton argued that they were the ones who were responsible for promoting world peace and justice; often using the phrase 'human security' at international assemblies. Later on, these thoughts were acknowledged as the 'Clinton Doctrine' after his famous speech in 1999:

"We can say to the people of the world whether you live in Africa, or Central Europe, or any other place, if somebody comes after innocent civilians and tries to kill them en masse because of their race, their ethnic background or their religion, and it's within our power to stop it, we will stop it."

This idea could not survive too long. A year later, when the Bush administration came to power, nightmarish practices were adopted.

THE CONCEPT of 'word peace' or 'humanitarian perspective' was not new to Bush's National Security Strategy (NSS), in which he outlined a security strategy with two pillars rooted in human security initiatives. The first pillar highlighted, "promoting freedom, justice, and human dignity - working to end tyranny, to promote effective democracies" in order to establish 'free governments which are accountable to their people, pursue economic and political policies that benefit their citizens' because 'peace and international stability are most reliably built

on foundation of freedom.' The second pillar was focused on the threats to the U.S, such as weapons of mass destruction and terrorism. Unsurprisingly, the second pillar was overwhelmingly emphasized during the Iraq War. It led to the false understanding of promoting sustainable peace since the strategy was problematic within its theorization; it prioritizes national interests primarily although supports world peace half-heartedly.

IN REFERENCE, AFTER accounting for the failure of the NSS in Iraq, Bush was asked the following question by a congressional oversight committee: "Why existing US political, economic, and security measures are not reducing violence in Iraq?" The response was ironic: "Human security initiative with measurements of progress towards meeting political, economic, and security objectives in Iraq was the main object." In the following section, an integrated strategy of the US was evaluated in two parts. First, the political part defended the U.S intervention in Iraq to support people to establish an inclusive diplomacy. The economic part was arguing that with this humanitarian intervention, the Iraqi government would have the foundations for a strong economy with the capacity to deliver essential services to its people, enabled through US loans and employing the services of American construction companies. Sounds like a very profitable deal, doesn't it?



“RULE OF LAW AND PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS IS A KEY



EVEN TODAY, THE Obama administration prioritizes discussions on freedom and justice. These practices, however, are once again materializing a false human security agenda which was supposed to help reduce the destructive impact of high-level armed violence and enhance sustainable political development in Syria. Instead, it is focused on avoiding Russian involvement and pretending to be vanguard against ISIS. In fact, among the ‘Obama Doctrines’ which cover six security objectives, one of them specifically addresses sustainable peace and opportunity for the Middle East. Obama directly expressed these concerns in his inaugural address in 2009. From this angle, one can argue that the concept of human security was evident.

HOWEVER, WITHIN THE Middle Eastern framework, US involvement in Syria against ISIS have been empty promises without following through an effective action despite being granted permissions to use Incirlik Air Base by Turkish authorities. It however, doesn’t stop at this. For instance, Washington had decided to train rebel forces in Syria against ISIS. In October, they changed

their mind which caused a loss of \$500 million. In similar vein, the effectiveness of US airstrikes was questioned by authorities as they not only target extremist groups but also kill civilians in the Northern part of the country. Airwars Project leader Chris Woods emphasized just a month ago, in October, that the US-led coalition airstrike killed at least 459 civilians including 100 children so far. This number is increasing now-a-days only because the US and Russia refuse to share intelligence reports for political reasons putting not just their efforts to question but also their vision to attain sustainable peace.

TODAY, SYRIA SHARES a similar fate with Iraq. What happened in the Iraq War is still practiced by global superpowers like the US and Russia. What is really tragicomic, however, is that these discreditable attitudes have been masked by the ‘sustainable peace’ rhetoric which were supposed to serve greater justice and development. ●

By: Umut Can Adisönmez



DEMOCRACY

IN THE WORLD'S YOUNGEST COUNTRY

The ongoing civil war in Southern Sudan has killed thousands of people and displaced 2.2 million more. It is currently far from constructing a peaceful, democratic and inclusive society in line with the development goal of building peace, justice and strong institutions.

