

# UTRIKES PERSPEKTIV

The Student Magazine  
on Foreign Affairs

Nr. 2  
May 2016



**INTERVIEW:**  
**José Ramos-Horta**  
*Nobel Peace Prize Recipient*  
**Ayotzinapa Students**  
*The 18 month long search*

**UPF Travels**  
*Beirut, Lebanon*

**Berta Cáceres**  
*1971-2016*

**EDITORIAL:**  
**Populism**  
*What is it really?*

**FACES OF PEACE**  
*Grassroots Action for Change*



## EDITORS' NOTE

### “THIS YEAR HAS SEEN MANY DRAMATIC SHAKEUPS ON THE WORLD STAGE...”

With three editions, two semesters, and one exciting year behind us, we are proud to present to you the final crowning achievement of Utrikesperspektiv magazine committee, Lund Association of Foreign Affairs, 2015-2016. This remarkable edition is dedicated to those people and faces, who have taken their work to the micro levels of society, and achieve their goals by working with people, ideas, and limited recognition from society at large.

**THIS PAST SPRING** saw the death of Berta Cáceres. She is an icon of dedicated environmental and social activism of this century, and we are proud to present a story of her achievements which characterizes her career. A more familiar face of peace is the former President of East-Timor, and 2011 Nobel Peace Prize recipient José Ramos-Horta, who himself fought on the grassroots level to bring peace and security to his home country.

**THIS ACADEMIC YEAR** has seen many dramatic shakeups on the world stage, and the future might seem more uncertain than ever. Our mission has been to shine light on enduring injustices, but also highlight possible solutions and amplify the voice

of those who are at the forefront of these solutions. As we see in this edition, there is hope for humanity for as long as we have activists risking their lives to fight for just causes, and people working tirelessly to realize their vision for a better world.

**THANK YOU FOR** sharing your time with us and our team, dear readers. When Utrikesperspektiv returns next fall, the helm will be manned by Tobias Adolfsson and Vilhelm Fritzson. We wish them the best of luck in taking on this endeavor, and look forward to seeing Utrikesperspektiv's legacy carry forward in the most capable of hands.



*Goodbye and Good Luck!*  
**Arttu Närhi & Saahil Waslekar**  
*Editors-in-Chief*

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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' ADDRESS**

**M**uch faster than expected, we find ourselves at the end of this working year and of our time as President and Vice President of this extraordinary association. Much has happened since our board began its work last summer. Environmental challenges, peace work on a grassroots level and arms as a means of security are just a few of the issues raised through our lectures, radio shows, study visits, and web-zine and magazine articles alike. Our Career committee has continued to shed light upon the different paths that await those interested in an international career, and the Travel committee has completed successful trips to Iceland and Lebanon. Sittnings and pub nights have provided a socialization settings for all of our members throughout the year, and our PR committee has taken care to masterfully promote each one.

**FOR ALL OF** this and more, we would like to applaud our wonderful active members. It has been an honor to work for you. To our benefactors and sponsors of this year within AF, CMES, LUCSUS, Folkuniversitet and Folke Bernadotteakademin: thank you for helping us turn our projects and ideas into reality. Finally, we would like to thank our fellow board members for making this an unforgettable year for the both of us. It has truly been a pleasure getting to know all of you and to see your unlimited creativity and passion.

**AS WE ARE** preparing to step down, we would like to congratulate those elected to the next year's board. We especially wish to congratulate our excellent successors as President and Vice President, Kajsa Fernström Nåtby and Sofia Höglund. We wish you both the best of luck as you embark upon an adventure that promises to be very rewarding.

**WHILE THIS WORKING** year may have come to an end, UPF will continue to grow older and wiser, providing students in Lund with a platform for discussion and debate on foreign affairs. In the hopes of your continued engagement with this remarkable association, we wish you a lovely summer and hope to see you all in September.



On behalf of the board,

President **Anahita Nicoobayan Shiri** &  
Vice President **Oscar Waldner**

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## UPF LUND

### EXECUTIVE BOARD 2016-2017

The following members were elected onto the Executive Board for the working year 2016-2017, at the election meeting on April 28<sup>th</sup>.

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### UFS & UPF

### ALMEDALEN WEEK July 4<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup>

Between the 4th and 8th of July, the Swedish Association of Foreign Affairs (SAIA/UFS) will be attending the Politicians Week in Almedalen (Visby, Gotland). As a member of one of UFS's member associations, you have the opportunity to come with us and participate in the week of lectures, seminars, debates, speeches, mingles, and meetings.

On July 4th, UFS is hosting two seminars. The first together with Utrikespolitiska Institutet, is going to be about the war in Syria from an international relations point of view. Among the speakers is Bitte Hammargren, journalist and Middle East analyst. The second seminar is a discussion panel with Charlotte Petri Gornitzka, the general director for SIDA and Linda Nordin, the general secretary for the Swedish UN-association, to name a few. The discussion is on what has happened during the last year in global security policy.

UFS will also arrange a seminar together with Folk och Försvar and the Association for Development (FUF) on the conflict in Mali, and a seminar together with Folke Bernadotte Academy about post-conflict Colombia and the challenges the nation faces today. Finally, UFS will host a youth associations' debate with all the parliamentary political parties on July 8th.

Beyond UFS's seminars, there will be a chance to mingle with other organizations and, of course, see the party leaders's speeches during the week.

There are still a few places left for this trip. Contact [almedalen@ufsverige.org](mailto:almedalen@ufsverige.org) for more details!

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## What to Look Forward to this Summer?

UPF is soon heading on its usual summer hiatus. In our absence, *Utrikesperspektiv* has gathered a list of the most significant events happening this summer. The next edition of *Utrikesperspektiv* will be published in the fall.

**S**ummer 2016 is looking exciting on the landscape of major world events. While we will be on vacation, this World Brief will be listing topics that are worthy of coverage, but are yet to happen. The obvious big time events involving the US Presidential Elections and the Brexit referendum are not mentioned, because they were discussed in *Utrikesperspektiv* #1/2016. Go to [Issuu.com](http://Issuu.com) to read up on them!

**THE 2016 SUMMER** Olympics in Rio de Janeiro will open on 5th of August. This comes at an auspicious time for Brazil, as their former and current presidents are embroiled in corruption scandals, with Brazilians taking to the streets en masse to protest. More on this in our article on [page 29](#). The international athletic community is also in a state of upheaval; as [IAAF.org](http://IAAF.org) reports, the Russian Athletics Federation has still not been cleared on their systematic doping abuse. Russian participation in Rio will be decided by the IAAF this May.

**RUSSIA IS AT** the center stage for political elections this summer too. In 2014, President Putin signed into law a new electoral system, where all seats in the lower house of parliament will be elected on the same day. [RT.com](http://RT.com) reports that half of the 450 MPs will be elected on party tickets, and the other



Photo: Basil D Soufi



Photo: Wikimedia Commons

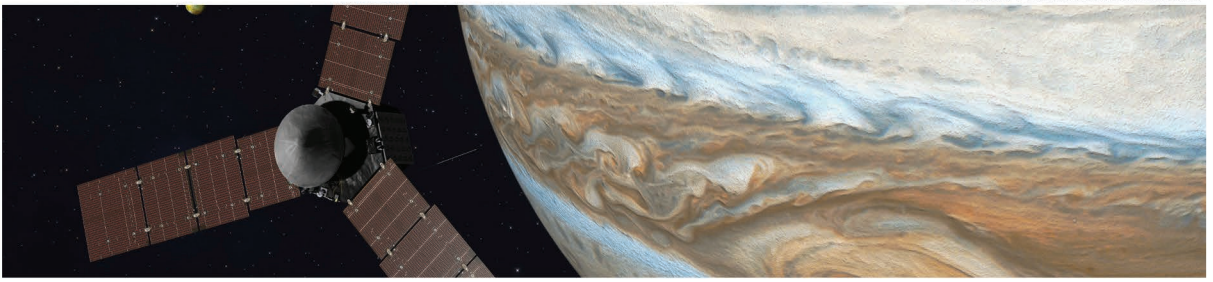


Photo: Rodrigo Soldon



Photo: Johan Wessman, News Oresund



half will come from “single-mandate independent constituencies.” The Election Day has been set for the 18th of September, 2016.

**THE UPCOMING SUMMER** has big scientific achievements in store for humanity. NASA’s Juno probe is scheduled to reach Jupiter at the beginning of July. The goal of the mission is to understand Jupiter’s evolution, observe the planet’s composition and to map out magnetic fields. Juno was launched in 2011, and it is the fastest manmade object to date traveling at 250,000 kmph, according to [JPL.NASA.gov](http://JPL.NASA.gov).

**THE 71ST SESSION** of the UN General Assembly is scheduled to begin in the middle of September. The agenda for the session is due to be released at least 60 days before the beginning of the assembly. This will contain all items proposed by UN delegates, actors or organs of the UN for the upcoming session. The assembly will also elect its President

at the beginning of the session. The 70th session has been presided over by the former speaker of the Danish Parliament Morgens Lykketoft.

**IN SWEDEN,** the annual Almedalsvecka political festival will be once again held in Visby. Starting on the 3rd of July, each Swedish parliamentary party gets a day to discuss issues closest to them in a series of seminars, TV broadcasts, and other social events. UPF Lund, as always, is heading there too. [Almedalsvecka.info](http://Almedalsvecka.info) reports that 3,465 events were arranged for approximately 35,000 people last year.

**UPF LUND** is slowly beginning to withdraw for the summer, but we will be back in September as always! Ready for a new year of political discussion, inspiring lectures, and the fantastic student activities we pride ourselves in. ●

### Where is the Promised Land for Ethiopian Jews?

**While thousands of Ethiopian-born Jews take to the streets of Israel and shout out their frustration over years of discrimination, the Israeli government struggles to find a sensible approach to dealing with questions of Ethiopian migration.**

**I**n Ethiopia, Jews have been discriminated against for centuries. Historically not permitted to cultivate lands, they were forced into craftsmanship; professions traditionally connoted with sorcery in the largely Orthodox Christian state. Jews were seen as backward people at best, and as the servants of the devil at worst – people who would turn into hyenas at night.

**AS A RESULT**, past decades have seen massive migration of Ethiopian Jews to Israel. For decades, under the Law of Return, Israel has encouraged Jews to move from their home countries to the relatively new Israeli State. The Law of Return allows every member of an acknowledged Jewish community to make aliyah, meaning to migrate to the Promised Land, Israel, and become an Israeli citizen. In some instances the Israeli government has even facilitated mass migration by actively flying out Jews from areas of military conflict. So happened in Ethiopia: In multiple secret service operations during the 1980's and finally in a large scale military operation in 1991, titled 'Operation Solomon', the Israeli Air force airlifted the majority of the Beta Israel, the Ethiopian Jewish community.

**HOWEVER, OPERATION SOLOMON** lasted less than 36 hours, and not all Ethiopian Jews made it in time to the checkpoints. A couple of thousand members of the Beta Israel were left behind and have

been looking for possibilities to make aliyah until today.

**ETHIOPIA OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED** freedom of religion in 1995. However, Irene Orleansky, an Israeli documentary filmmaker who is involved with a rural Beta Israel community, claims that the misfortune experienced in rural Ethiopia, such as illness and accidents, are still attributed to Jewish witchcraft today. They are sometimes followed by violent attacks against Jews. Many rural Jewish communities keep underground and practice Orthodox Christianity on the outside, while sneaking off to hidden synagogues each Saturday.

**FOR MANY ETHIOPIAN** Jews, Israel is the Promised Land, not only in religious terms but even as a socio-economic haven. In the end, the will to migrate from Ethiopia is strong not only with-

**“WOULD THE GOVERNMENT TELL EVEN ONE JEW FROM RUSSIA, OR EUROPE, OR AMERICA WHO HAD FAMILY IN ISRAEL, “WE DON'T HAVE THE MONEY TO BRING YOU HERE”?**

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*Israeli ethiopians protest against racism in Jerusalem.*

in the Jewish community. However, the dream of a bright future in Israel might be an illusion. In reality, Ethiopian-born residents face difficult times in their new home too. According to recent reports, Ethiopians and their descendants in Israel earn 30% less than the average Israeli, and they are twice as likely to end up in jail. On top of that, there have been regular accusations of systematic racial discrimination. In May 2015, these accusations reached a new peak when thousands of protesters took to the streets of Tel Aviv following the unprovoked beating up of a black Ethiopian-Israeli soldier by two white police men.

**So WHEN IN** November 2015 the Israeli parliament approved a decision to allow the migration of 9,000 Ethiopian Jews who had been “left behind” in Addis Ababa and Gondar, many saw this as a sign of support for the Ethiopian Jewish community. However, just four months later and before any Ethiopians were able to migrate, this decision was overturned by Prime Minister Netanyahu himself. He argued that current security crises, especially the threat of Islamic terror in Turkey meant that the Israeli government could not find sufficient funding for airlifting any Ethiopian Jews.

**BACKING DOWN FROM** the decision was met by fierce protests, both on the street and in parliament. Two MPs, themselves Ethiopian-born Jews started to boycott all parliament decisions, putting Netanyahu’s Likud party’s 61-to-59 majority at a risk. In Jerusalem, the decision sparked off protests as many Ethiopian Jews saw it as yet another example of racial discrimination. Protesters interviewed by AFP News Agency bring up that for other Jewish communities aliyah has always been encouraged, but “when it comes to Jews from Ethiopia, everyone refuses.” “Would the government tell even one Jew from Russia, or Europe, or America who had family in Israel we don’t have the money to bring you here?”, a frustrated protester asked.

**THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT** did show that they had serious concerns for their citizens’ safety in Turkey and started to call them back in late March. Still, the trust of Ethiopian Jews towards the Israeli government seems more shattered than ever before. For many, the wait for a final decision continues, and many Ethiopian Jewish families are separated between a country where they are discriminated against because of their religion, and a country where they are discriminated against because of their skin colour. ●



# SERBIA

## A Country in Between...

**A country in a region with a turbulent history on the way to new beginnings. What does Serbia's approach towards the EU look like? Furthermore, what aspects of the country's history and different ideas about the future influences this process?**

Serbia and the Balkans have been troubled by instability for centuries; most recently with the wars in the 1990's that followed as a consequence of the disintegration of Yugoslavia. The ascension into the European Union has already begun, but the process is affected by issues relating to the country's past and ideas of its future. Major challenges lie ahead when it comes to reforming society in line with EU standards, but as a key country in the region, Serbia plays an important role in the stabilization of the Balkans.

"THE POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT of Serbia is strongly tied to the creation of long term stability, and the accession of Serbia to the EU is the best guarantee for this to be achieved" says Christer Asp, Ambassador of Sweden to Serbia and Montenegro. He emphasizes that joining the EU is the most natural step for Serbia to take regarding access to and participation in the internal European market.

YUGOSLAVIA'S COLLAPSE CREATED an ideological vacuum. When the rest of the world was driven by globalization another idea was gaining ground in Serbia: nationalism. The country became more and more introvert while other nations were beginning to open up. "Yugoslavia had a broader view towards the rest of the world. It was an example of a relatively well functioning socialist economy model" says Bojan Cvilak, political officer with a special focus on Serbian EU integration at the Embassy of Sweden in Belgrade. When nationalism gained ground in Serbia, the country became ideologically irrelevant to the outside world. Nationalism was the answer to the unanswered questions Serbia was left with after the fall of Yugoslavia: focus should be on nation-building and the creation and exculpation of a national identity. History, culture and a feeling of community were important. This was a period when people focused on the past, not the present or future.

**So how would EU membership benefit Serbia?** First and foremost, Serbia requires a redefinition of the core principles in its society regarding legislation, institutional independence, and power balance. The process towards attaining EU membership is a way for Serbia to work on all parts of its political and so-

cial systems, step by step. This started in 2007 when Serbia initiated a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU, and in 2013 they fulfilled the demands of, and received, full candidate status. The negotiation process for any candidate country is done based on 35 different chapters of *acquis*. The chapters correspond to the different areas where reforms are needed in order to meet the ascension conditions. Serbia is now looking to open chapter 23 about judiciary and fundamental rights, and chapter 24 about justice, freedom and security. These are important chapters for Serbia as big reforms are needed.

