

# THE PERSPECTIVE

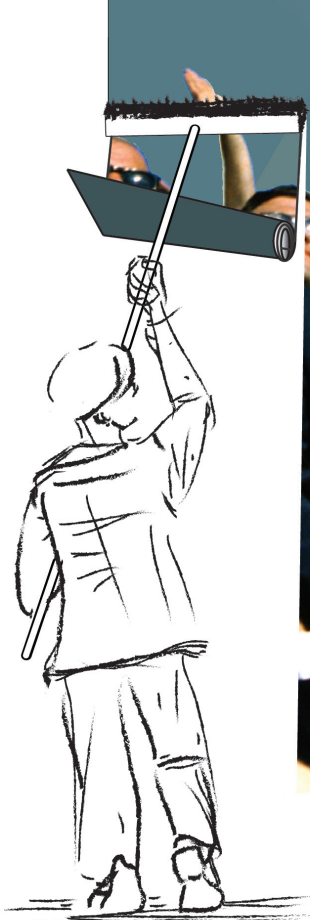
MAGAZINE

No 4

2017

## A Brighter Future

COMING SOON?



**ASSOCIATION OF  
FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

LUND EST. 1935

## EDITORS' NOTE

Winter has yet again come to Sweden and enclosed Lund in thick darkness. But fear not, another issue of the Perspective has arrived to comfort you as you hide away from the cold. As you light your candles to battle the darkness that winter has brought, the Perspective will contribute to the holiday spirits and bring you 'A Brighter Future'.

**THIS IS THE** time to shower the people around you with some extra love and show your fellow humans compassion. But how can someone even think about love and compassion in a world where everything seems to take a turn for the worse? To be honest, even our editorial team found the theme 'A Brighter Future' challenging. It's easy to become skeptical about the future, with news headlines featuring stories on global terrorism, conflicts, famine, poverty and political cleavages. After a while, you begin to lose hope. Are we even moving in the right direction?

**AFTER EXPLORING AND** discussing the theme for this issue, the Perspective team came to the conclusion that although we are indeed facing huge challenges, the end of the road is not as dark as it might appear to be. Hiding on the sidelines of frightening news stories are the human rights fighters and people taking action to ensure a

better future for all. There are several examples and stories to point at, showing that extraordinary development and human kindness can be found all around the world. And where there are struggles, new solutions constantly appear.

**IN THIS ISSUE**, you can read about the incredible global progress taking place, but also about today's issues and how they can be tackled. The Perspective team challenges you to look beyond the doom and gloom of the news; can we wish for A Brighter Future?

Have a good read!



ZIGNE EDSTRÖM & VIDE WASSBERG  
EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

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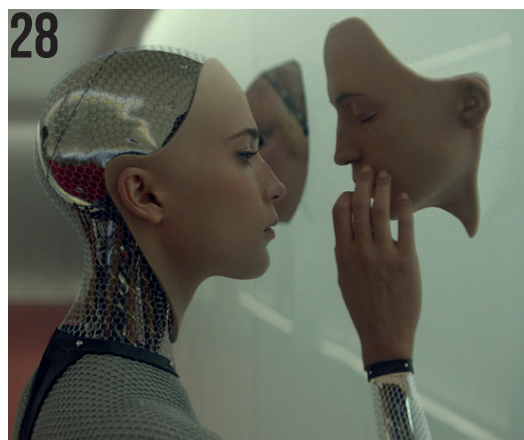
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## PRESIDENTS' ADDRESS

**AS WE SIT** in the office on a miserable, wet Friday afternoon, looking back on another year that has flown by, an address like this gives us a moment for reflection. Now that we have time to stop and think, we are so proud of what UPF and its members have achieved in the past year. Well, of course, we are going to say that, but that doesn't make it any less true.