On the 9th of July 2011, Southern Sudan became the world's youngest nation, following a peace deal in 2005 that ended a 22 year long civil war with its northern neighbor. After only two and a half years it was, once again, thrown into bloody civil war. This war is often framed as a struggle between two men, President Salva Kir and his former Vice President Dr. Riek Machar. This feud started when Kir dismissed Dr. Machar from the government, Dr. Machar responded by claiming Kir was attempting to centralize his own power. However, the root of the conflict is more complex than how it is often described. Its origins can be traced back to the structure of the original Sudanese

state, the organization of the country's main armed group and now main political party (the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM)) and how these factors contributed to the conflict in relation to the demographical nature of the country.

SINCE THE NATION of Sudan won independence from Great Britain in 1956, it has had a history filled with ethical and religious conflict. For example, the Arabs in the area around the capital Khartoum have tried to construct a national identity based on their culture and religion resulting in conflict with the more African and Christian south. Moreover, infrastructure and services (such as schools and hospitals) have been lacking in areas further from the capital and, as a result, numerous armed conflicts have occurred between the central government and armed groups in the periphery, not only in the South but in places such as Darfur as well. John Garang, the founder and former leader of SPLM, has argued that the problem was the North's failure to include its diverse population in governance. This caused

Left: On the 9th of July 2011, the day of independence, young men parade with the flag of the newborn country.

a widespread identity crisis amongst various ethnic and religious groups. He instead proposed the creation of “New Sudan”, a Sudan constructed as a democratic and pluralistic state. A concept that can clearly be linked to the 16th development goal of creating peace and stable inclusive institutions.

IN PRACTICE, THIS vision of Sudan did not even apply to his own organization, as during the course of the civil war SPLM was a top down organization whose politics were originally managed exclusively by Garang through the use of the military. As a party, it never constructed any institutions and it lacked an agenda for domestic social change in areas under its control. Questions concerning democracy, literacy and general social welfare were not dealt with, with the exception of expecting aid from international humanitarian agencies. Furthermore, a conflict erupted in 1991 when a faction of the party, ironically led by Dr. Machar, attempted to seize power. This has caused a lasting internal party division and led to the creation of other armed groups as a result of SPLM losing influence. One of the groups was even led by Dr. Machar before he joined SPLM once again.

TODAY, SOUTHERN SUDAN is one of the most diverse countries in the region, inhabited by around 60 different ethnic groups, a number that rises to 90 if clans and sub-clans are included. As

in all nations, the question of identity is important, however, in a country as diverse as Southern Sudan it is of central importance in the construction of a democratic society. The ongoing conflict has been viewed by some observers as an ethical one where Kir is an ethnic Dinka and Dr. Machar is an ethnic Nuer. However, others see this as too simplistic of an explanation for the conflict. Still, to a high degree the country's population identify themselves by ethnicity first and view their South Sudanese citizenry as secondary. Combining this identity crisis with the underdeveloped institutions in the nation has resulted in the creation of “quasi-states” separated along ethnic lines. These states have their own leaders, their own armies and concentrations of ethnicity and religions with a history of conflict.

SOUTHERN SUDAN IS facing the problem of how to include these groups into the framework of a democratic state where the concept of “New Sudan” is an interesting one. To build a functioning society it's imperative that the leaders of South Sudan, as a natural part of the state building process, try to include its citizens in the decision making process and encourage the population to identify themselves as South Sudanese. To achieve this, the ethnic and religious tensions must be dealt with to create a more homogenous population. Secondly, the internal structure of the SPLM must be changed following the absorption of several armed groups into the army. As a result, 55-60% of the nation's budget goes to military spending. Furthermore, since a significant portion of the population are now dependent on their military jobs for income, reform will be complicated. Most importantly a solution to the civil war is needed, a solution that can be a starting point for a more decentralized state that is inclusive of all its citizens and help bring forth peace and strong institutions in line with the development goals. ●

By: Rickard A. Wählhammar

**“ IDENTITY IS
OF CENTRAL
IMPORTANCE IN THE
CONSTRUCTION
OF A DEMOCRATIC
SOCIETY**



Photo: Wilka Hudson

REGENERATION IN THE NORTH EAST OF ENGLAND

As the focus of development typically looks further afield, the EU has quietly led regeneration in many areas of its constituent regions that previously faced little national attention. EU regeneration funding in the North East of England highlights the progress that can be made under such initiatives.