## “NATIONALISM WAS THE ANSWER TO THE UNANSWERED QUESTIONS SERBIA WAS LEFT WITH AFTER THE FALL OF YUGOSLAVIA

**THE GENERAL UNDERSTANDING**, both among the people and politicians, is that EU membership would be best for Serbia. The rational idea of belonging to something bigger as a means of becoming more relevant and stronger is recognized, but naturally there are still major obstacles. For example, the involvement of EU nations in the Kosovo War is a very sensitive issue in Serbia. Another fact that is disturbing for some is the bombing of Serbia by NATO, consisting of many EU member states, during the Kosovo war and Milosevic regime in 1999. “For many people here, Koso-

vo is an integral part of Serbia, and the bombings were perceived as an unfair collective punishment for failed policies of the government. They consider the conflict to be an internal matter and the bombings have created a long term ambivalence” says Bojan Cvilak.

**ANOTHER FACTOR IN** Serbia’s process is the Russian involvement in the region. The bond with Russia is strong - culture, language, religion and the Slavic identity. Opinion polls in Serbia show that people have a more favorable view of Russia, but want to live and work in the EU. Russia is not the motherland, but rather a distant relative that you still have strong feelings for. The idea of Russia is not so deep, it is more a feeling of belonging and sympathy. There are two different views, where one states that Russia is simply the better partner to cooperate with, and the other is based on a bond of tradition.

**AMBASSADOR CHRISTER ASP** has an optimistic prognosis for Serbia’s ascension to the EU: “I think that it is possible for the negotiations about Serbia’s membership to be finished in large parts in 2020, provided that the Government of Serbia continues on the reform path, and that the EU member states steadily follow the rules guiding the enlargement process. To this end, recent parliamentary elections in Serbia has given the Government a strong mandate to stay on the reform course.” ●

# UPF IN BEIRUT, LEBANON

JONAS ASKER, HEAD OF TRAVEL COMMITTEE

## UPF in Lebanon - 6th to 9th April, 2016

**Crammed in between powerful neighbors with regional ambitions, Lebanon has had to navigate dire straits throughout its history. The civil war has left scars, but in Beirut, there is hope. Fascinated by Lebanon's turbulent past, UPF's Travel Committee traveled there to learn more.**

**B**eirut's skyline finally appears from the airplane window after a long flight. In the distance, one sees the rolling hills of this ancient city, situated by the coast in the eastern Mediterranean. It was just after midnight on Wednesday, April 6th, as UPF's Travel Committee left the plane and walked into the almost empty terminal. Few tourists arrive at this time of night, or at all. Last fall's terrorist attack in southern Beirut, discouraged western tourists to visit the city. What is worse for the Lebanese economy, is that, all Gulf States now caution their citizens against traveling here. There seems to be more to this decision than just safety: punishing Lebanon economically, is also a strategy.

**THE FOLLOWING DAY**, we met with an expert on the region, Nadim Hourey. As deputy director at the Human Rights Watch's Lebanese office, he spoke to us about current affairs in Lebanon. Since the beginning of the unrest in Syria, there has been a decrease in debates on democratic rights and the will to find common ground. Today, the discussion focuses on security and the huge amounts of Syrian refugees in the country. With a government crippled by corruption and inefficiency (for example, Lebanon has not been able to elect a president in two years), the population has been forced to rely on their religious communities to provide basic goods and services, adding mistrust

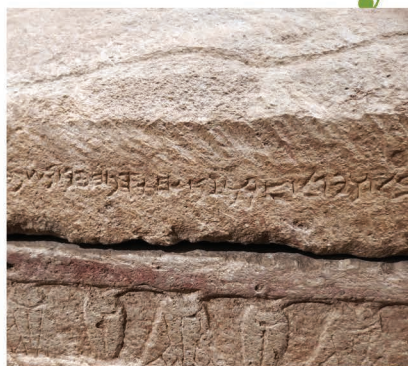
between groups in the already divided and sectarian society. The most obvious evidence of this, even for foreigners, is the state of the garbage disposal department. Beirut has not had a working garbage system for six months, which makes walking through certain parts of the city an unpleasant experience. Recently, the conversation reached new levels of absurdity, with debaters claiming that the only way forward was religiously segregated landfills.

**STILL, HOUREY CLAIMS** there is hope. Military dictators and religious extremists do not have answers for the kind of questions that the Lebanese youth are asking. Moreover, they are in search for a better life, the opportunity to improve their situation. All in all, Lebanese society will have to revisit the discussion on democracy and how to improve their public institutions, he says.

**SUNDAY, 9TH OF** April was the last day for UPF in Beirut. A street festival took place in Furn Al Hayek, a central district of downtown Beirut. The buildings were newly renovated in French colonial style, and the stores that occupied them were super hip, although there were still signs of the city's previous struggle in these quarters. A DJ plays house music from a stage and middle class families stroll the street, eating ice cream and enjoying themselves. A blank sheet hangs on a wall, with the headline "share your thoughts on civil marriage", "love has no religion, race or sex" and space for people to write on. It appeared to be like a farfetched dream to hope for civil marriage here. Still, thinking of Nadim's words about the hope that the youth holds for their country: where there's a will there's a way. The Lebanese youth definitely seems to be willing to work hard for their country's future. ●

*Background: Jonhy Blaze/flickr*

# Beirut Photo Gallery



## THE ITINERARY

### WEDNESDAY APRIL 6TH

- Visit to WILPF (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom) office
- Tour of Mohammed al Amin Mosque

### THURSDAY APRIL 7TH

- Visit to Human Rights Watch office
- Meeting at The World Bank Lebanon Headquarters

### FRIDAY APRIL 8TH

- Visit to UNHRC office
- Visit to Media Association for Peace office
- Trip to Saifi Hills
- Meeting at the Swedish Embassy
- Dinner and night out on the town!

### SATURDAY APRIL 9TH

- Guided tour of the National Museum and the down town area
- Trip to the local food market
- Meeting at Helem office
- Roller derby at a Roller Disco!

### SUNDAY APRIL 10TH

- Visit to Jeita Grotto caves



Photos p.13-14: Runa Aarset, Emelie Wendesten, Caroline Asker, Ludwig Bengtsson Soneson, Stina Hinderson

# The Lebanese LGBT-community: Discrimination by a Colonial Legacy

**While in Beirut, the Travel Committee visited Helem. Human rights and grassroots movements was on the agenda during a visit to the first LGBT center in the Arabic world.**

**I**t was noon, when we had arrived. There was nothing marked on the door which directed us up to the community center. This community center is a new one. They decided to split it as the old one was becoming more renowned, and they did not want to risk people getting exposed if they were to go there for help, as homosexuality is still forbidden by law in Lebanon.

**ESTABLISHED IN 2004**, Helem is the oldest LGBT organization in all the Arabic countries. While Lebanon is progressive in many ways, the situation for LGBT people has a long way to go. The French colonial relic Article 534 only mentions, “sexual intercourse contrary to the order of nature”, but is used to criminalize homosexuality. In a recent landmark on the path to abolishing the article, a judge declared that “nature” is not defined well enough to determine that homosexuality could go against it. The Article is still in existence however. While people are not tortured and imprisoned as often these days, the number of detained people is still high.

**THE GENERAL OPINION** about LGBT people is not positive, as tradition and powerful religious communities have not found common ground towards the group. People are subjected to a lot of discrimination, risk of getting fired from their workplace and shunned from their families if found out. The situation is even worse for transgender people as the people from Helem explained to us, “a gay person can just lie and refrain from not telling their boss about their situation. When the employer sees the transgender person’s ID they will find out and not hire them.”

**HOWEVER, THE SITUATION** has slightly improved over the past ten years. Previously, some stores refused service to “gay-looking” people and the police conducted “anal exams” to try to prove if a man was gay or not. Much of the improvement is due to Helem’s work. “Just ten years ago there were no words for homosexual and transgender in Arabic. If media reported on it, they only used slurs. So we invented them and while the process was long and difficult they have now adapted our words for it.” ●



LUND UNIVERSITY  
Center for Middle Eastern



*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.*

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*Photo: CMES, Finngatan 16, Lund*

# KÖNSKVOTERING - EN GLOBAL FRAMMARCH?

*Island är "bäst" på jämställdhet. Regeringen i Bolivia har genomgått en "gender chock" och i Rwanda är den "kvinnodominerad". Drude Dahlerup berättar om hur kvinnor under kort tid globalt sett tagit mer och mer utrymme i det politiska rummet trots att den totala representationen fortfarande ligger på låga 22 % och könskvoterings roll i detta*



**D**et är en sval onsdagskväll och Utrikespolitiska Föreningen intar som vanligt Café Athen för veckans föreläsning. Gästar gör Drude Dahlerup som skall föreläsa under rubriken "Women in Politics". Dahlerup är professor i statsvetenskap vid Stockholms Universitet och är etablerad forskare och rådgivare när det kommer till konsten om kvotering inom politiska system och parlamentariska val. Hon berättar under vår intervju hur hon reser världen runt i syftet att bistå regeringar i att implementera könskvotering i sina politiska system. "Vanligvis när jag kommer till ett nytt land får vi i den internationella delegationen – oftast är vi 3-4 experter – en vecka på oss i vårt arbete. Under denna tid skall vi kartlägga faktorer bakom kvinnornas underrepresentation, träffa kvinnoorganisationer, politiska partier, NGOs, regeringsrepresentanter och oftast hålls en stor konferens om saken med alla stakeholders. På fredagen skall vi presentera ett förslag till ändringar i vallagen, speciellt könskvoteringsregler och ändringar i nomineringsprocessen. Efter att vi har kommit hem, skrivs en sammanställd rapport med förslag till ändringar för att bättre kunna inkludera kvinnor".

**KÖNSKVOTERING ÄR EN** del inom den jämställdhetspolitiska strategin och syftar att genom målinriktad rekrytering av det i sammanhanget underrepresenterade könet rätta till öönskade skevheter i samhället. Det finns huvudsakl-

-igen i tre olika typer; reserverade platser, juridiska kandidatkvoter samt partikvoter. Syftet är att tillförsäkra kvinnlig representation på ett minimum av 30-40 %. Således ämnar de flesta kvoteringsystem att stärka kvinnlig representation medan andra system bygger på "könsneutralitetet" vilket innebär att inget kön får representera mer än exempelvis 60 %.

**KÖNSKVOTERING ÄR DEN** snabba metoden och förespråkas av de som anser att kvinnor blir utestängda på grund av institutionella exkluderingsmekanismer. Förespråkare av den långsamma metoden ser snarare ett behov i att omfördela resurser för att på så sätt tillförsäkra att kvinnor kan göra karriär på samma villkor som män. Dahlerup beskriver hur den snabba modellen är attraktiv just på grund av dess effektiva och tydliga resultat. "Jag blir tillfrågad av kvinnor överallt i den Globala Syden om hur lång tid det tog för kvinnor i Norden att komma upp till 40 %, och jag måste ju svara att det tog 100 år! 'We are not going to wait that long', är svaret ofta. Därför föredrar så många länder idag fast track politik med kvotering".

**FÖRUTOM KVOTERINGENS GLOBALA** utbredning frågar jag även om Dahlerups personliga intresse för kvotering; "Jag började forska om kvotering då jag kände på mig att det var något nytt globalt som var på gång. Tillsammans med min kollega, Lenita Freidenvall, ansökte jag om pengar från Svenska Vetenskapsrådet för att

få organisera en konferens för forskare inom alla stora regioner i världen. Konferensen resulterade i den första boken om könskvotering i politiken; *Women, Quotas and Politics*. Jag trodde att jag skulle arbeta om detta ämne i 3-4 år, men det fortsätter... Idag är jag rådgivare åt många internationella organisationer, UN Women, UNDP, Inter-Parliamentary Union, IPU och i länder som Sierre Leone, Kambodja, Tunisien, Egypten, Butan och nu senast Kenya”.

**UNDER FÖRELÄSNINGEN KARTLADE** Dahlerup kvoteringens korta – men intensiva – framväxt framför en fullsatt publik. Speciellt fokus lades på kvotering i den tredje världen samt behovet att inkludera kvinnor i parlamentariska val. ”Vi ser att fler post-konflikt länder för igenom konstitutioner nu där kvinnor och alla minoriteter inkluderas via kvoteringsregler, som därefter skall utnyttas i nya vallagar. Därtill kommer FNs viktiga resolution 1325 om kvinnors inkludering i fredsprocessen. Här finns dock stora problem med implementering, vilket vi bland annat såg i skapande av Sydsudan, där kvinnor mer eller mindre bankade på dörren men endast ett fåtal blev insläppta i förhandlingarna för att få stop på konflikten.”

**I SITT JÄMSTÄLLDHETSARBETE** måste Dahlerup arbeta kontextbaserat. Olika länder kräver olika lösningar då det finns olika orsaker till varför kvinnor utestängs från politiken. Hon berättar att det finns de länder som antar att demokrati indirekt innebär en jämn representation, vilket var fallet när hon kom till Bhutan. Där man infört demokrati men blev förvånade när de endast fick 8 kvinnor invalda, ”Men vi har ju fria val nu?” Och det finns inga formella barriärer alls, varför är så få kvinnor invalda?”. Så hörs ofta, t.ex. i Egypten efter Mubaraks fall. Men det är självklart naivt att tro att du kan skapa en jämställd institution, när hela samhället är ojämställt och där som jag kallar det ’ojämställdheten sitter i väggarna’. Men

även kvinnorrättsorganisationerna skylar låg representation på kvinnor, då de menar att kvinnor inte röstar på kvinnor. Ett (mot?)argument som jag även hört i Egypten, Marocko, med mera. Då frågar jag alltid dem ’Hur vet du det? Har ni inte hemlig röstning?’ När man sedan kollar på statistiken märker man att det ofta inte finns en kvinnlig representant att rösta på. Så diagnosen är helt fel, det är inte kvinnor som inte röstar på kvinnor, utan det finns inte tillräckligt med kvinnor att rösta på. Man måste se till vem det är som kontrollerar nomineringarna i första hand.”.

**ETT ÅTERKOMMANDE ARGUMENT** mot könskvotering är om kvinnorna ifråga är kvalificerade för arbetet. Då bör vi istället vända på frasen och fråga, hur kvalificerade är männen? När jag frågar Dahlerup varför hon tror så pass många fortfarande är emot könskvotering svarar hon; ”Därför att det krockar med idén om att män är val-

**“VI HAR EN NY  
GLOBAL DISKURS [...] SOM UPPMUNTRAR  
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'DEMOKRATISK'”**

-da baserat på deras kompetens, medan forskning har visat att en homosocial rekrytering har ägt rum – där män tenderar att välja andra män från sina nätverk. Partierna är likt "gatekeepers" till förtroendeposter, och de borde vara mer vittomfattande i förhållande till kön, minoriteter med mera.