**THERE WERE MANY** firsts, like the UPF Annual Ball, which is back by popular demand next year; our media committees - Radio, Webzine, and Magazine - merged to form The Perspective, and will soon be competing with Rupert Murdoch's empire for global influence; and the Career Committee's Networking Event, which (at the time of publishing) will have brought international organisations to the doorsteps of our ambitious members.

**BUT WITH THE** new came the familiar. Our lectures went from strength to strength, with the President of Croatia's visit in the spring paving the way for a series of high profile names this autumn. Every ambassador and their dog seemed to be queuing up for a chance to give a lecture, and we have been happy to oblige. The diverse array of lectures brought out the best in our marketing campaigns, with the help of our fantastic PR team which is now bigger than ever, with both an official photographer and a social media coordinator.

**So 2017 HAS** been great, but what is in store for 2018?

**NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS** have a bad reputation, but here's one we're sure to keep: we'll continue to do our best to spread knowledge and facilitate debate on foreign affairs. And if you would like to join us - keep your eyes peeled for next semester's Get Active Meeting!

**UNTIL THEN, ENJOY** some well-deserved rest over the winter holidays, and we'll see you again in January!



SEASON'S GREETINGS,

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OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN LAW



## About us

We are an experienced research and academic institution that has offices, programmes, and convening power covering 40 countries.

We combine evidence-based human rights research with direct engagement with key partners around the world to bring about human rights change for all.

We are named after Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who saved tens of thousands of Jews and other people at risk in Hungary at the end of World War II.

Want to know more about our work? Sign up for our newsletter at: [www.rwi.lu.se](http://www.rwi.lu.se)



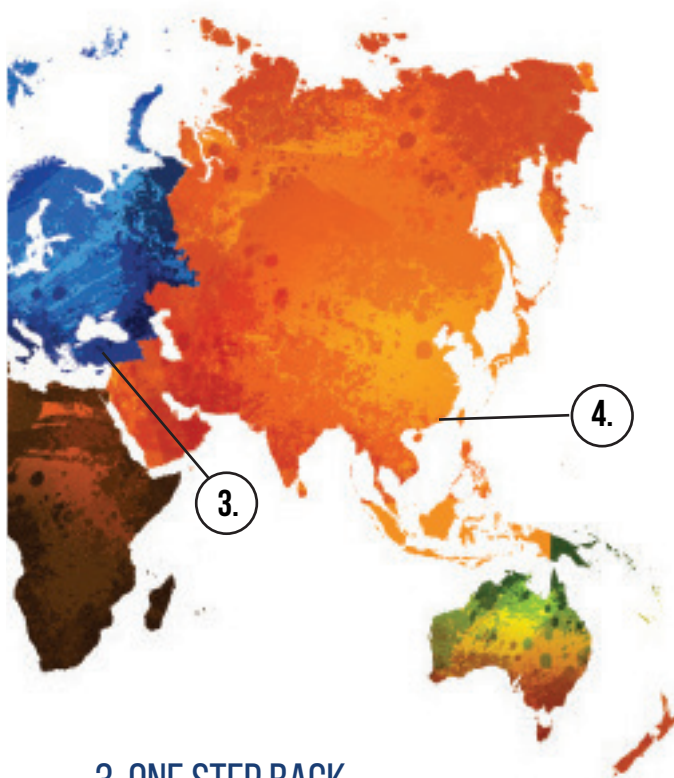
## 1. TROLLS AS GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

**R**ussia's attempts to influence the recent US elections through social media are well documented. Seemingly it is becoming more common for states to interfere in other sovereign state elections through the internet. However, an "on the Net" report from the US NGO Freedom House shows that out of the 65 countries surveyed, the governments of 30 countries around the world use a so-called "army of opinion shapers" in order to influence domestic politics online. Venezuela, one of the governments mentioned, employs people on the grassroots level to mimic public support of regimes in power to combat counter opinions, and advances anti-democratic agendas and crack-downs on social liberty through social media. Using bots, propaganda producers, fake news, and fake grassroots movements the practice enables governments to become self-supportive without any proper political debate. Distorting the domestic information landscape could have devastating effects on civil and democratic activism, in an environment where states produce their own support on what used to be public platforms. The survey further reveals that even in countries where the use of the internet is considered free, governments used "opinion shapers". Furthermore, only a few of the 30 countries using this practice were going through an election period at the time, showing that the tactic is used in order to withhold power, even outside sensitive political periods. ●