Emerging out of the fog on the river Tyne, the engineering feat that is the Millennium Bridge proclaims a revitalised Newcastle, and a reinvigorated North East. This November it was 15 years ago that the bridge was completed. However since the state-sponsored de-industrialisation in the 1980s, the North East has been known as the sick patient of England whose costly treatment the government has been reluctant to pay for.

HOWEVER, SINCE THE late 1990s and early 2000s, the North East has found support in the form of investment from European Union; namely support from the European Regeneration and Development Fund (ERDF). With over 377 million invested in the years 2007-2013, across a range of large and small projects aiming to boost employment, infrastructure and quality of living for the 2.61 million people who inhabit the North East. The next round of funding was announced in 2014 and is expected to invest a total of 11 billion in the UK. Key infrastructure projects currently being developed involve improving rail links, harbours and broadband to majority of the rural areas that dominate the North East. With all ERDF projects being equally funded by the local civic administrations.

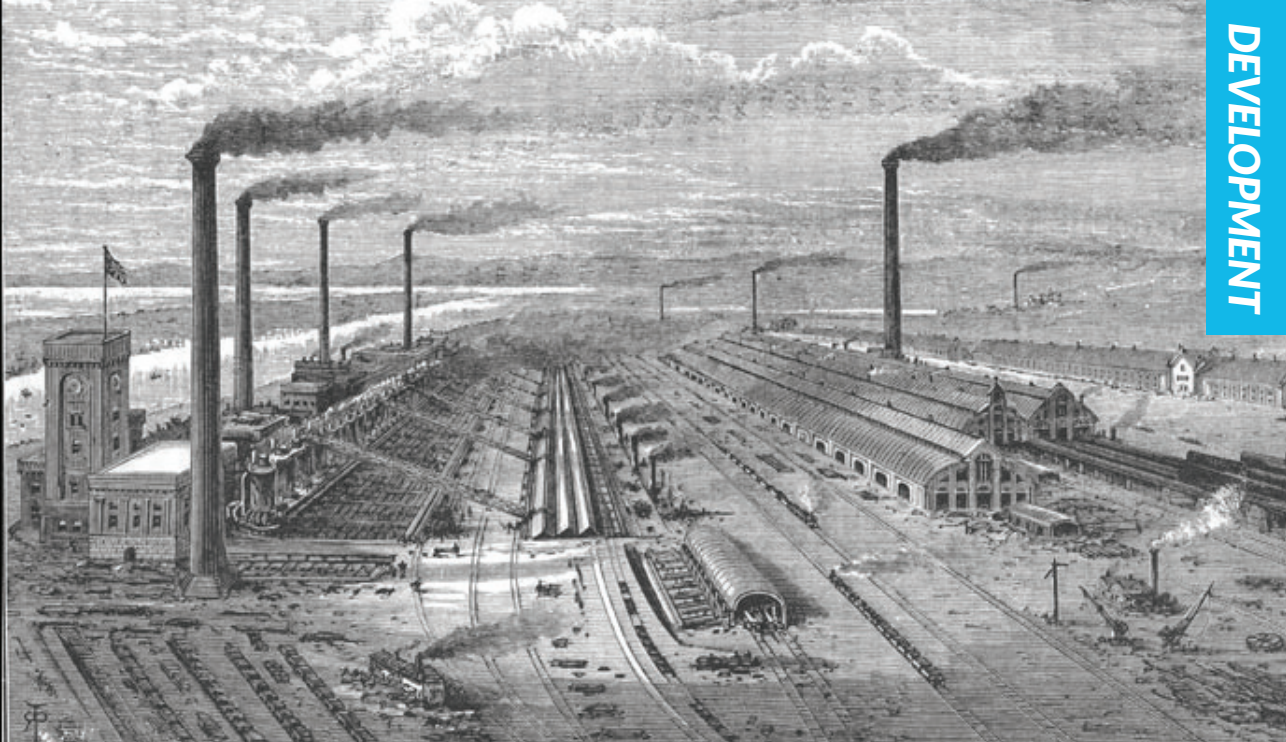


Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Left: The River Tyne with silhouettes of the Gateshead Millennium Bridge and the Tyne Bridge.