## “‘OJÄMSTÄLLDHETEN SITTE I VÄGGARNA’

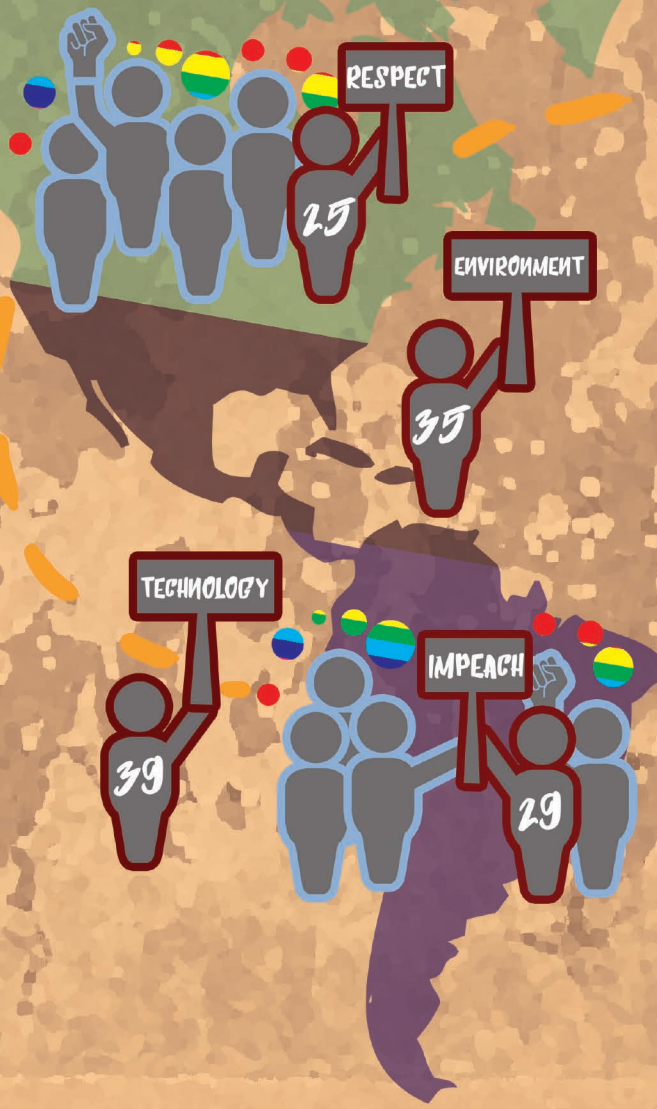
**ÄNDOCK FORTSÄTTER KVOTERING** att vinna ny mark och jag frågar varför hon tror att det blivit så populärt, "Vi har en ny global diskurs, en diskurs som uppmuntrar kvinnlig politisk representation i sin strävan att framstå som 'modern' och 'demokratisk'. Dessutom är det många post-konflikter stater som vill starta om från början och skapa ett inröstat parlament som återspeglar sammansättningen i samhället. I många fall tar man efter grannländer, såsom i Sydamerika där Argentina har tagit en ledande roll."

**SAMTIDIGT SOM VI** bevittnar en uppgång i det globala syd pågår det en nedåtgång i Skandinavien. En stagnation som få verkar tala om. Dahlerup förklarar att detta beror på utvecklingen av nationalistiska partier som får mer och mer inflytande, en förklaring som indirekt pekar på att dessa partier är mansdominerande. Ho understryker därmed vikten av att upprätthålla arbetet på hemmaplan. "Skandinavien är inte längre den enda modellen, även om vi varit det under lång tid... Jämställdhet är inget som bara 'sker' med tiden utan något som måste kämpas för. Backlashes är möjligt och speciellt i krigstider där patriarkala strukturer är mycket hårda att bryta ner."

**FÖRELÄSNINGEN AVSLUTAS MED** efterföljande diskussion. Sverige firar snart 100 år med kvinnlig rösträtt men har fortfarande en bra bit kvar. Vi får hoppas att den globala utvecklingen fortsätter i samma takt och inte tar likt som för oss, ett sekel; "Det är viktigt för kvinnor och män att se sig själva inom olika yrken. Men man får ofta höra att kvinnor inte skall vara så otåliga och att jämställdhet kommer komma. Men ojämställdhet sitter i väggarna, och det beror på diskriminering och exkludering. Könkvotering kan tvinga de politiska partier att öppna rekryteringsprocessen och börja välja seriöst bland alla de kompetenta kvinnor, som de facto finns i civilsamhällen över hela världen." ●

**Text and photo:** Sandra Jakobsson

# FACES OF PEACE



GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM HAS SPROUTED IN EVERY CORNER OF THE GLOBE. PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD HAVE ALWAYS LOOKED TO EACH OTHER FOR HELP IN THEIR QUEST FOR JUSTICE. ON THIS MAP, YOU WILL SEE THE PAGE NUMBERS ON THE CHESTS OF OUR ACTIVISTS REPRESENTING THE STORIES FOR GRASSROOTS PEACE.

Illustration: Jamie Woodworth



# GRASSROOTS ACTION FOR CHANGE

## INTERVIEW

### PRESIDENT JOSÉ RAMOS-HORTA



*"With a really poor taylor in a forgotten town in Guinea-Bissau. I was visiting the area and decided to walk and explore when I saw this very kind gentleman who had set up business with an old sowing machine on the veranda of an old house. I noticed he didn't any material to sow."*

*President José Ramos-Horta*

## Nobel Peace Laureate: Jose Ramos-Horta

President José Ramos-Horta's struggle personifies hope, among many such struggles seen across the 20th century. Through this interview, Utrikesperspektiv shares what it really means to create peace from grassroots action.

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By: Saahil Waslekar

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**You left East Timor in order to forward the plea of the East Timorese people, against the occupation and oppression of Indonesia, to the United Nations at the age of twenty-five, as Foreign Minister**

**How was it possible for you to become the Foreign Minister of East Timor at the age of twenty five? How did you manage and with what hope did you address the United Nations?**

It was by accident of history. We were all young. I was the only one with some English and some grasp of international politics. I managed to address the United Nations through the good offices of some friendly Governments at that time like Tanzania,

Mozambique, Portugal. Portugal lodged a complaint to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on Indonesia's invasion of East Timor, then still legally considered to be a Portuguese administered Territory. I was very hopeful, our only hope, full of innocence and naïveté about the UN.

Very soon after securing a unanimous UNSC resolution calling on Indonesia to withdraw its forces from Timor-Leste (TL), I learned my first lesson in international hypocrisy: the United States of America (USA) having voted for the UNSC neverthe-

less continued to supply weapons to Indonesia which enabled it to continue to prosecute the war in TL in defiance of the same UNSC resolution that the US voted for.

**The National Council of Maubere Resistance's (umbrella political organisation against Indonesian occupation) Peace Plan document was instrumental in contributing towards East Timor freedom**

**As face of CNRM's Peace Plan abroad, did your experiences and learnings from the international stage contribute to**

### **formation of the plan?**

Well, one learns through experience, studying, through one's own instinct sometimes.

**How did you communicate with leaders back home in the 1970-1980s? How did you feel when you received the Nobel Peace Prize?**

Communication was extremely difficult. For years we didn't have any direct communication. But we received reports via Church channels, the Church being the only institution on the ground and somewhat preserved, safe.

*Photos: President José Ramos-Horta*



*"Shopping in a popular market. I would visit this market called 'Caracol' regularly and even though I was living alone and didn't eat much at home I always bought tones of vegetables, fruits, just to leave some money behind."*

*President José Ramos-Horta*

I was surprised, embarrassed, when I heard the news that I had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, I never ever thought about it let alone lobbying anyone to nominate me for the Prize.

**You stood as an Independent candidate to the post of President of East Timor**

**As President, seeing East Timor shape on a daily basis, were you convinced that the people of East Timor were living peacefully?**

I did much to restore peace to the people, restore lost hopes and faith, by crisscrossing the country, visiting the common people everywhere; I engaged all in dialogue; I launched creative initiatives through sports and culture, films, etc to promote peace. And I succeeded. By the time I handed over the presidency to my successor, five years later, the country was dramatically different from the one I had received. My conscience was at ease.

**You are the United Nations' special Representative and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office**

**in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) How do you contribute to sustainable peace today?**

I was... I am not now. I was the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) from Feb 2013 to July 2014. I did contribute my share to restore constitutional order and more important hope to the people of Guinea-Bissau. I left when the country was back on tract to peaceful, democratic regime. Thousands of simple people, street vendors, bid me farewell. Many cried when I left. This was the best, more heartfelt tribute I felt.

**Yours is a story of hope, perseverance and self determination**

**What is your advice to those youth who aspire to contribute to peace and eradicate challenges of today?**

First advice to youth: study, study and study, to excel, to be the very best, to be the pride of your family, community and country, and to serve the people.

Second: never surrender to hatred, violence. Respond to violence with messages and acts of tolerance, understanding, love.

## About...

President José Ramos-Horta received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996 alongside his countryman, Bishop Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo, 'for their work towards a just and peaceful solution to the conflict in East Timor'. Between 2007 and 2012, the respected Nobel laureate served as the second President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. Today, President Ramos-Horta continues working for peacebuilding.

Third: embrace the poorest of the poor in your school. Look out for the neediest student in your classroom, in the school. Share what you may have; some clothing, shoes, food, books.

Fourth: identify a possible project in a poor community where you and other students may develop to improve the lives of the people; maybe clean water and sanitation; solar lighting? Free internet? ●

# “NEVER SURRENDER TO HATRED, VIOLENCE

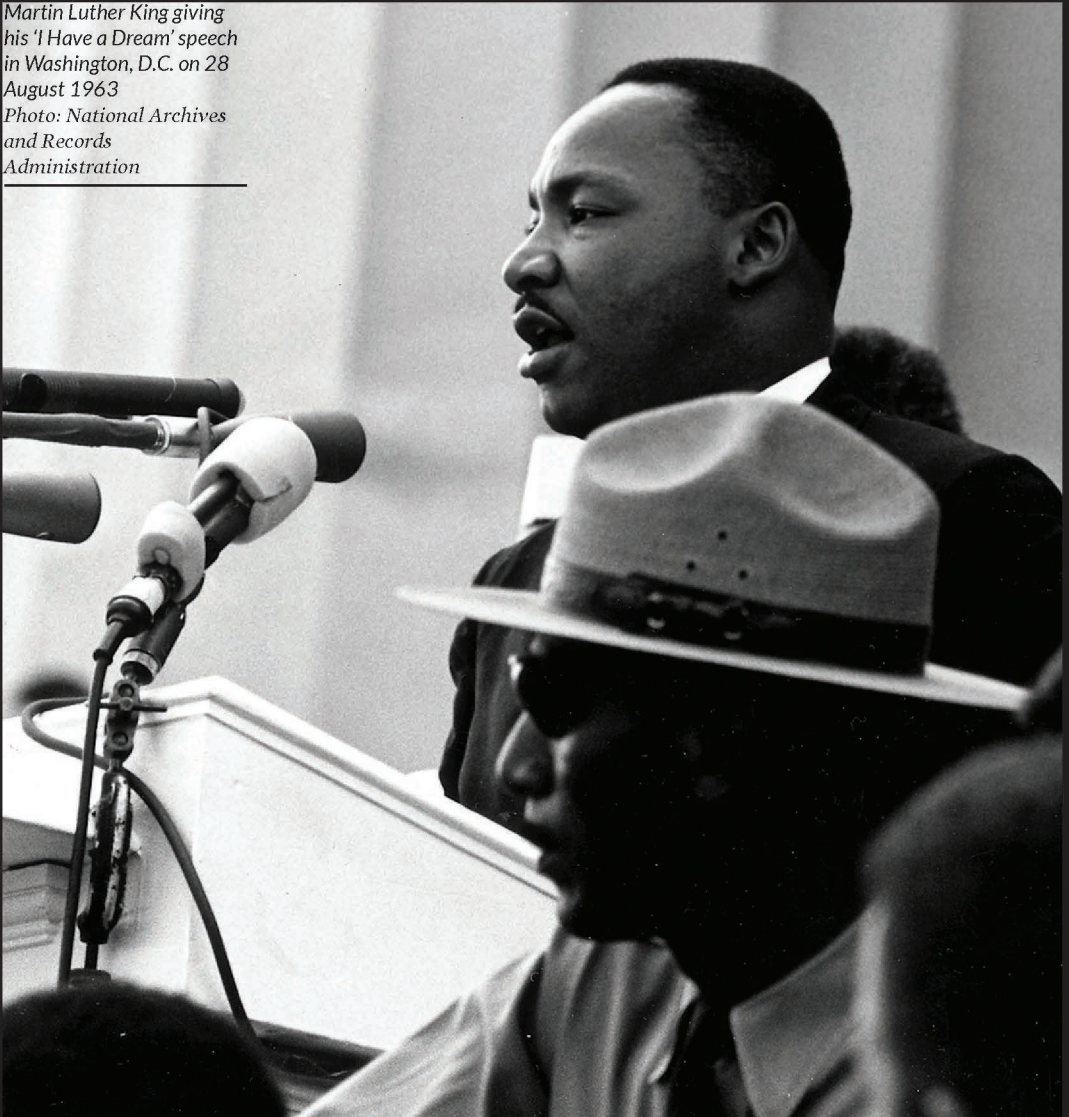
# Black Lives Matter and the Death of Respectability Politics

The murder of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Sandra Bland, Freddie Gray and countless other Black Americans whilst under police protection has been a catalyst for the nationwide Black Lives Matter movement. With their deaths the use of politics of respectability, a tactic used in the 1960s American Civil Rights movement, died as well.

Martin Luther King giving his 'I Have a Dream' speech in Washington, D.C. on 28 August 1963

Photo: National Archives and Records Administration

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**O**N APRIL 16TH 1963, Martin Luther King wrote his seminal open letter from his incarceration in Birmingham jail in which he defended the benefits of non-violent resistance to combat racism and the need for direct action outside established institutions to challenge oppression. More than fifty years from then, black people in America continue to face disproportionate incarceration and death at the hands of state apparatus. Further, black people are still more likely to be unemployed, live in poverty and have fewer opportunities for social mobility than their white counterparts.

**IN TRUE 21ST** century fashion, the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM) began as a hashtag. Following the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the death of Trayvon Martin, black community leader Alicia Garza wrote a Facebook post and signed it “Our lives matter, Black lives matter.” This was hash-tagged by Opal Tometti, support was given by Patrisse Cullors through social media and the Black lives Matter movement began. What sets the BLM movement apart from the non-violent civil rights movement of the 60s is the new avenues that have been opened for community organisation through advances in technology. Twitter and Facebook have made the dream of a truly horizontally organised movement of the citizens a reality. Furthermore, during the 60s spreading information or highlighting instances of state oppression required finding space in newspapers, having access to telephones and time on news stations. This required support of established institutions and friendship of the almost exclusive white members of them.

**INTERESTINGLY, BLACK PEOPLE** are disproportionately represented on Twitter – they make up 25% of the Twitter sphere while they only making up 13.2% of the American population, according to

# “US PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES DISMISS BLM: LET’S GET BACK TO THE ISSUES

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Gawker.com. This has led to a phenomenon, currently being studied at universities such as the University of Southern California. Referred to as “Black Twitter” in which the black community excels at drumming up support through social media for a variety of topics, from making fun of Kanye West to more serious issues such as #IamJada – which supports victims of sexual assault.

**THE BLM MOVEMENT** is characterised by its rejection of “respectability politics” – the requirement that marginalised groups present their grievances in line with mainstream values rather than challenging existing norms. Instead, their acts of direct action take several forms including “die-ins” (flash mobs of people “dead” in areas to disrupt the normal flow of people); marches and most salient - disrupting political rallies through both silent and vocal protests. It is the last of these tactics that has highlighted the tension between both the old and the new black civil rights movement, and between BLM and the wider public.

**BARBRA REYNOLDS, VETERAN** of the 60s civil rights movement, in August, 2015, published an article in which she admonished the BLM movement for their rejection of respectability politics. She wrote “in the 1960s, activists confront white mobs and police with dignity and



*The 'Million Hoodies Union Square' protest in response to Trayvon Martin's shooting death in Sanford, Florida  
Photo: David Shankbone*

decorum" and that Black Lives Matter demonstrations are "peppered with hate speech (referencing chants that claim policemen are killers), profanity, and guys with sagging pants that show their underwear." Similarly, Reverend Young, an aide to Martin Luther King Junior, during the civil rights movement, claims "white supremacy is a sickness...you don't get angry with sick people; you work to heal the system. If you get angry, it is contagious and you end up acting as bad as the perpetrators."

**AS THE CURRENT** American political race becomes more polarised, BLM's insistence on rejecting political affiliations puts the movement at odds with much of politicised America. When BLM protestors interrupted a Hillary Clinton rally and confronted her about statements she had made about the black community, the presidential candidate responded in a manner that has been widely viewed by black commentators and organisations as "dismissive." She reacted by stating, "let's get back to the issues," before having the protestors removed and Clinton was visibly agitated

by the interruption. One need not look too far to find multiple instances of Trump supporters verbally and physically assaulting BLM protestors at his rallies across the United States. Trump himself defended his Birmingham supporters who attacked a BLM protestor, “maybe he should have been roughed up because it was absolutely disgusting what he was doing.” It has been widely reported that Bernie Sanders stood back at his Seattle rally and allowed the BLM protestors to speak. This claim has been disputed by Seattle’s chapter of BLM who paint a more hostile picture of the Senator’s reaction. However, what is clear is his supporters were enthusiastic in showing their distaste for the disruptive tactics of the BLM protestors. Marissa Johnson, one of BLM protestors on stage, writes, “the crowd was outraged, chanting Senator Sanders’ name during a moment of silence for Mike Brown and calling for the police to tase us while throwing water bottles at us on stage.”