## 2. #DEADLINE

**S**ome say that being a journalist is becoming one of the most dangerous jobs in the world. Journalists face prosecution by authoritarian states, violence in areas affected by conflict and hate and threats online. Women and non-binary persons working within the media sector or as journalists can add sexual harassments to that list. After the social media campaign #metoo and social uproar from female and non-binary people against sexual harassments, it became evident that women within media are especially vulnerable. The witnesses of sexual harassment and outing of powerful men within media, protected by their financial or social status, has finally started to break the ice and shed light on a problem swept under the rug for too long. Women within media, and throughout the world, have had to endure being groped, belittled, harassed and sexually assaulted, seeing their testimonies being swept away or ignored or had their working status challenged or threatened were any charges would be pressed. Such incidents have been viewed as "part of the job" for too long. At the time of writing, 4084 journalists in Sweden are putting their foot down under the hashtag #deadline, showing solidarity to victims or sharing their testimonies. The message is clear: let's break up with sexism and sexual harassment once and for all. ●



### 3. ONE STEP BACK

**E**arlier this year, Germany and, most recently, Australia voted yes to same-sex marriage. However, while steps in the right direction have been taken, there have also been setbacks. Recently, Turkey's capital Ankara banned all public events related to LGBT issues. In a written statement on the 19th of November, Ankara's governor stated that the LGBT events could interfere with "public security" and were therefore banned. The governor's office declared that the ban would help to promote "public order, prevention of crime, general health, and morals." Homosexuality has been legal in Turkey since 1923. However, activists in the country say that members of the LGBT community are often exposed to widespread hostility and the country has one of the worst records of human rights violations against LGBT people in Europe. In response to the declaration, two gay rights groups in the country described the ban as "illegal, discriminatory and arbitrary," and organisations based in Ankara argued that it violated Turkey's constitution. They said that "in our country where discrimination and hate based on sexual orientation and gender identity are rampant, it is the duty of national and local administration to combat this discrimination and hate." ●

### 4. A POLITICAL (FOOTBALL) ARENA

**D**uring the football game between Hong Kong and Lebanon, fans of Hong Kong's national team erupted into loud booing during the Chinese national anthem, despite warnings from the Asian Football Confederation (AFC). As the anthem was announced, the boos started and increased in intensity when the first notes of "March of the Volunteers" were played. While booing, the fan covered their faces with scarves or wore masks or hats in order to obscure their identities. It has almost become a routine for fans to jeer at the anthem since the pro-democracy protests back in 2014. However, in October a new law was introduced whereby people who "disrespect" the anthem are punished with up to 15 days in jail. Since then, the seriousness of the issue has only increased as a more recent amendment, which would extend it to a maximum of 3 years, is now being considered. The law has become the latest issue for people in Hong Kong fearing a growing Chinese infringement on Hong Kong affairs. Cladia Mo, a Hong Kong politician and member of the Legislative Council, stated that if the law was to be enacted in the city, the frustration and anger would grow. ●

# THE POVERTY TOURIST

In this guest article, UPF member Isa Diamant discusses her moral dilemma regarding volunteer work.

I am 18 years old, on a backpacking trip through Central America. After a day in Spanish class in Oaxaca, Mexico, I am having a beer with Emily, a classmate of mine. When our month of school is to be over, she tells me, she is going to do some voluntary work at an orphanage school in Chiapas, another part of Mexico.