Right: Steelworks close to Newcastle in the late 19th century.

THE SCIENCE CENTRAL project that is regenerating the site of the old Newcastle Brown Ale Brewery (the production of the iconic beer is now located in Yorkshire) into a collection of offices, housing, and university laboratories, demonstrates the ambition of ERDF to drive regeneration through collaboration. Newcastle University, the local council, and residents and business were all heavily involved in the development of the new site.

BEYOND THE BIG name regeneration projects, ERDF supports a vast range of smaller causes, for instance increasing the number of small to medium sized businesses as a route to higher employment – the North East currently has the worst unemployment in the UK at 7.5% compared to the national average of 5%. Factor in the lack of public expenditure by consecutive governments, as well as a deskilled labour force, and the problems soon become apparent. The region is usually the first to enter a recession, and the last to emerge from it.

AS A RESULT OF EU membership, the North East has benefited greatly from trade links and initiatives, it is thought that some 140,000 jobs rely directly on

the region's trade with the EU and furthermore some key employers such as Nissan and Newcastle Airport are convinced that an EU membership is necessary for future trade.

HOWEVER THE RISE of euro-sceptics threatens to undo the progress that the North East has made despite the neglect by national governments. In 2014's European elections, UKIP (UK Independence Party) gained one of the three regional seats, much to the detriment to promoting closer ties between the region and the EU. This anti-European sentiment was also evident in the 3,800,000 votes the party garnered in May's General Election, as well as UKIP becoming a firm second in some North East constituencies.

IN REGARDS TO the issue of regeneration and development, anti-Europeans would argue that national governments would be in a better position to implement such policies themselves. However, such arguments hold weak in the light of previous governments approach to regeneration in the North of England. For the Westminster village, the North East holds little incen



Photo: Guillaume Paumiere

Prime Minister David Cameron has announced that a referendum for British EU membership will be held by the end of 2017

tive to regenerate as there is no political cache to be gained from any political party, as the North East has consistently voted Labour for decades. This reluctance from national government was recently reflected in the Chancellor George Osborne's "Northern Powerhouse" economic policy. With an emphasis on public investment in the North of England, this extra money would invigorate trade and stimulate local economies. However, the Chancellor's definition of North would appear to stop at Leeds, with North East cities such as Newcastle, Sunderland, Durham and Middlesbrough seeing very little of this public money.

IN DEFENCE OF the Chancellor, some projects have seen some public investment, with the previously mentioned Science Central championed by the Chancellor, albeit from the side-lines. The difficulty lies in the lack of public orientated projects, with the government more warm to investing in commercial giants such as Nissan. Such investments seek to solidify the dependence of the labour market on a handful of organisations through supply chains, rather than, as ERDF has promoted,

start-ups and supporting small to medium sized businesses.

IN ADDITION TO the lack of public investment, the North East councils face between 10 to 20% cuts each year, further exacerbating unemployment, especially as the public sector is one of the largest employers in the region. These cuts directly impact local authorities capacity to regenerate and develop because the equal funding required by ERDF. In other words, ERDF will match the funding for regeneration by local authorities. The problem being that under such cuts, regeneration has been seen as an indulgence when authorities struggle to provide basic public services such as health and education.