**THE CONTEMPORARY FIGHT** for civil rights in America is not directly concerned with promoting legislative change. Unlike the 60s, when one could point to discriminatory legislation, today’s racism lurks within social interactions – a disproportionate police response towards black civilians is not written in the black letter of the law, it is learnt through institutionalised practices. Thus, the tactics of the 60s, where “respectable” victims were chosen and walked through the legal process by organised civil rights groups in an attempt to change legislation, cannot be applied to the current situation.

**INSTEAD, BLM** is attempting to change the hearts and minds of individuals working within state institutions. Despite being charged with the same crime, the length of Black men’s sentences for federal crimes are 20% longer than their white counterparts - this percentage only increases with the se-

verity of the crime. This is not a result of unbalanced legislation in favour of whites but the result of systemic norms and values within the judicial system. Similarly, the persistent failure for grand juries to indict police officers after the shooting of black civilians does not represent a failure of the grand jury system itself but is instead an illustration of the perception of black victims by the American people. Respectability politics tells black activists: conduct yourself in a way worthy of white peoples respect and they will grant you that respect. This conduct requires that you fight within existing structures and in line with mainstream values. BLM’s core goal is to change the values and norms inherent within institutions – to change the status quo – by definition this cannot be done with a policy of respectability politics.

**THUS, THE CALL** for a more tempered response from the BLM movement is antithesis to the organisation’s agenda and undermines the changes they are attempting to affect. It would appear as though little has changed since Martin Luther King Jr. wrote his Birmingham jail letter:

*“THE NEGRO’S GREAT stumbling block to freedom....is the white moderate who is more devoted to order than justice....who constantly says, “I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I can’t agree with your methods of direct action.” – Martin Luther King Jr. Letter from Birmingham Jail. ●*

**By: Danielle Soskin**

# BRAZIL, IMPEACHMENT AND GRASSROOTS MOVEMENT

As the political forces of Brazil come closer to the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff, Brazilian democracy is undergoing grassroots transformation both within parliament and on the streets.



Former President  
Luiz Inácio Lula da  
Silva  
Photo: Ricardo  
Stuckert



Mass protest in  
Brasília on 13 March  
2016  
Photo: Agência  
Brasil



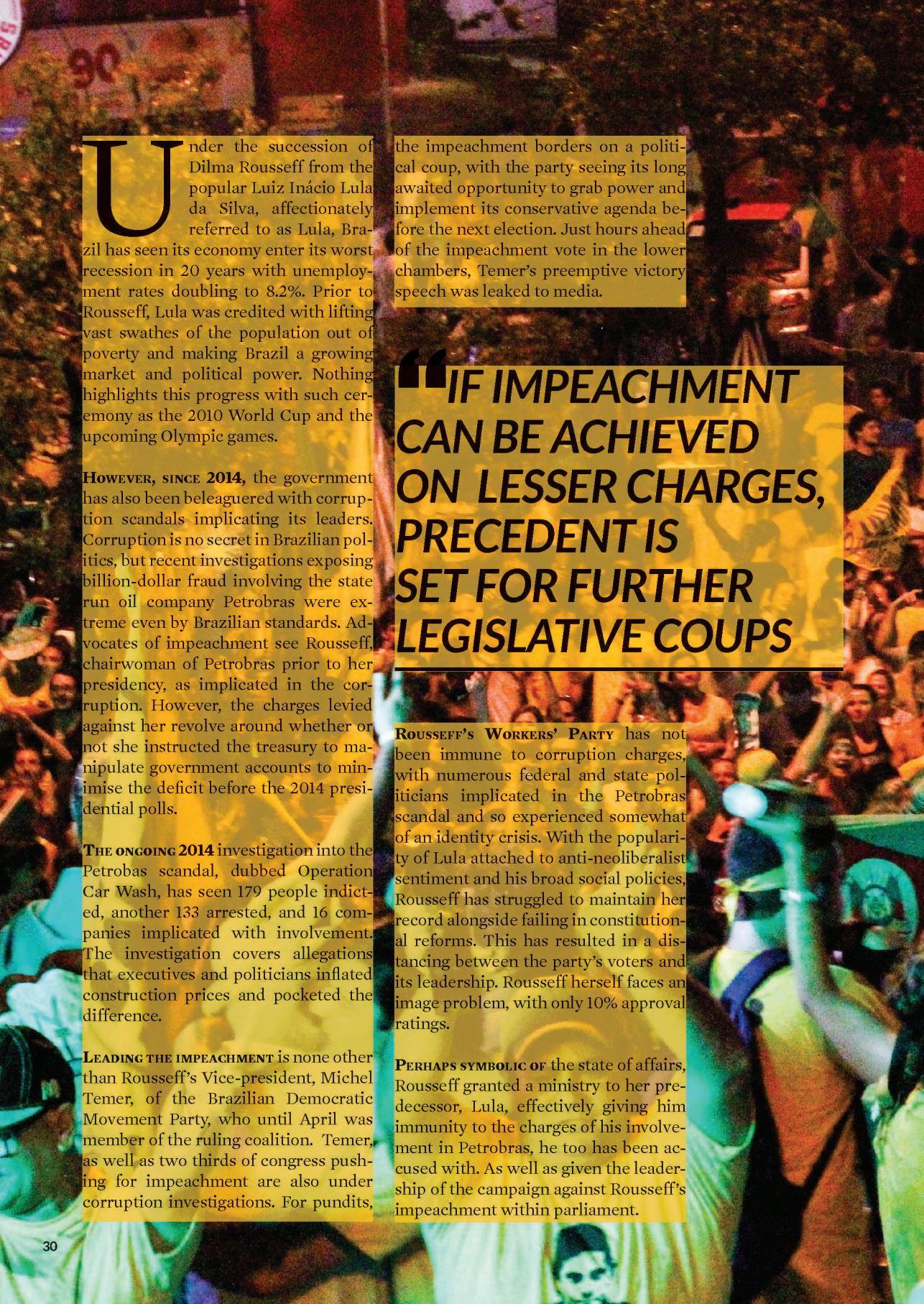
President Dilma  
Rousseff  
Photo: Ricardo  
Stuckert



Michel Temer  
Photo: Anderson  
Riedel



Protest in São Paulo  
Photo: Agência  
Brasil



**U**nder the succession of Dilma Rousseff from the popular Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, affectionately referred to as Lula, Brazil has seen its economy enter its worst recession in 20 years with unemployment rates doubling to 8.2%. Prior to Rousseff, Lula was credited with lifting vast swathes of the population out of poverty and making Brazil a growing market and political power. Nothing highlights this progress with such ceremony as the 2010 World Cup and the upcoming Olympic games.

**HOWEVER, SINCE 2014**, the government has also been beleaguered with corruption scandals implicating its leaders. Corruption is no secret in Brazilian politics, but recent investigations exposing billion-dollar fraud involving the state run oil company Petrobras were extreme even by Brazilian standards. Advocates of impeachment see Rousseff, chairwoman of Petrobras prior to her presidency, as implicated in the corruption. However, the charges levied against her revolve around whether or not she instructed the treasury to manipulate government accounts to minimise the deficit before the 2014 presidential polls.

**THE ONGOING 2014** investigation into the Petrobras scandal, dubbed Operation Car Wash, has seen 179 people indicted, another 133 arrested, and 16 companies implicated with involvement. The investigation covers allegations that executives and politicians inflated construction prices and pocketed the difference.

**LEADING THE IMPEACHMENT** is none other than Rousseff's Vice-president, Michel Temer, of the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party, who until April was member of the ruling coalition. Temer, as well as two thirds of congress pushing for impeachment are also under corruption investigations. For pundits,

the impeachment borders on a political coup, with the party seeing its long awaited opportunity to grab power and implement its conservative agenda before the next election. Just hours ahead of the impeachment vote in the lower chambers, Temer's preemptive victory speech was leaked to media.

## **“IF IMPEACHMENT CAN BE ACHIEVED ON LESSER CHARGES, PRECEDENT IS SET FOR FURTHER LEGISLATIVE COUPS**

**ROUSSEFF'S WORKERS' PARTY** has not been immune to corruption charges, with numerous federal and state politicians implicated in the Petrobras scandal and so experienced somewhat of an identity crisis. With the popularity of Lula attached to anti-neoliberalist sentiment and his broad social policies, Rousseff has struggled to maintain her record alongside failing in constitutional reforms. This has resulted in a distancing between the party's voters and its leadership. Rousseff herself faces an image problem, with only 10% approval ratings.

**PERHAPS SYMBOLIC OF** the state of affairs, Rousseff granted a ministry to her predecessor, Lula, effectively giving him immunity to the charges of his involvement in Petrobras, he too has been accused with. As well as given the leadership of the campaign against Rousseff's impeachment within parliament.

**FOR BRAZILIANS**, the impeachment process has exposed the rifts underlying the fabric of the country. The year 2015 saw increasing protests in the streets, both against and for the government. This seemed to culminate in March this year, with estimates of 1.2 million to 3.6 million taking to the streets calling for Rousseff's impeachment. All across social media, news networks and in the streets, anti-Rousseff rhetoric is echoed, especially in the affluent and white south. Whilst in the working class north, where the Worker's Party garners most support, Brazilians face institutionalised exclusion from the media and civic life. After all, it was these constituencies that propelled Lula to office.

**OUTSIDE OF THE** parliament, grassroots campaigners have emerged in supporting impeachment as a facet of their wider agendas. One such group is the nascent Free Brazil Movement, which adheres to an economic libertarian stance and cut from the same ideological cloth as Reagan and Thatcher. However, the leaders of FBM are not the conventional prosaic leaders of neo-liberalism, but college students and millennials. It's most recognised figure-head at 19 years old, Kim Kataguri commands a strong social media followership, as well as headlining at pro-impeachment demonstrations upwards of 200,000 people. The FBM seeks the impeachment of Rousseff in projecting its power on established conservatives, with some equating it to a Brazilian Tea Party. Indeed, FBM has received support from American neo-liberalists such as Rand Paul and the Cato institute.

**IRRESPECTIVE OF THE** millions of demonstrators that took to the streets in favour of impeachment, there remains an element of pragmatism that persists in Brazilians. With some seeing the impeachment and subsequent shift of government to right wing parties such

as that of Temer, as a move to austerity measures and the downsizing of the social policies that lifted millions from poverty under Lula. Such policies are seen as the first step of disenfranchising working-class voters and the millions living in favelas.

**BRAZILIAN DISCONTENT** seems more complex than a merely anti-Rousseff campaign, with Reuters reported 61% favour of impeachment (down from 68% in March), a further 58% would also seek the impeachment of Temer. 78% are in favour of new elections, if both were impeached. As a result, a silent majority has emerged amongst those dependent on the social policies, those fearful of a right-wing government, and most common - those that see the entirety of Brazilian politics as corrupt. Something that might explain this silent majority circulates on Brazilian social media "If you are not confused, you are not informed".

**OPPOSITION PARTIES** HAVE been successful in its aggressive take down of Rousseff, but at the same time this has raised questions about the rigidity of the political system. If impeachment can be achieved on what lawmakers such as the Attorney General see as "lesser charges", precedent is set for further legislative coups.

**WITH CONGRESS** OVERWHELMINGLY approving impeachment proceedings on 17th April, the Senate looks next to progress with the charges. As the impeachment of Rousseff looks increasingly likely, the future of Brazilian politics looks far from it. With so many implicated in corruption, now more so than ever, democratic institutions such as the independent judiciary system will be charged with the responsibility of holding parliament to public account, where others have failed. ●

By: Thomas M. Rogerson

# GEZI

## An Uncommon Grassroots Movement in Turkish History

Turkey has witnessed three highly politicized grassroots movements since the 1960s. The well-known Gezi Park Protests was a unique peaceful resistance sought to emancipate millions without promoting an ideology.

Social movements can mean a variety of things. Over time, they have known to be a rejection of particular political stand points and even generated an outbreak moment targeting revolution. In this piece, I would like to share my impressions on two major social movements in Turkish history where, almost all of my family members including me took part.

**THE MOST NOTEWORTHY** and comprehensive grassroots movement in Turkey took place in the 1960s which was materialized by the worldwide-known “60’s generation” and continued in 1970s in some way. Since I have had the opportunity to learn first-hand from my relatives’ personal participations, I am rather well aware of the movement which erupted in the 1970s. At the first half of the 70s, Turkey lacked political authority. The functionality of statehood had been in a fragile position where the legislative structure almost collapsed. In addition to this extreme situation, there was an ongoing economic embargo sanctioned as a result of the Cyprus Invasion. It might be hard to imagine in today’s age and time although the consequence was seen through lines stretching kilometers, in

**Left:** Protesters having occupied a building near Gezi Park, a few days after the protests began.

order to collect two litres of gasoline or a package of coal.

**THIS DYSTOPIAN ATMOSPHERE** lived until May, 1977. In Taksim Square of Istanbul, 33 people were murdered when they celebrated Worker's Day. This act was the final straw leading to a three year long grassroots movement between right and left wing supporters. A year after "Bloody May 1", social movements became all more complicated. Politically motivated groups clashed amongst each other, announcing certain districts as "clean neighbourhoods" for their supporters and stratifying people by their physical appearance.

**AT THAT TIME**, my uncle was a socialist student in Istanbul University. As a childhood memory, I still remember the discussion, when he shared with my father, the incident of a fatal explosion in the university faculty. He was lucky to survive although, at the end of the day, his best friend and thirty other people were not.

**THIS TURBULENCE APPEARED** to have ended in 1980 with the military coup d'état. People voted in favour of new mandate with great majority. However, the new era only finished apparent clashes among people on the street yet started the covered intelligence and labelling war carried out by military authorities.

**TURKISH SOCIETY HAS** managed to survive this politically motivated grassroots movements. It can be argued that in the 1970s there was a general systemic problem combined with internal political instability. However, no one can argue that the "2013 Gezi Movements" were also a systemic failure. We, Turkish society as a whole, nurtured the environment leading to this social explosion prepared by the Justice and Development Party (AKP in Turkish Acronym).

**AKP'S TWELVE YEARS** of supremacy in the government (2001-2013) has been a remarkable era which can be taught in political science departments. Their

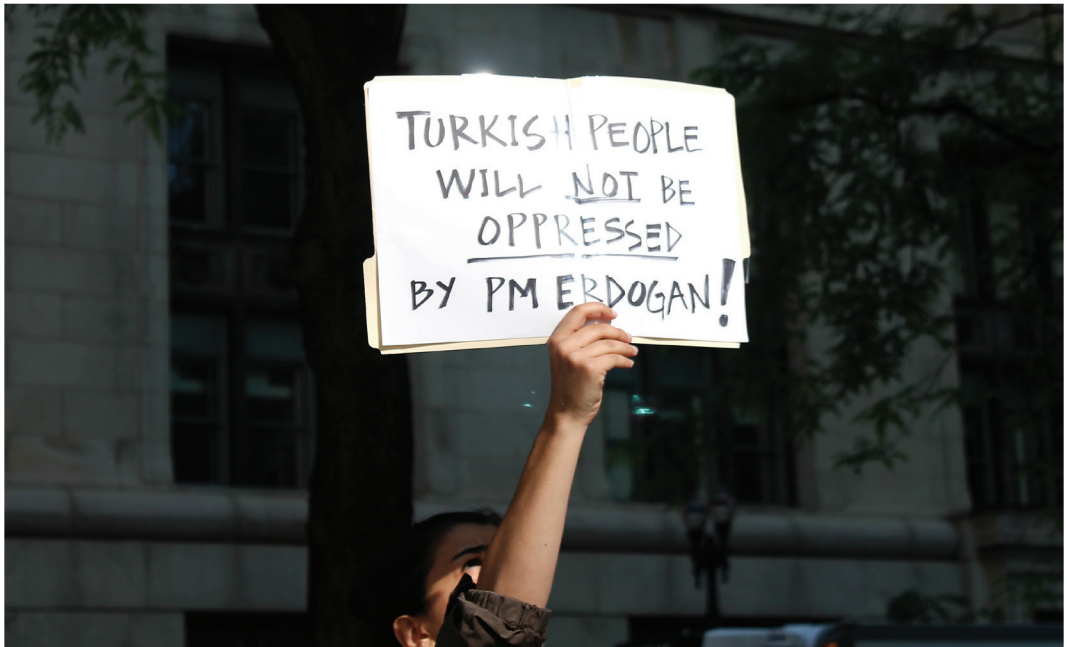


Photo: Ceyhun (Jay) Isik/flickr.com



conservative agenda which ideally leaning on economic development and social justice has been beneficial for some groups in Turkish society. These groups were mostly third generation migrants coming from rural areas of Anatolia and those who suffered from rapid urbanization. They have been a predominant group within the population who have been neither villagers nor city locals but somewhere in limbo. AKP's well-designed conservative agenda directly integrated them into the political sphere. By receiving majority votes, AKP gradually established its control within all ministries with highly motivated partisanship. Like martial law after the 1970s, they also labelled people who do not support them as 'others' and non-AKP groups as 'foster children' of the Turkish Republic. As a result, people were expected to be obedient to the AKP government's Turkey. Any critics from civil society, even from academics were regarded as 'spying activities'. Unlike the 1970s movement, these circumstances suppressed people from all backgrounds: seculars, non-believers, LGBTs, Kurds, the wealthy class and even nationalists.

**WITHIN THIS NEXUS**, on 28th May 2013, AKP occupied, Istanbul Municipality officials, wanted to cut down trees in Gezi Park next to Taksim Square in order to build a shopping mall. Many people, obviously not AKP supporters, started to shelter these trees by standing in front of the bulldozers. However, this resistance was classified as 'viola-

tion to municipality's rights to work' and people were suppressed by tear gasses capsules. This scene, going viral across social media, showed how the police took orders from the AKP government and hit people in order to suppress the intervention. Initiating from Istanbul, this uprising spread across all major Turkish cities such as capital Ankara and the "Aegean Pearl", Izmir. For almost four months, millions of people from different parts of the society revolted against AKP's harsh regulations.

**IT WAS A** non-partisan explosion of Turkish people who were essentially caged in their mother land. Young protestors, such as Ali Ismail Korkmaz, Ethem Sarısülük, Abdullah Cömert and Mehmet Ayvalıtas were murdered by AKP sympathisers and many law enforcement officers were permanently disabled. Even though these people suffered, tortured and eventually killed, one needs to remember that the core of Turkish society should not be underrated.

**EVEN THE CURRENT** ruling party has survived such determined and widely organized grassroots movement. It is hard to estimate how powerful a future movement will be. Once people are united, regardless of ethnicity, political orientation or social background there is nothing that could possibly stand in their way. ●

**By:** Umut Can Adisönmez



# BERTA CÁCERES

## A LEGACY OF DIALOGUE

**As citizens fight for environmental and political rights around the world, Cáceres' legacy lives on. This eulogy recounts some of the most important work Cáceres was a part of.**

**B**erta Isabel Cáceres Flores was a Lenca leader who co-founded the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) more than 20 years ago. The Lencas are an indigenous community that live in the river basins of southwestern Honduras and eastern

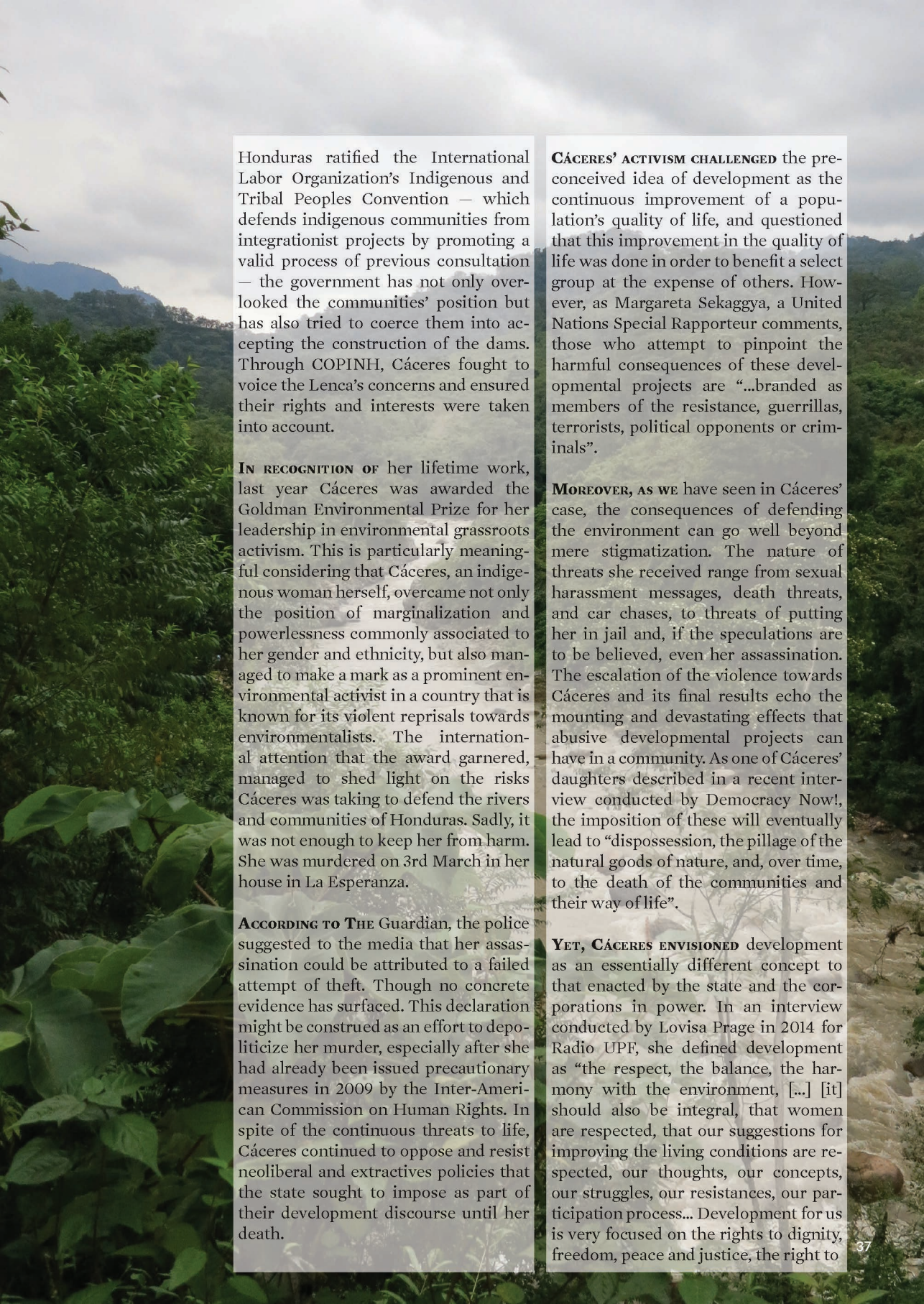


El Salvador. For them, the rivers and surrounding areas provide more than just resources, the area is also central to their culture. The rivers are a place of social gathering, playing an important role in religious ceremonies. It is noteworthy that the Lencas consider themselves ancestral guardians of the feminine river spirits that, in turn, bestow life and wisdom upon them. However, as the Government of Honduras and private corporations sought to exploit natural resources found in this area to accelerate growth, the Lenca's way of life has been threatened. It was in an effort to protect the interests of the Lenca communities that COPINH was born.

**THROUGHOUT HER LIFE**, Cáceres stood up for the Lencas and other vulnerable communities whose rights had been neglected, and sometimes even denied, by the government and the international enterprises responsible for the construction of hydroelectric and water-intensive mining projects. One of the most controversial projects that she stood against was the construction of Agua Zarca hydroelectric dam in the Gualcarque River, where different groups of Lencas live. Cáceres considered the project illegitimate and strongly opposed it on the grounds that the communities that were directly affected by the construction of dams were not previously consulted. Even though

**Above:** Cáceres in front of a COPINH painting.

**Right:** Proposed site for a dam which Cáceres and the Lenca community successfully stopped the building of.



Honduras ratified the International Labor Organization's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention — which defends indigenous communities from integrationist projects by promoting a valid process of previous consultation — the government has not only overlooked the communities' position but has also tried to coerce them into accepting the construction of the dams. Through COPINH, Cáceres fought to voice the Lenca's concerns and ensured their rights and interests were taken into account.

**IN RECOGNITION** OF her lifetime work, last year Cáceres was awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize for her leadership in environmental grassroots activism. This is particularly meaningful considering that Cáceres, an indigenous woman herself, overcame not only the position of marginalization and powerlessness commonly associated to her gender and ethnicity, but also managed to make a mark as a prominent environmental activist in a country that is known for its violent reprisals towards environmentalists. The international attention that the award garnered, managed to shed light on the risks Cáceres was taking to defend the rivers and communities of Honduras. Sadly, it was not enough to keep her from harm. She was murdered on 3rd March in her house in La Esperanza.

**ACCORDING TO THE** Guardian, the police suggested to the media that her assassination could be attributed to a failed attempt of theft. Though no concrete evidence has surfaced. This declaration might be construed as an effort to depoliticize her murder, especially after she had already been issued precautionary measures in 2009 by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. In spite of the continuous threats to life, Cáceres continued to oppose and resist neoliberal and extractives policies that the state sought to impose as part of their development discourse until her death.

**CÁCERES' ACTIVISM** CHALLENGED the pre-conceived idea of development as the continuous improvement of a population's quality of life, and questioned that this improvement in the quality of life was done in order to benefit a select group at the expense of others. However, as Margareta Sekaggya, a United Nations Special Rapporteur comments, those who attempt to pinpoint the harmful consequences of these developmental projects are “...branded as members of the resistance, guerrillas, terrorists, political opponents or criminals”.

**MOREOVER, AS WE** have seen in Cáceres' case, the consequences of defending the environment can go well beyond mere stigmatization. The nature of threats she received range from sexual harassment messages, death threats, and car chases, to threats of putting her in jail and, if the speculations are to be believed, even her assassination. The escalation of the violence towards Cáceres and its final results echo the mounting and devastating effects that abusive developmental projects can have in a community. As one of Cáceres' daughters described in a recent interview conducted by Democracy Now!, the imposition of these will eventually lead to “dispossession, the pillage of the natural goods of nature, and, over time, to the death of the communities and their way of life”.

**YET, CÁCERES ENVISIONED** development as an essentially different concept to that enacted by the state and the corporations in power. In an interview conducted by Lovisa Prage in 2014 for Radio UPF, she defined development as “the respect, the balance, the harmony with the environment, [...] [it] should also be integral, that women are respected, that our suggestions for improving the living conditions are respected, our thoughts, our concepts, our struggles, our resistances, our participation process... Development for us is very focused on the rights to dignity, freedom, peace and justice, the right to

# “CÁCERES ENVISIONED DEVELOPMENT AS AN ESSENTIALLY DIFFERENT CONCEPT TO THAT ENACTED BY THE STATE AND THE CORPORATIONS IN POWER

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self-determination, sovereignty and autonomy...”. In contrast with the more westernized and individualistic developmental model proposed by the state and corporations, in this definition of development, Cáceres outlines a sense of community in which everyone has a role to play to ensure the protection of nature and individual well-being within a society.

**THIS CONCEPT OF** inclusive development is modeled in the way COPINH works as it strives to organize the indigenous community’s resistance efforts against abusive development projects. Cáceres’ philosophy is present in the goals they envision and in the way that they attempt to accomplish them. Said organization believes that through the collective analysis of their own reality and constant dialogue, they can establish common positions about different issues and coordinate their efforts to defend them. So far, the results of their efforts are promising: if the Agua Zarca project has failed to be implemented until now, it is only due to the coordinated efforts and manifestations that people have organized for more than three years.

**THAT PROTESTERS IN** Honduras and countries around the world took to the streets to ask for justice and to com-

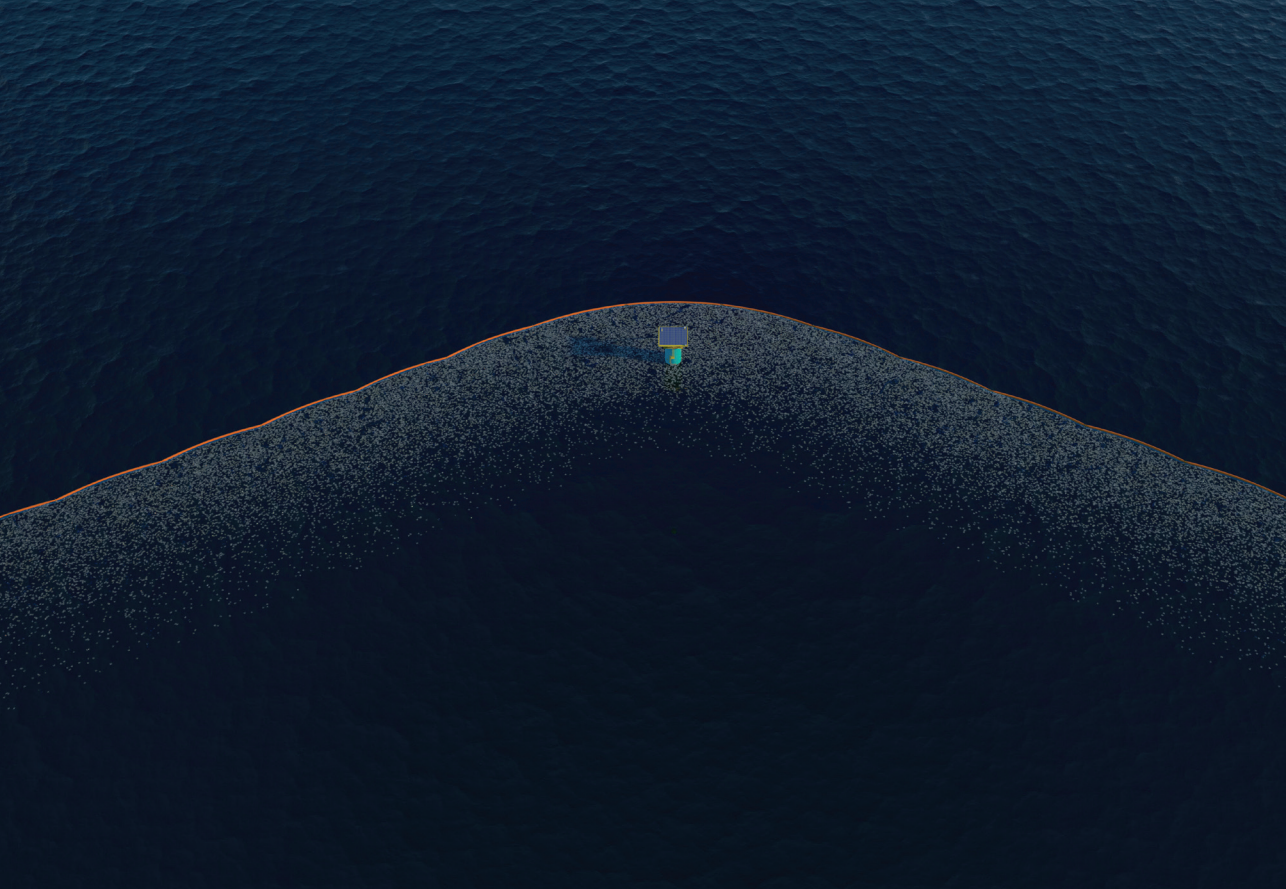
memorate Berta Cáceres’ life, can give us some insight on the expanse of her legacy. First, she worked for communities that even today work to defend the rights of nature, women and indigenous groups. Second, her contribution to the internationalization of a methodology of dialogue used to keep the organizations close to people’s concerns and regulate the influence of the groups in power. Third, the creation of worldwide networks to make the process of resistance against big projects and the defense of the indigenous rights more visible and gain stronger support. And finally, her work has fostered a broader debate on the definition and implications of development, challenging preconceived ideas on the role that nature and people have to play in order to achieve a desirable quality of life.