AND SO, UNDER the austerity that the region has faced, the role of EU initiatives,

“EURO-SCEPTICS THREATEN TO UNDO THE PROGRESS THAT THE NORTH EAST HAS MADE

such as ERDF, should not go unnoticed in improving the standard of living and increasing the prospects of thousands of inhabitants that would have been diminished without the support of such initiatives. And as the British people contemplate the fate of EU membership, the North East must be careful not to bite the hand that feeds it. ●

By: Thomas M. Rogerson



IDENTITY CRISIS:

Copenhagen's Vesterbro district in transition - from the city's slum into a global icon of sustainability

Even though we are situated in cities for most of our lives, we seldom stop and think about our immediate surroundings and their development in more detail. This article seeks to awake such thinking by looking at Copenhagen as a case.



Imagine yourself on streets of cobbled stones, in the middle of the oasis of cafés, the smell of freshly baked bread. Dozens of restaurants and bars, design stores, secondhand shops and bicycles lure you to look around, stop, observe, and get inspired. Bound by the 1930's style, functionalist façades, the former meatpacking district Vesterbro is one of the hippest areas of the Scandina-

vian capital Copenhagen. But while standing there in the midst of all the bustle, it is hard not to wonder, how is it possible that just within a couple of decades Vesterbro's and Copenhagen's reputation in general has transformed from being the most notorious part of town, into a globally well-known hub of sustainability.

NOT MANY OUTSIDERS would have guessed, as late as during the 1980's Vesterbro was still out of adequate water and heating facilities, on the brink of decay, referred to as the slum of Copenhagen. The tenants who could afford to move out from the borough from the 50's onwards, did so, for the new suburban areas growing at the fringes of the city tempted with their modern amenities. Since it was the poorest of the poor occupying Vesterbro, many properties were not soundly taken care of. Gradually, Vesterbro began to deteriorate. It was not before the early 90's Copenhagen city included the district into their urban planning policy. Even then, the driving motive behind the reconstruction of Vesterbro lied in its newly realized commercial potential.

THE VISION FOR urban renewal in Vesterbro meant fundamental renovations for the housing facilities, opening up some old courtyards, increasing the amount of green areas, and turning the neighbourhood beside the main train station into a charming, urban space. In short, the whole borough was to be reconstructed. During the past few decades radical urban development projects had taken place in other regions of Copenhagen, however the experiences were quite traumatic. In the case of Nørrebro, large-scale constructions implemented by private sector actors changed the whole social character of the district rapidly, pushing a significant part of the original, lower-income residents to move away from their homes. An intense public discourse around discrimination of certain mar-

ginalized groups was triggered, and in the physical development project of Vesterbro, a more inclusive strategy was required. To avoid radical gentrification, the refurbishment of Vesterbro properties was to take place gradually, one sub-district at a time. In this way, Copenhagen could meet the new planning objectives that were globally gaining attention - striving to introduce sustainable and environmentally friendly urban renewal.

DURING THE PAST couple of decades the rivalry between different cities has risen to a whole new level. As cities are, above all, composed by their inhabitants, much of the competition between urban areas seems to be focused on attracting the 'right kind of' people. A full branch called place branding, or in other words, city marketing, is concentrated on establishing an image for a region, with an ultimate objective of attracting new residents, visitors, and businesses in the area. No less, some say that city branding has become one of the most effective methods for urban development, since without attracting people to the area there will hardly be any development in sight.

IN THESE TERMS, Copenhagen's place branding has quite unique qualities. Throughout the new millennium Copenhagen has tried to renew its traditional city image in line with current international trends. In 2009, for instance, the city served as a host for the previous UN Climate Summit, and was branding itself with a rather optimistic moniker, as Hopenhagen. Just about a year later Copenhagen tried to change its identity into a more inclusive one, this time nicknaming itself as COPENHAGEN. In a sense the marketing strategy was ingenious: the city created an ideology for itself that was easy to relate to, and that did not exclude anyone. Ironically, only five years later in the middle of the European refugee crisis the Danish capital is precisely famous for closing their borders.