**“BERTA CÁCERES IS** not dead, she multiplied!” was the cry that resonated in a recent rally as activists gathered to oppose illegitimate projects promoted by the government and international corporations. In fact, her ideas did not die, they multiplied. ●

**By: Alfredo Berard & Laura Lucia**

**Photos: Goldman Environmental Prize**





# THE OCEAN CLEANUP

## *An endeavor to change the tide*

**With unprecedented consequences and ineffective measures so-far, ocean pollution is one of the most critical environmental issues faced by the world today. As the seemingly insurmountable issue worsens, the question is: can ocean pollution ever be solved?**

**A**ccording to 21-year-old Dutch inventor Boyan Slat, it can be solved. Not a moment too soon, this ambitious young man has taken up the challenge of tackling the often overlooked issue of ocean pollution. Through his foundation “The Ocean Cleanup”, he presents a grass-roots movement that may very well

change the tide in favor of the world’s oceans.

**TO UNDERSTAND SLAT’S** initiative, we must look at the consequences of ocean pollution. One such issue is the continuous expansion of the great ocean gyres, enormous areas of ocean where swirling currents cause plastic from around the world to converge in huge patches. One such site is the Great Pacific Garbage Patch which is twice the size of Texas. A direct result of gyres and ocean pollution is the death of over 1 million seabirds and 100 000 sea mammals per year.



**ANOTHER CONCERN** COMES from the decomposition of plastic itself which makes up 80 % of the litter found in the oceans and coastlines. As plastic breaks up and disintegrates, it forms micro plastics. These tiny fragments of a few millimeters or less are consumed by marine wildlife from the smallest fish to the largest whale. Through digestion and absorption, toxic substances begin to build up in the animals' bodies, an effect further amplified when travelling through the food chain and ultimately to humans. An increase in the accumulation and concentration of pollutants and toxic chemicals has a devastating impact on animals and humans alike. Health risks include cancer, mutations and impaired reproduction.

**HOWEVER, DESPITE THE** severity and magnitude of the situation, ocean cleanup has not been implemented as a solution. Instead, policy has primarily been about reducing the influx of garbage and plastic dumped into the ocean. Although this is a step in the right direction, it does not stop the expansion of

the gyres or prevent ocean pollution, it only slows it down. However, all the plastics and waste that still remain in the oceans is not being dealt with, as it is perceived as impossible, not to mention, expensive to clean up. This skepticism is understandable to a certain degree as a staggering 8 million metric tons of trash and plastic is released into the oceans every year.

**THIS PESSIMISTIC VIEW** is contrasted by Slat's optimism. Where some people

*Boyan Slat working from his bedroom, before The Ocean Cleanup had an office.*

**“WHERE SOME PEOPLE SEE INSURMOUNTABLE PROBLEMS, SLAT SEES OPPORTUNITIES**

see insurmountable problems, Slat sees opportunities and is determined to find solutions. One such goal is Slat's endeavor to clean up the Pacific garbage gyre. His foundation, along with other scientists, develops technologies to extract, prevent and intercept plastic pollution. At the moment, Slat is developing a V-shaped floating network of barriers called "Ocean Cleanup Arrays". The system is designed to take advantage of currents and winds. This extensive system of arrays and submerged non-permeable screen collects plastic floating around and below the surface to a central platform. From here the plastic is extracted and stored for transport. As most of the currents pass under the screens and arrays, it reduces by-catch and the risk of harming marine wildlife. Not only does the Ocean Cleanup Array present a great solution to a stressing issue, it is also supposed to be the longest floating structure ever deployed in the ocean.

**SLAT'S OCEAN CLEANUP** Array not only helps to confront issues concerning the well being of marine wildlife and humans. It also presents solutions to other issues relating to ocean pollution such as transportation costs. Currently, plastic waste is causing up to 13 billion dollars in damage annually. The collection of plastic and other debris would reduce the costs for the shipping and transport sector. In addition, it can provide a possibility for further recycling and reuse of various resources. This provides an incentive for companies to make profits from extracting and "mining" ocean waste as a resource. In return, it encourages recycling, and most importantly sustainability.

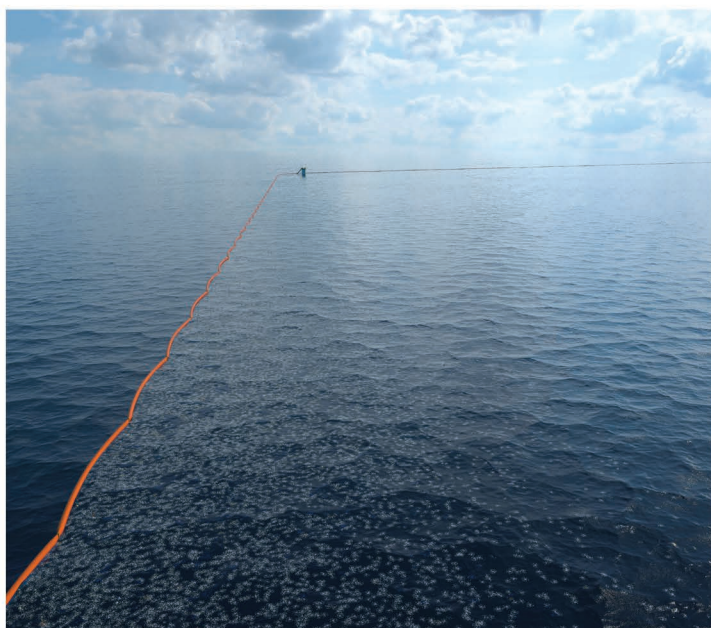
**SLAT'S INITIATIVE AND** determination to clean up the oceans promotes new thinking and pushes forward solutions concerning environmental issues. He challenges solidified contemporary pessimism regarding the clean up of the oceans and introduces new aspects that prove beneficial for society as a whole.

Future policymaking will hopefully promote and deploy his ideas and ways of confronting the problems caused by ocean pollution. In the end, Slat's grass-roots movement will inevitably change the perception and understanding of the oceans for the greater good. ●

**By:** Fredrik Blix

**Photos:** TheOceanCleanup.com

*The Ocean Cleanup Array, gathering floating trash over vast distances.*



# WHAT WE TALK ABOUT WHEN WE TALK ABOUT POPULISM

**As one of the most used political labels today, the serious nature of populism has been all but squeezed out; the time has come to restore its power. Tobias Adolfsson explores the concept for Utrikesperspektiv.**

Just like 'democracy' is a word that can refer to almost anything that one deems good in society, 'populism' has, in the last couple of years, come to be a label that can be applied to whatever one deems bad. This hollowing out of the meaning of the word threatens to render it useless. As political landscapes are changing at an ever-increasing pace, the need for proper analytic tools that can be used to understand and assess the dangers that this could bring along grows mutually. This is why the concept of populism has to be stipulated.

**A COMMON CONCEPTION** of populism is the opportunist one: a populist is a turncoat that adapts to whatever the opinion of the majority is and uses it to gain power. To some extent this is true, but this is also to some extent true of all politics, and this is a good thing; the cornerstone of democracy is that the people rule through representatives that implement their wishes. To quote Jean-Marie Le Pen, former chairman of the French Front National: "Populism takes into account the opinion of the

people. Does the people have a right to express their opinion in a democracy? If that is the case, then I am a populist." This should not be the case; this is the kind of rhetoric that serves to defuse the seriousness of the allegation. The same goes for many other definitions of populism, including that it is the giving of simple solutions to complex problems, that it is the appeal to the emotions and fears of the public, and that it is anything outside of the established political order. It is not that populism does not often contain these elements, but they are not enough to make a useful analytic tool. This is because they, as well, are all common to politics in general, rather than to populism in particular.

**So WHAT IS** a useful definition, which can help us understand the situation we are facing? Princeton Professor of Politics, Jan-Werner Müller has extensively tried to discern the central meaning of populism. What he has found central is that populism always entails a moralistic perspective of the demos, the people, which is to say that there is a 'morally pure' or 'authentic' part of the population that really are 'the people'. These, always regular, honest, hard-working people, are in opposition with, or even threatened by, something like corrupt political elites, who only work to remain in power, or a leeching lower class that holds them from pros-

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*Left: More than any other movement in history, the Nazi's distinguished the 'authentic' people from the totality, and followed that distinction to its extreme.*

perity. The authentic people are then represented by a leader who claims that he or she exclusively can identify the *volonté general*, the general will, of the homogenous group and then put it to action. Müller finds examples in Viktor Orbán, who, after losing the Hungarian elections in 2002, delegitimized the loss with the claim that "the nation cannot be in opposition" or, after winning the election in 2010, changed the constitution to ensure staying in office despite losing popularity, and Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who, in response to the massive protests against the building of a mall in Gezi Park in 2013, denounced the protesters as not being "real Turks."

**THE CENTRAL ARGUMENT**, then, is that populism is, firstly, the antagonistic approach of pitting the 'authentic' people against 'evil' elites, lower classes, minorities or the like. Secondly, it is also necessarily anti-pluralistic, which is to say that, whatever the empirical reality, the populists deny the very idea of legitimate opposition, and that different groups can have the right to be a part of the political process. The notion that there actually is a moral dimension to the composition of the demos is diametrically opposed to the liberal foundation of democracy, which dictates social equality for all individuals; it is a reverting back to a clan-like perception of the state. In this way populism

is incompatible with democracy itself, and only if seen as such can we properly analyze the movements or parties labelled thus.

**WHEN APPLYING THIS**, conditions usually are not this clear. Taking Sweden Democrats as an example, their roots lie in the 'Preserve Sweden-Swedish' movement, which embraces the type of ideology that makes moral distinctions between different groups of people.

**HOWEVER, FOR A** while now they have fought to leave these ideas behind, and rather make the claim that economic motives are the basis for their wanting to restrict immigration. One must take care to note that, if this was all that there was to it, this would not be populist. Are they, then, or are they not, populists today? One must understand the definition as an ideal type against which one can compare reality, and so a specific example will have some but not all the populist traits. With this in regard, the historical remnants, if nothing else, definitely cause enough similarities between the Sweden Democrats and populism to get them across the line.

**HOPEFULLY THIS NOTION**, that populism, rather than an appeal to the people, is a moral defining of the people, and that this in itself is undemocratic, can help bring clarity to the political predicament of today. Perhaps now, when we hear the word, we can, rather than shrug our shoulders like Le Pen, understand that we are dealing with something that might bring about disastrous consequences, and react accordingly. ●

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**“ POPULISM  
ALWAYS ENTAILS  
A MORALISTIC  
PERSPECTIVE OF  
THE DEMOS**

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# Education at stake

## Teachers' movement in Hungary

**Hungarian teachers' frustration with the system they are forced to work in has been bottling up for years. Now it has reached its breaking point, as teachers protest and schools are on strike to push for change in the education system.**

**S**o, what is so problematic about the current system to generate such a collective outrage? The most prominent problems concern centralization, unreasonable workloads for both teachers and students, infrastructural problems, increased segregation and the lack of consultation with experts that could have prevented the chaos.

**IT STARTED WITH** the new National Curriculum released in 2012, including policy changes and teaching guidelines, which faced heavy criticism from the beginning. Besides the increased workload, the curriculum also focuses too much on factual knowledge instead of independent thinking and problem-solving. With nationalization of the school book market, free choice of teaching material was not an option either. A new central institution, KLIK (full form in Hungarian language), was also formed the following year to operate public schools. This institution was formerly run by local governments to ensure financial stability and transparency. During its short life however, the institution had already become highly indebted, and is challenged with a complicated administration process

that has resulted in delays in school supplies, including basics as chalk and toilet paper.

**TO AVOID BEING** run by KLIK, many schools choose to be maintained by the church instead. Church-run schools are private and unlike public schools, can select their students through a self-designed application process. This has led to an increase in segregation, creating a division between white, middle-class children going to the private institution and underprivileged, mainly Roma children being stuck in state-owned schools in regions with significant Roma populations.

**STUDIES EXAMINING THE** famously high quality of the Finnish education system show that its success lies in the autonomy of teachers, fewer hours of teaching and providing equal opportunity regardless of one's socio-economic background. It seems surreal that Hungary has been doing the exact opposite in every aspect.

**AS A RESULT,** an open letter was written towards the end of 2015 by a high school in Eastern Hungary, a desperate cry to change the current education policy immediately. Drawing attention to the everyday problems teachers face, it emphasizes how the sudden changes are in fact "experimenting on children" and call for reforms based on "societal and professional consent". Soon after, a movement was built around the letter, with over 950 joining schools and



attracting thousands of supporters. The Tanítanék (“I would like to teach”) movement listed 12 demands, such as free choice of school material, desegregation, and dialogue which includes incorporating the opinions of unions and other professional organisations for policy changes.

**AFTER PROTESTS EARLIER** this year, a major demonstration was held on 15th March for the “freedom of education”. In a speech given by István Pukli, a school principal and leading figure of the movement, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán was urged to apologise to the teachers for humiliat-

## “MORE THAN 200 SCHOOLS JOINED THE ACT OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

ing them in the past years. If not, they would organise strikes. Orbán briefly commented on the demand, saying that he “thought it was a joke”. About two weeks later, more than 200 schools joined in an act of civil disobedience. Participating schools did not hold the first class that day. Instead, teachers, students and supporters demonstrated in front of their school buildings. As the termination of KLIK was announced shortly after, it seems that the protests did have some effect. Schools however would still be maintained by the state, therefore it is hard to see whether this policy would bring significant change.

**SO FAR, NEGOTIATIONS** between the government and teachers’ unions have not begun. The Ministry of Human

Resources, responsible for education, invited representatives of the movement for a roundtable discussion which they refused, stating that they did not consider this an eligible platform for real negotiations as it lacks policy makers and experts. This means that more strikes are scheduled until the end of the school year to push for real negotiations.

**HUNGARY HAS NOT** been short on massive demonstrations since the Orbán-led Fidesz party won elections in 2010 and 2014. Rapid and major changes to the constitution, media law, and increasing tuition fees in higher education among others have resulted in thousands protesting on the streets, each ending with different success rates. One of the most pressing issues is the state of the public health system which faces severe underfinancing and dreadful conditions. In 2015, Mária Sándor, a nurse, urged healthcare workers to work in black clothing for a weekend to draw attention to the critical state of the system. It grew out to be a movement as well, but one year and many demonstrations later, the “nurse dressed in black” said she was giving up her fight. For the teachers’ next strike in April though, she called healthcare workers to dress in black again showing solidarity with teachers. Many teachers and students wore black clothes too to express support in exchange. As the movements of different social groups start to intertwine with and possibly empower each other, they hopefully stand a better chance to evoke concrete action for change, for once. ●

**By:** Krisztina Judit Tóth

# THE MEKONG SUB-REGION

*Economic Development*

*or*

*Geo-strategic Competition?*

**The Mekong sub-region has become a new geostrategic site of the great powers' battle for influence through their new strategic brands of 'development cooperation frameworks.' The burden is on the smaller states to carefully reap the benefits for the socio-economic well-being of their people.**

**T**he Mekong River is one of the most resource-rich areas on Earth. It is a major source of livelihood for over 70 million people in

six countries. These countries are referred to as 'CLMVT' and include the less developed Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam plus Thailand, a medium-sized middle income country. Finally, China, a rising power, benefits directly from the region. The Mekong is a key water lane for trade and tourism. However, its significance goes beyond this physical dimension to include political and economic spheres.

**DURING THE COLONIAL** period, the imperialist expansion of the French Indo-Chinese and British colonial powers

*Photo: Akuppa John Wigham*



encroached on The Mekong. In World War II, the region witnessed the Japanese imperial expansion under the so-called 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty sphere', which caused historical wounds that still traumatizes people today. The Cold War saw the region become an ideological battleground between Western Democracy and Communism. Fortunately, the Post-Cold War era has provided impetus for a comparatively peaceful regional order, allowing the sub-region to develop economically and socially. However, the area surrounding Mekong is still recognized as one of the poorest regions in the World.

**UNDER THE DEVELOPMENT** paradigm, both regional and extra-regional great powers have rushed to pursue their political and economic agenda through cooperation and provision of aid assistance to small size nations in the region. The proliferation of regional development cooperation frameworks and institutions is symptomatic of this strategy.

**GIVEN ITS PROXIMITY** to the sub-region, and the importance of the region to their national interest, China has actively engaged in the development of the Mekong sub-region as an upper riparian state - acting as a big brother. China takes a pragmatic approach by emphasizing the financing of infrastructure development projects in terms of 'construction and upgrading', both through bilateral ties and through multilateral frameworks. Due to long standing diplomatic ties, the CLMVT countries are the largest recipients of the Chinese bilateral financial assistance for infrastructure development. The projects, for example, include railroads and highways leading to China, development close to the Chinese border, and energy with construction of hydro-electric dams.

**THE LOGIC THAT** underlines China's support for the region's development lies in its domestic gains: the development imperative of their Southern provinces, energy supplies for domestic consumption, market access, and export of Chinese commodity goods to the neighboring markets. Through multilateral channels, China also supports the development project under the umbrella of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). They are active stakeholders in projects, co-financing and providing trade concessions to the countries. The two-prong approach provides China with economic leverage, since infrastructure projects easily translate into concrete economic development and, of course, dependence. In this case, the efficient transport system has increased the volume of trade, which has benefitted the people as well. This economic interdependence has transformed into political leverage - providing China with an opportunity to manipulate its neighbors.

**JAPAN IS ALSO** a core contributor to the economic development of the Mekong sub-region, especially through the ADB. The significance of the region's development goes further back in the case of Japan, since well-connected infrastructure in Southeast Asia provides large benefits to Japanese overseas factories and firms. In light of China's recent expansion and quest for regional dominance, Japan asserted a cooperative development framework in 2007 known as the Mekong-Japan Cooperation to give them leverage to re-engage with CLMVT countries.

**SOUTH KOREA HAS** also found economic opportunity in the sub-region. They proposed their own version of a cooperative framework called the Mekong-Republic of Korea Cooperation in 2011 through their 'Cooperation Fund.' This has similar emphasis on infrastructure development - in line with the ASEAN Framework.

**INFLUENTIALLY, THE US**, as well, has been involved in the Mekong since the beginning of the Cold War. While countering communist insurgency in the region and preserving liberal democracies, the US was actively involved in the formation of the first Mekong regional institution: The Mekong Committee, established in 1957. Its members included Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and, at the time, South Vietnam. During the Cold War the institution fell into disrepair; however, it reemerged as the Mekong River Commission (MRC) in 1995. Its new members included only the lower stream states of CLVT countries. More recently, under the 'Pivot' rebalancing policy, the US stressed the need to launch the cooperative Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI) in 2009 showing its renewed engagement with the region. Later in 2011, Friends of Mekong Initiative (FMI) was launched. The interesting thing about this push was that China, as a Mekong country, is the only one not included in these frameworks. However, the US approach has taken a different path with a people-oriented approach focusing on human security and human development addressing trans-boundary issues.

**AT THE HEART** of the great powers' fierce competition, and their active commitments to the Mekong sub-region development, are the great benefits for the riparian CLMVT states. China's emphasis is on 'hard' infrastructural development by financing the transport infrastructure development for the purpose of trade benefits and mobility. While the US approach supports the 'soft' infrastructure development in human security issues and institutional building through training and knowledge-sharing, as well as improvements on local standards of living. It is clear that the US places emphasizes on the negative side of Chinese economic, especially environmental side effects from Chinese dam construction. Alternatively, Japan strongly supports the

'missing links' infrastructure projects while South Korea lays ground work along existing frameworks of ASEAN Integration.

## “THE CAREFUL MANAGEMENT OF THE SITUATION YIELDS GREAT BENEFITS FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE MEKONG SUB-REGION

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**WHAT IS LEFT** under this discussion is how the CLMVT countries continue to reap the benefits from competitive development cooperation schemes and frameworks. It is not the traditional balance of power which the states should be pursuing, but the 'balance of influence' in which the states should carefully share the riches with the great powers with equality. In fact, the act of balancing influence can be seen in their insistence to co-chair all the frameworks proposed by the great powers, giving them the leverage to oppose any ideas that would threaten the interests of the Mekong CLMVT countries and jeopardize peace and prosperity of the region. If successful, the careful management of the situation yields great benefits for the people of the Mekong sub-region nations. ●

**By: Varintorn Thanvichien**

A white plastic fork is lying vertically on a sandy beach. The fork is covered in sand and small debris. The background consists of sand, dry leaves, twigs, and some green plants.

# Why not eat it?

## Edible cutlery

**Bakey's edible cutlery, one man's effort to revolutionize the future's waste management and food security concerns by bringing about a radical shift in approaching the food-water-energy nexus. Utrikesperspektiv contacted Bakey's founder Narayana Peesapaty to find out more.**

*Background: renee\_mcgurks/flickr*

**M**ounds of garbage, unclean water and rising temperatures are just a few of the most common problems in the world's largest cities. Rising rural depopulation and unsustainable use of natural resources, coupled with indiscriminate consumption of plastic has created this problem.

**INDIA, ONE OF** the world's most populous countries, is at the heart of this mess. Having to feed over a billion people, the agricultural sector in the country is dominated by rice, wheat, sugarcane and pulses production; rice being the staple diet of people in southern and eastern India and wheat in the western and northern parts. India is the second largest producer of rice in the world, accounting for almost 20% of the world's total production. Dominated by rice paddy, the agricultural sector in India accounts for almost 90% of the total annual water consumption. Due to such high water demand, irrigation for these crops is mainly dependent on the annual monsoon, thus resulting in extremely risky circumstances of drought and subsequent insufficient annual yield. Over the last two years, India has faced drought and reduced rainfalls, leading to the exploitation and resulting depletion in the quality of surface and groundwater for the irrigation of these crops.

**AS OF APRIL** 2016, only two months into the year's summer, the Ministry of Earth Sciences has predicted that this could be the warmest summer in a century for India. Making headlines alongside this news are the astounding figures of waste generation in Indian cities. It has been reported by the Central Pollution Control Board that in 60 Indian cities, daily plastic generation has risen to over 15,342 tonnes. As per a statement given by the country's Environment Minister to Times of India newspaper, 9205 tonnes of the plastic

waste generated gets recycled while more than 6000 tonnes of this waste remains uncollected, discarded in open heaps along sidewalks and streets all over these cities. This waste remains unattended for days; once collected, it is disposed in municipal landfills and left untreated. Due to the low quality of safeguards maintained in landfills in India, toxins from degrading materials reacting with plastics, metals and other chemicals present in this waste seeps into the ground, polluting the soil and eventually ground water.

**SET IN THIS** backdrop, and determined to make a difference, is Mr. Narayana Peesapaty and his internationally recognized edible cutlery. Mr. Peesapaty is a ground water and agriculture researcher by training and practice, based in the city of Hyderabad, India. He has recently established himself as an entrepreneur, and has stepped into the manufacturing sector determined to bring about a change tending to more sustainable practices in industry and in people's lives.

**“BAKEYS  
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**MR. PEESAPATY'S COMPANY** Bakey's, founded in 2011, produces cutlery that can be eaten after use. His products are made using a specific proportion of ground sorghum, rice, wheat and combined with hot water. The company produces spoons and forks in a variety of flavors such as sweet, plain and savory. In order to cater to a broader clientele, the cutlery is also being made using other millets such as ragi or finger millet, barley, corn and soy, to make them gluten free. Bakey's claim that their cutlery adds to the meal by being a high protein supplement, providing nutrition equivalent to sorghum roti (an Indian flat bread).

**THE DOUGH, ONCE** prepared, is molded and baked hard to ensure that the cutlery does not melt while being used in liquid food. Abiding by their mission, Mr. Peesapaty confirms that there is no waste generated even during production as the broken spoons are reused in the main mixture. Although the products are currently being wrapped and sold in plastic packaging material, Mr. Peesapaty has confirmed that all the cutlery being produced in their new manufacturing facility will be wrapped in paper packaging material and further research will go on into finding the most appropriate packaging mate-

rial that preserves the integrity of the product while being biodegradable and environmental friendly.

**THE COMPANY'S WEBSITE** explains the main motivation behind this innovation is to reduce the amount of non-biodegradable waste going into landfills. They explain that the cutlery, if not consumed, can be discarded as they will naturally decompose in about three to four days. They go on to explain that choosing sorghum as the main ingredient was because it needs over 60 times less water than rice to grow. In his interview with business-standard.com, Mr. Peesapaty talks about how his product has the potential to create the much needed market force for transitioning to the production of millets and grains besides rice, thus preventing soil degradation and high water demand that comes along with paddy cultivation.

**BAKEY'S HAS RUN** two extremely successful crowdfunding campaigns hosted by Ketto and Kickstarter with the main aim of spreading awareness regarding their product and the need for a paradigm shift and to be more sustainable in their product design and production. Bakey's currently has a production capacity of 50,000 spoons per day. Mr. Peesapaty is in the process of upgrading this to over

**Background:**  
Sorghum crop in a field.

**Photo:** Bakey's edible cutlery displayed with spices.

300,000. He confirms that the current orders are over three or four times their production capacity and are from all over the world. He is also in the process of diversifying his production line to include chopstick, coffee stirrers, soup spoons, desert spoons, forks, bowls, and similar products to meet this varied demand. Although these products will initially be exported and shipped, he stresses that “we see no sense in using our food grains converting them into utensils and creating food insecurity. We would be setting up production facilities overseas. To reduce the costs, we would be working with locally available raw materials such as oats, barley, corn, soy, rye, etc.”

**THE WORLD’S PLASTIC** production was 311 million tonnes in 2014, estimated to triple by 2050. With landfills at over-capacity and improper management practices increasing at alarming rates, radical change need to take place in main consumer product industries. India alone produces 120 billion pieces of plastic utensil waste annually. Innovative ideas to meet this rising demand sustainably, such as edible cutlery, need to be nurtured and promoted to ensure the safeguarding of innovative capacities paving the way to a more sustainable future. ●

By: Krithi Venkat



Photo: Bakey's

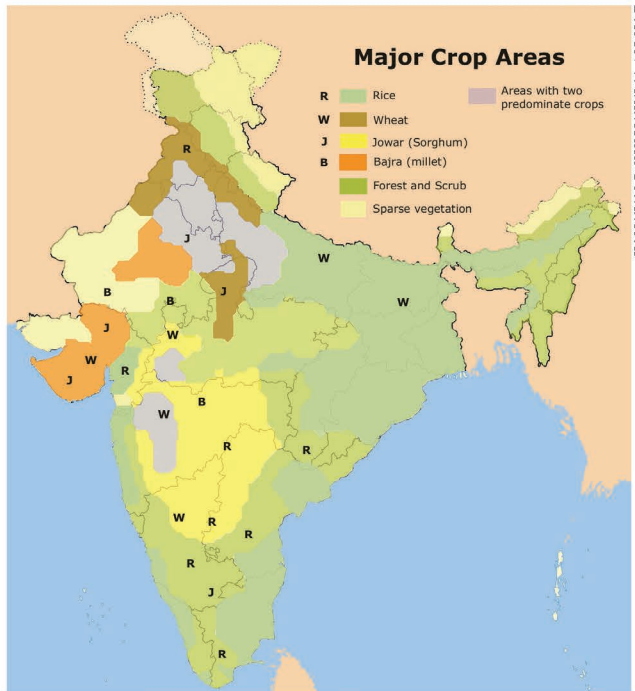


Photo: Wikimedia Commons



Photo: Bakey's



Photo: Metropolico.org

## GRASSROOTS MOVEMENT = GOOD?

**Is a grassroots movement always a good thing? Exploring deeper shows that civic movements could also be xenophobic, racist and chauvinistic. A sadly successful example is the German, PEGIDA: “Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident” Movement.**

**F**ounded in Dresden in October 2014, PEGIDA started as a closed Facebook-group. From 20th of October, 2014 onwards, demonstrations under the name of PEGIDA have been held every Monday in Dresden – with rocketing numbers of participants and quickly spreading to cities all over the country. However, while crowds in other places never exceeded several hundreds, Dresden’s PEGIDA reached its peak in January 2015 when 25,000 people took part. These days the rallies

usually do not reach more than 2,000-3,000 people.

PEGIDA’s POSITIONS AND claims are mostly formulated through the organizer’s speech on the rallies. Concretely originating in a protest against cruelties of the so-called Islamic State and communal asylum policies in Dresden, the movement quickly became a melting pot for all kinds of establishment, rejecting, xenophobic, chauvinistic, racist, and islamophobic ideologies. The topics of conversation include asylum and immigration policy, domestic security and direct democracy. Political correctness (i.e. language criticism and feminist gender politics) is mostly rejected as ‘ban of thought’ and their foreign policy ideas take a mostly pro-Russian stance and reject EU-sanctions. These rather concrete areas grew and blossomed on a rich ground of poten

tially right-wing populist, politically apathetic, disappointed citizens – on a diffuse feeling of ‘Now it’s enough’.

**PEGIDA OFFICIALLY PUBLISHED** a program. This however only consists of 19 points which present very general and moderate claims. The more extreme and crude ideologies appear in speeches, posters, the members chanting and flag symbolisms. Utterances and demands are very diverse in nature, ranging from hostility toward the media (‘state propaganda’), toward political correctness in language, and of course the fear of domination of Islam and immigrants from which traditional German values and culture need to be protected. Supporters and members are highly reluctant to speak to any kind of media which are malignly considered as ‘Lügenpresse’ (lying press) – a term with a long history of attacking media of the political opponent and used very eagerly by the Nazis.

**THE VARIETY OF** claims is wide and

shows the movement’s diffuse nationalistic and prejudiced background. Rage against ruling elites in politics and media and against the mainstream are catalyzed in these topics – in the supporters interpretation, a social movement for preserving peace in Germany and Europe.

**ONE OF THE** slogans chanted on the rallies has a special history. During the Peaceful Revolution in the GDR in 1989, also a grassroots initiative with demonstrations every Monday, ‘Wir sind das Volk’ became the central symbol for the violent-free social movement resulting in Germany’s reunification. Hence, PEGIDA is exploiting its positive nationalist connotations. Also, it plays on the idea of basic democracy, in their eyes a regaining of power to the people – just that the ‘we’ would apparently not really include everybody. But who is this ‘we’ strolling through Dresden every Monday?

**SURVEY DATA SHOWS** that the average

*PEGIDA demonstration in Amsterdam.*



*Photo: Guido van Nispen*



PEGIDA-participant is male, middle-aged, non-religious and from Saxony. Surprisingly however, he comes from the bourgeois middle-class with a slightly above average income and has a good education (one third with an academic degree). Eventually it is a movement of outrage about a generalized political and media elite nourishing from ethnocentric protest against a perceived 'left-green mainstream' in the establishment. PEGIDA channels a diffuse dissatisfaction. A certain cultural way of living is constructed as being under attack from inside and outside, which ends in a patriotic movement of rage and protest.

**CLASSIC DEFINITIONS** AND explanations of social movements usually focus on 'positive' forms of civil disobedience or bottom-up protest initiatives: progressive, emancipatory, rather left. The PEGIDA phenomenon thus shows the 'bad' or 'dirty' civil society: citizen participation promoting nationalistic xenophobia and intolerant misanthropy. The central aspect of islamophobia (in their title), rather a form of general racism, constructs a situation of attack against

which our traditional European way of life and values must be defended. Interestingly, in Dresden around 0.4% of the population are Muslims.

**A PERSPECTIVE ON** PEGIDA as a grass-roots initiative 'for peace' sheds light on the constructed-ness of alleged Islamic domination in Europe. PEGIDA's self-proclaimed peacefulness is used as a justification of oppressive politics and ideologies. Positive notions of peace and democracy are used as façades for wrongly legitimizing intolerance and exclusion.

**PEGIDA IS NOT** an isolated phenomenon. It has branches all over Germany and Europe and there are similar or even more radical organizations like the English Defence League or Soldiers of Odin. They perfectly demonstrate that not every bottom-up social movement standing 'for peace' is favorable. ●

**By:** Philipp Seufferling

# SEARCHING FOR THE AYOTZINAPA STUDENTS: 18 MONTHS ON

In 2014, a group of students heading for a protest were abducted by local police and unidentified masked men. The Mexican government claims the students' bodies were found murdered, but activist organizations across the Americas and the world dispute this.