Photo Credit: Sigfrid Lundberg, 2012 (purple and black and white picture on page 63; background picture on pages 64-65); Roman Boed, 2015 (yellow picture on page 63)

IN URBAN STUDIES a well-known theory that is connected with place identity is the thesis of creative class, presented by Florida in the early 2000's. The creative class refers to a group of open-minded individuals who in particular contribute to the city system through innovative ideas. Such people are those with creative lifestyles, like technology workers, musicians, architects, artists, and other bohemians. Side by side with the law of accumulation, the creative class attracts ever more labour force, versatile businesses and consumers into a given area. In this sense, the creative class reflects on today's gentrified borough. It might not come as a surprise that the idea has been criticised for being elitist and somewhat self-contradictory. Clearly, labeling the 'non-creative' citizens as outsiders of the 'innovative class', the open-mindedness of the creative class becomes rather paradoxical. Moreover, a newly renovated district filled with hipsters; inventive minds and folk with alternative lifestyles, fulfills the very given perception of a gentrified city district.

THE MOST RECENT brand ideology of Copenhagen is, quite seemingly, built around sustainable development. Like implied above, for instance the Vesterbro renewal was largely executed in order to alter the area's image and character into a more sellable one. It seems that the sustainability strategy is working: the term has become nearly an omnipresent phenomena, and is already a component of a large part of Copenhagen based businesses' and services' agendas. At present the city, and the Vesterbro borough specifically, is internationally renowned as being the hub of sustainability.

ONE INTERESTING QUESTION is, which came first: place promotion of sustainability, or sustainability as a worldview and way of acting amongst the locals. In Copenhagen, the sustainability idea is largely related to the comprehensive

and pragmatic biking routes that reach all around the town. On one hand, the cyclist paths have been improved by various urban renewal projects that seek to enhance the city image. But then on the other, biking has been a key transportation method in this geographically flat town throughout its history. Furthermore, sustainable commodities are those that currently sell like hot cakes, but doing smart business does not necessarily equate that people are gullible for advertising. Perhaps people utterly believe in sustainable products and perhaps people utterly aim to live sustainably.

LET'S RETURN TO imagining those streets of Vesterbro. In the Mecca of second-hand boutiques and organic take-away lattes, one may still feel slightly confused by the story of the surroundings. Considering that the city's reputation has altered so frequently, is it actually certain, that the sustainability identity of Copenhagen is here to stay? Should we be thankful for the urban renewal that enabled Vesterbro to be a sustainable district today, or should we proclaim that gentrification, even though slightly more subtle than typically, has damaged the original local socioeconomic character?

PERHAPS WE WILL never find straightforward answers to these questions, and probably every individual will answer these questions differently. Even so, it is important to consider such cases: we cannot really understand the place of the present, if we do not understand what the place has been in the past. Next time you wander the streets of Vesterbro, I hope that you will look at the place from a slightly different point of view. ●

By: Kia Silvennoinen

Gentrification

- The process of gentrification generally has a negative nuance (suggesting that wealthy new incomers displace the original poorer inhabitants)
- Gentrification typically takes place in old industrial areas, near water bodies, or by the city centrum (like in Vesterbro)

Place Branding

- Process of image communication to a targeted market
- A powerful tool that can as its best attract more visitors, businesses and inhabitants to a city

REVIEW

THE GIRL WITH SEVEN NAMES BY HYEONSEO LEE (2015)

The Girl with Seven Names unfolds the incredible journey of a young woman who managed to escape and rescue her family from North Korea. The story introduces a young girl and her one-day-to-another transition into an adult who has to make tough decisions every day in order to survive.

In her memoir, Lee takes us through all the essential moments of her life; from the day her parents had met until the day she settled down in her new home. With an intriguing narrative, she recollects her childhood spent in the “Greatest Nation on Earth”. She elaborates on how all North Korean people are convinced that they are living in the best country possible, also she talks about the ways the North Korean regime altered history in order to strengthen and reinforce its personal cult to an almost unimaginable degree. In addition, Lee reveals how the Leaders’ cult of personality intrudes in people’s homes: in each North Korean household, portraits depicting the Great Leaders are to be found which must be treated with the highest level of respect and admiration.

In North Korea, surveillance, denunciation, dread, inspection and retribution are everyday phenomena. According to Lee’s narrative, people have been punished and executed for various reasons: for wearing trousers as a woman, or even rolling a cigarette from a piece of paper with Kim Il-sung’s picture on it. In North Korea, individuals can also be punished for not addressing a member of the Kim dynasty by their respective titles. The biggest crimes are the ones committed “against the state” and their punishments can effectively go to the extreme. Lee reveals that one person she once knew seemed suspicious for some reason in her old hometown; he and his whole family disappeared overnight at a glance.

With her memoir, Lee gives an intriguing insight into the life of a North Korean citizen during the 1990s. As a reader, it was astonishing to find, how many people in the country managed to live on such high alert, watching their every step in order to avoid making mistakes that they can be

punished or even executed for. Lee implies that almost all North Koreans have to wear a “mask” in order to survive: they have to be careful what they do and say if they do not want to get into trouble or incriminate themselves.

PERSONALLY, IT WAS intriguing to learn about the degree people abide with the extreme personal cult established by the regime. In an interview with the author, Lee stated that the Leaders were thought of as God-like royalty by the North Korean people; for them it was unimaginable to picture the Kims getting sick, tired or old. The

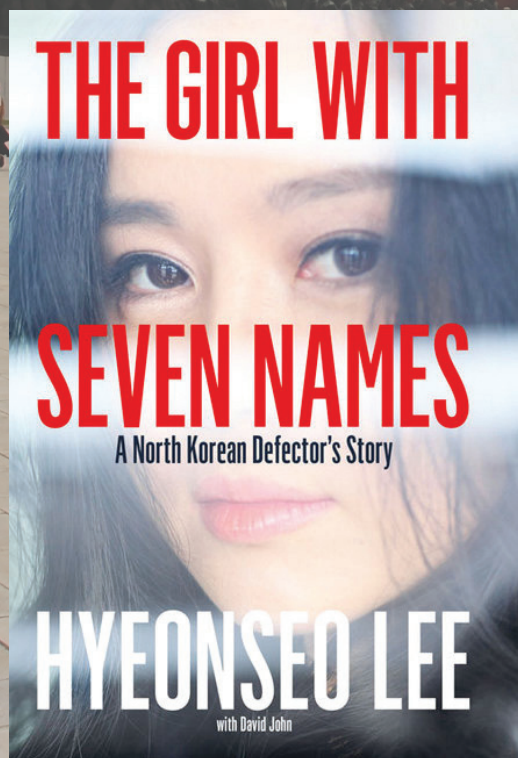


Photo: Harper Collins Publishers



day Kim Il-sung died, people were horrified and confused: his death caused a mass-hysteria since the nation could not imagine that this could ever happen to their “immortal” leader.

SINCE NO ONE was allowed to leave the country, people had no other perspective of how life was outside of North Korea. Therefore it may be more understandable why citizens accepted what they have been told about their nation. However during the 1990s famine, people started doubting the “Greatest Nation” when they realized that most of their relatives and acquaintances are dying from starvation. Similarly to Lee, many North Koreans crossed the border towards China and escaped in order to seek a better life.

AT LAST, BEING a North Korean refugee constitutes of hiding and concealing one’s identity and a life full of vicissitudes. In *The Girl with Seven Names*, Lee revealed her enormous secret: the long years of hiding her identity and pretending to be someone else in order to avoid being forced back to North Korea where she probably would have faced torture and public execution. Finally she managed to seek asylum in South Korea and start her new life without having to conceal herself. Later, she decided to tell her incredible story to make people aware of the inhumane conditions, and the constant violation of human rights still happening in North Korea. The memoir is truly a priceless piece of literature, one that has unique value in the horror it describes and the hope it brings. ●

By: Dora Paulik

B



LUCSUS

Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies



LUCSUS är mötesplatsen för tvärvetenskaplig forskning och undervisning i miljö- och utvecklingsfrågor vid Lunds universitet.



www.lucsus.lu.se