Photo: Jorge Mejía Peralta

One and a half years have passed since the night when 43 students were abducted by local police in Ayotzinapa in the state of Guerrero, Mexico. Since then, a series of events have highlighted the severe state of the country in terms of human rights violations, impunity, and corruption. The case of Ayotzinapa is a story of 43 student activists whose whereabouts are still unknown; of a determined people's movement for justice and a government's desperate attempts at obscuring its complicity in what Amnesty International calls "one of the worst human rights tragedies" in the

country's modern history.

**THE AYOTZINAPA RURAL Teacher's College** was founded after the Mexican revolution in an effort to guarantee higher education in rural areas, and has a long tradition of activism and critique of the government. On September 26th 2014, a group of young teacher students from the school were on their way to the town of Iguala, 90 miles away. They occupied five public buses in order to protest the discrimination against rural teachers. Before heading back to Ayotzinapa, police forces and unknown masked men stopped the buses and fired at the students. Six people died

and 43 were abducted. The mayor of Iguala, José Luis Abarca, has been accused of ordering the arrest, as the students were reportedly heading to Abarca's wife María de los Ángeles Pineda Villa's mayoral campaign meeting.

**THE GOVERNMENT HAS** claimed to have found the students' burned bodies in a garbage dump nearby. However, this story is widely dismissed due to several inconsistencies highlighted by various independent research bodies as well as human rights organizations. While the government's investigation describes the event as a local conflict between drug cartels assisted by a corrupt police patrol, evidence indicates influences from significantly higher levels of government. The Interdisciplinary Group of Experts Ayotzinapa (GIEI), an independent research group assigned to the case by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, exposed various severe problems with the official

investigation in a report from September 2015. Apart from the fact that it was technically impossible to identify the bodies found at the dump, there were reported cases of torture in official interrogations, destruction of evidence such as film recordings and communication between authorities, as well as the forbidding researchers from interviewing members of the military. Furthermore, the team found that police and state monitored the location of the students on the day of the disappearance, and witnesses' accounts point towards a thoroughly planned and coordinated operation by several levels of police force.

**THE CONFLICT BETWEEN** the state authorities and the GIEI around the investigation intensified in the beginning of April, as the attorney general of Mexico leaked confidential information of the independent investigation, thereby violating the agreement between the

Photo: Sapdiel Gómez Gutiérrez





Photo: Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos

two. At a press conference on April 6th in Mexico City, the GIEI declared their research to be heavily obstructed, stating that “there are sectors that want to block the investigation, focus the discussion on the garbage dump once again, break up the file, ignore other issues of the investigation or even try to close the case”.

**ACCORDING TO AMNESTY** International, more than 27 000 people have disappeared in Mexico in the last ten years. President Enrique Peña Nieto has received heavy critique for the country’s growing numbers of torture cases, as well as its extremely dangerous environment for journalists. Given these facts, the impunity around the Ayotzinapa case is perhaps of little surprise. What seems somewhat remarkable however, is the government’s continued persistence in hiding information and neglecting such clearly exposed faults, despite the growing critique from various directions.

**STARTING WITH A** protest of 50,000 people in Mexico City one month after the disappearance, a broad solidarity movement has grown strong both in Mexico and internationally. Since 2015, parents and colleagues of the disappeared students have travelled through South America, United States and Europe to shed light upon the impunity and mobilize an international demand for truth. While Peña Nieto is currently about to embark on a series of country visits to Europe during April and May, the voices of what appears to be an increasingly unified international movement continues to condemn his administration. The words “Vivos se los llevaron, vivos los queremos” (“They took them away alive, we want them alive”) continue to echo in protests extending far beyond the borders of Mexico. ●

By: Lovisa Prage

*As part of an investigation of the Ayotzinapa case, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights pays a visit to the students’ school, where parents and students have gathered to give their testimonies.*

Background photo: MadriCR (Flickr)

## Fight for or against feminism: the unfortunate counter effect of grassroots movements

The political struggle for which one thing is right can cause the opposite of a wanted result, through a reactionary response. Rickard Allreke Wählhammar dives into the subject by exploring reactions to feminism.



*Photo: Neal Jennings*

**A**s a student in Lund, it is easy to get stuck in the academic bubble that surrounds it. Every day we study and spend our time with people that study academic subjects and theories that would seem quite foreign to the people outside it. These include, ideas, concepts and politics about feminism, ethnicity, and environment and so on. The idea that feminists are anti-man and that men are being discriminated against, the concept that multiculturalism is a danger to our society, and not to mention the idea that Islam and most of its followers support terrorism are all common.

**A LOT** of students get involved in movements that are actively against the ideas mentioned above, to include, feminist groups and groups working with refugees and migration policy are numerous within the student life. It is easy to understand this reasoning: if we fight for a better world, the world will eventually become better. In other words, morally correct action leads to a desirable change. This line of thinking can however lead to the opposite result and the logic behind it can be quite clear. For instance, in order to work towards a more feminist society the biggest obstacle are those people who are actively against it.

**A GRASSROOTS STRUGGLE** should fundamentally be about changing the ideas of people or at least making sure that the general opinion does not sway from a desirable position. In order to do so, it is important to understand why people do not believe in what we do and the logic behind it. Moreover, I think it is important to ask if common grassroots action helps the cause that they work towards. An interesting example of this is the countermovement against feminism.

## “FOR THE WELL VERSED FEMINIST READING THIS, DO NOT GET ME WRONG

The anti-feminists or Men's Rights Activists (MRAs) are arguing that men are acutely the victims of today's society, where men have a disadvantage in custody cases. They are not recognized as victims of not-being-heard-as-victims of domestic abuse and are victims of the false rape accusations “epidemic”.

**AFTER READING FORUM** posts and articles from people who hold these ideas, it becomes pretty clear that they see themselves as victims of today's society. At some point, among all the poor arguments, there are some valid points. Points that are however, not a result of the man-hating feminists, but of the logical nature of the patriarchal society we live in. Most of the points they are bringing up are cases of men not fulfilling the discourse of being a man or cases where the discourse of manliness works against men. Weakness is, according to the patriarchal discourse, seen as a feminine trait, so an incident where a woman abuses a man goes against the societal roles of genders and can therefore (theoretically) be more difficult to take seriously. Taking care of children is also a feminine trait, in patriarchal discourse, so if it applies that men should be less likely to be given custody, all other factor equal.

**THE PREVIOUS LINE** can be seen as a theoretical description of a patriarchal discourse that might end up hurting men. For the well versed feminist reading this, do not get me wrong, women are being actively disenfranchised by these discourses; domestic abuse is still mostly towards women, the idea that men should be the sole caregiver of a divorce is quite modern and the terrifying idea that some people believe that false rape accusation are an epidemic demonstrates this. There is however, on a theoretical basis, an argument to be made that there are men who are victims and the feeling they have needs to be understood. There are also a lot of other aspects, but gender, that can get people structurally disenfranchised where class and people living in peripheral areas are important for this argument.

**IF ONE WERE** to look at the background of people that are antifeminist on a superficial level, the amount of working-class men from peripheral areas is striking. They seem to come from rural areas where the economic future looks grim. As a result, they have other barriers in society to overcome than an upper middle class woman in a major city. These men constitute a group of people who have to struggle against certain social structure too. It is here, where their relation to the movements mentioned earlier gets interesting.

**THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT** and similar movements, which for example work with refugees, are all about analyzing and working to destroy the power structures stratifying social groups. As a white middle class heterosexual man born close to Gothenburg, I can see that I have been privileged in most, if not all, ways but for people who are privileged in some ways (being a white man) and not in others (coming from an impover-

ished rural area), the rhetoric of these movements might come off as wrong. Saying that women are structurally disenfranchised, however true it is, and asking man to look in to the theory privilege when they might experience more disenfranchisement, can make them turn against them.

**MOST PEOPLE ARE** not academics, they do not necessarily read feminist theory. So when we talk about feminism, we usually understand that the gender divide is one of many and that feminists are working towards a more equal society on all levels. The people against it do not see it in this way: they see a group of privileged, often middle-class academics telling them that they are actually the privileged ones, even if this is not our intention. Somewhere along the line, the message got misunderstood and the active anti-feminists, the people who actively hate women and think that feminists are the opposite of them (therefore man-haters) are getting people to believe that their view on feminism is correct.

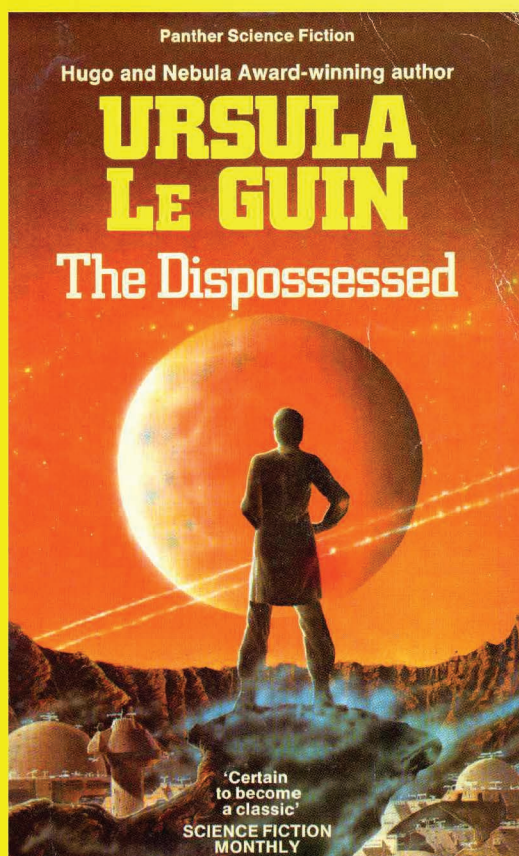
**LIVING IN THE** bubble that we do, it is easy to assume that people get what we are saying, and that the fight might lead to a better world. In reality, a counteraction has happened, and without understanding its mechanism it is easy to see that the harder we fight for what we think is right the stronger the reaction might be. There is a theory in political science that says that a topic being discussed does not change people's opinions, although only how the topic is being viewed. If a fight for feminism and other causes only make the backlash stronger it might be time to reconfigure our strategy, so that our actual point gets across and actual progression in society could come out from the struggle. ●

## REVIEW

DISPOSSESSED: AN AMBIGUOUS UTOPIA (URSULA K. LE GUIN, 1974)

# A Utopian Reality in Science Fiction

**Live your own utopia within a grassroots movement. Create new norms through bottom-up decision making, and communicate a political message that challenges the status quo of society. Doing things different can be frightening. Science fiction can take away fear through the visualisation of new imaginaries to create real alternatives.**



**T**he degrowth movement is a grassroots movement that calls for a radical socioecological transformation. This socioecological transformation should lead to an era of social justice and environmental sustainability. Societies should

be about human well-being and enhanced ecological conditions. This can be reached through downscaling of production, a focus on sufficiency instead of efficiency, cooperation and conviviality. Critics of the movement often argue that the alternative society they envision does not sound attractive, and will lead us on a path of decline into a backward society. To demonstrate different and take away the fear that the principles of degrowth do not necessarily lead to reduced freedom and dissolution of happiness they draw on science fiction utopias.

**IN 1974,** URSULA K. Le Guin wrote the science fiction novel *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia*. Utopias and science fiction have the power to critically assess current societal structures and to explore how alternative norms and values would be translated into reality. Therefore Le Guin's utopian literature in which she takes the reader to explore new worlds based on harmony, anarchy and communal ownership perfectly ties into degrowth's struggle for justice.

**THE DISPOSSESSED** TELLS the story of Shevek who grew up on Anarres the moon of Urras (simultaneously Urras is Anarres' moon it just depends on your standpoint). Anarres is a society that was established seven generations ago through a revolution in which it set itself free from the societal structures of Urras. That, according to them, are structures of inequality, exploitation and false illusions. Odo was the leader of the Anarasti revolution calling for justice. They challenged the societal structures of Urras but the powerful elite on Urras experienced them as dangerous and sent them to the moon to start their own community: Abbeney which means "Mind".

**ABOUT TWO HUNDRED** years later Shevek lives on Anarres. He is an exceptional physicist who works on *The Theory of Simultaneity*. Scientists on Urras are interested in his work and invite him to come over to the moon. This journey is not without danger as coming to Urras means that Shevek has to cooperate with the Urrasti while the Anarresti once swore to never get involved in their businesses again. Shevek decides to go, not to merely hand-over his scientific work but to establish brotherhood between Urras and Anarres.

**ONCE ON URRAS** he finds a society that has similar norms, values and societal organisation as the modern western society in which economic growth, consumption and material welfare are desirable and unquestioned. The Anarrasti, just as the degrowth movement, challenge these structures as they often go hand in hand with social inequality and ecological destruction. The freedom and beauty of these societies therefore are criticised as illusory and unsustainable.

**THE POLITENESS OF** the people on Urras comes therefore as a surprise to Shevek once he enters the moon. He even enjoys the comfort in his own luxury room. However, the more time he spends on Urras, the more he starts to dislike the society ruled by individualism and greed to live the dream of false freedom and unequal prosperity. He misses home, even though life on Anarres is much tougher than on Urras through natural shortages and its life of survival. He misses Anarres' norms and values.

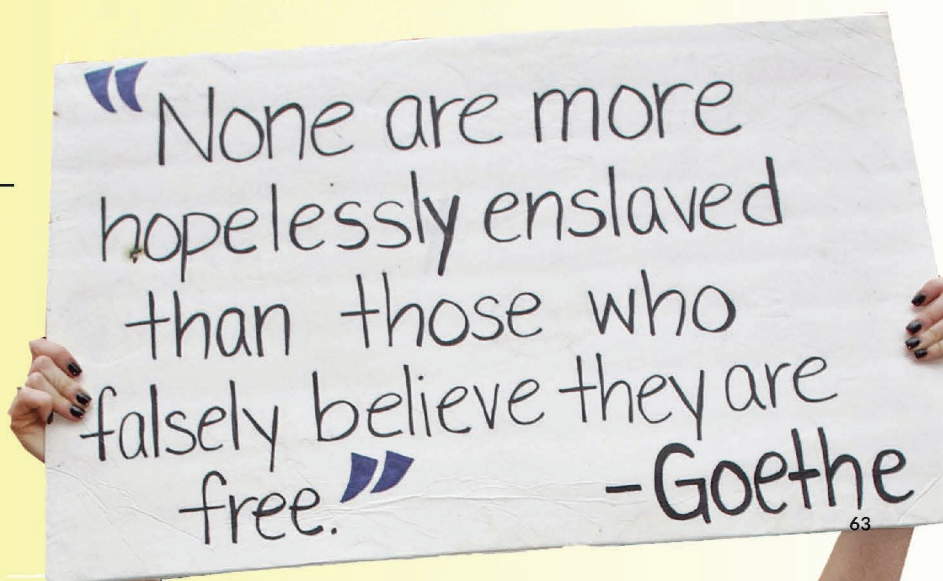
**LIFE ON ANARRES** is organised bottom-up through human solidarity, sharing, commons and mutual aid. There is no money and no exploitation, there is no excess and no inequality. A new generation Odonians on Urras feels inspired by the Odonian revolution 200 years ago and demonstrates for freedom. Shevek gets in touch to be in solidarity with them and their struggle and spoke the following words on the biggest demonstration ever since the Odonian revolution:

**ON ANARRES, SHEVEK** states, "[w]e have nothing but our freedom. We have nothing to give you but your own freedom. We have no law but the single principle of mutual aid between individuals. We have no government but the single principle of free association. We have no states, no nations, no presidents, no premiers, no chiefs, no generals, no bosses, no bankers, no landlords, no wages, no charity, no police, no soldiers, no wars. Nor do we have much else. We are sharers, not owners. We are not prosperous. None of us is rich. None of us is powerful. If it is Anarres you want, if it is the future you seek, then I tell you that you must come to it with empty hands." (Le Guin 1974)

**THE STORY OF *The Dispossessed*** shows us how science fiction can be a creative playground for grassroots movements to envision alternative societies. Envisioning of utopias might be the beginning of a new story of reality. ●

**By:** Petra van der Kooij

Sign held by an Occupy  
Wall Street protester in  
Zuccotti Park, New York  
on 28 September 2011.  
Photo: David Shankbone



# B



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