**FROM THE INTELLECTUALLY** enlightened cool kids at my high school, I have been taught that charity work at orphanages is harmful to the children in the long-term perspective, rather than actually being beneficial. Help to self-help is the modern kind of volunteering. For example, helping to educate teachers who will be around for a longer period of time is more beneficial than to do the short-term volunteering work, getting your pictures of the kids, and then move on to your next adventure. Voluntary work is, in one way, a commercialising of people in need, selling the imperialistic idea of being a saviour. The package includes: one month of saving the poor people of the world, and then you get to go back home with a good story to tell. Furthermore, quoting the self-declared experts at my high school, “if you really want to do volunteer work abroad, you should do it on a farm or a hostel where no children will feel abandoned when you leave”.

**EMILY IS TEN** years older than me, and have most certainly already been met by this kind of cynicism. She listens patiently to my moralising, monologic preaching before she responds. “You have got a point. Actually, most volunteer programs today are designed as self to self-help, and so is mine. But about harming local societies – is not farm work as harmful as orphanage work? When working for free on a farm or a hostel, you

are taking the job opportunity from local people who actually need the job and the money.”

**THE NEXT WEEK** we part ways – Emily is leaving for her work at the orphanage in Chiapas, while I leave for Puerto Escondido. The hostel I live at is owned by a German couple who spend their summers in Cologne and winters in Puerto Escondido. The hostel workers are young travellers like me who work for a couple of weeks before they continue their journeys. I am enjoying surf camps, mountain hikes, and beach parties, but Emily’s speech is echoing in the back of my head. What if this hostel would employ local people instead, who not only would get an income, but also pay taxes to their local community?

**THE POST COLONIAL** philosopher Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak states in an interview with Robert Young, whether white people can or should engage in battling racism, “either you do it as carefully as you do your own work or you don’t do it at all.” She says that you don’t have to look in a particular way or be from a specific place to take part in the fight against racism, but you need to invest as much time, education and engagement as if it were questions concerning your own personal life.

**MAYBE MY MORAL** dilemma regarding voluntary work could be answered in a similar way. Volunteer work needs to be meaningful to someone else than yourself. You have to invest more than just your spare time and if not, simply stay away from the charity business. Civil engagement is not some side business or vacation, but a full-time engagement. You have to put in an effort as big as you would do in your “real” career, or you can stay at home donating money to people who actually do. ●



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**WE WANT TO YOUR  
THOUGHTS, COMMENTS  
AND IDEAS!**



**E-MAIL YOUR SUGGESTION TO  
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# A CENTRED ALTERNATIVE

There are Swedes who are getting more and more tired of the traditional left and right blocks within Swedish politics. Voices have suggested the establishment of a centred coalition between the Social Democrats, the Centre Party, and the Liberal Party. With increased support for parties on both the far left and the far right, could Sweden, for the first time in over 60 years, end up with a cabinet representing both blocks?







THE LEFT PARTY



THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS



THE GREEN PARTY



THE CENTRE PARTY

**T**he two major parties on the left and right blocks in Sweden have, for the last three decades, been the Social Democrats and the Moderate Party, respectively, but Swedish politics have historically been vastly dominated by the former. Before the Alliance was formed by Sweden's centre-right parties in 2004, the Social Democrats had been in government for all but nine years since 1932. The Alliance won the elections in 2006 and 2010, now offering a clear alternative cabinet to the Social Democrats. However, with the Sweden Democrats gaining ground in recent years, potentially becoming the second largest party, the previously clear division between the two blocks is becoming more and more blurry, challenging the former order in Swedish politics. This could force the two centre parties, the Centre Party and the Liberal Party, to compromise with their old socialist antagonists.

**SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO** bear in mind before diving into the current mess of Swedish politics is that Sweden has negative parliamentarism. This means that when a party leader is asked by the Speaker of the parliament, Riksdagen, to form a cabinet, he or she can only do so if a majority of the members of parliament (MoP) choose not to vote against it. The potential Prime Minister does not, in other words, need support from the majority of the MoP's as long as he or she does not have the majority voting against him or her. Sweden is currently governed by a red-green coalition between the Social Democrats and the Green Party. Since the two parties only ended up with 138 seats in Riksdagen, the Alliance could, with its 140 seats, have voted against Stefan Löfven as Prime Minister

after the election in 2014. Löfven was, however, given passive support by the Left Party. The Alliance was aware of this situation and since the four parties were not ready to govern with the passive support of the Sweden Democrats, Löfven was able to form a relatively weak minority cabinet.

**HOWEVER, THE TWO** parties in the current red-green cabinet have together lost support since the election in 2014, according to recent polls. Even though the Moderate party, the major party in the Alliance, has lost a noteworthy amount of its support as well, the Alliance as a whole has not lost significant support. The Moderate party has, in addition, seemingly regained some popularity after Ulf Kristersson recently became party leader. The Social Democrats, who want to remain in their position of power, are therefore throwing flirting glances towards the other side of the table. Forming a cabinet between the three parties, or perhaps four if the Green Party is included, on the centre of the political spectrum could ensure Löfven a continuation as Prime minister. The threat to the Social Democrats historical dominance in Swedish politics is, as touched upon above, the Alliance, and Löfven may see an opportunity to create a crack in that cooperation. What is then the likelihood that the Centre Party and the Liberals would participate in a cabinet outside the Alliance?

**ARGUABLY, BOTH THE** Alliance and the current cabinet have reasons to be concerned. If Swedes were to vote today, the Green party and the Christian Democrats, would risk not making it over the 4 percent threshold necessary to be ensured seats in Riksdagen. Furthermore, the Sweden Democrats might vote against a centre-right cabinet unless



THE LIBERAL PARTY



THE MODERATE PARTY



THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS



THE SWEDEN DEMOCRATS

such a formation decides to cooperate with the nationalists – something that both the Centre Party and the Liberal Party clearly have refused to do. The two parties have, however, also promised not to allow another four years with a red-green cabinet. Obviously, the Sweden Democrats are creating some turbulence in Swedish Politics. With the far-left and far-right parties getting stronger, there are demands for a centred solution that would ultimately neutralise the extremes of both sides of the ideological spectrum.

**A CRITICAL QUESTION** remains – who would be Prime Minister in a centred coalition? If the coalition would be between the Social Democrats, the Centre Party, the Liberal Party, and potentially the Green Party, it is quite clear who has the upper hand in the negotiations – Stefan Löfven. Annie Lööf, the leader of the Centre Party, has nevertheless promised that she will not allow Stefan Löfven another term. So, what are then the other scenarios at hand? The parties to the right want to prevent Löfven from becoming Prime Minister at all costs, while the parties to the left want to avoid a right-wing cabinet. Both sides may just choose the less undesirable and accept a centre cabinet without the Social Democrats. In this scenario, Sweden would have a centre-liberal cabinet passively supported by the Social Democrats. But would it be acceptable with a cabinet that only represents about 15 percent of the Swedish voters? Probably not.

**HOWEVER, TAKING A** look at history – it has, de facto, happened before. The Social Democrats once accepted a liberal cabinet in order to create dismay between the parties to the right, and there-

by increasing their own chances of winning the following election. In 1978 Olof Palme, the then leader of the Social Democrats, allowed Ola Ullsten to become Prime Minister, forming a cabinet consisting solely of members of the then Liberal Party. However, the cabinet only lasted for a year. Perhaps Palme's strategy can provide Löfven with the inspiration to do something similar in the upcoming election?

**IF SWEDEN WAS** to end up with a centred cabinet – with or without the Social Democrats – after the election in 2018, there would, unquestionably, arise disagreements on several issues. A minority cabinet is, however, close to a rule in Sweden, something that has encouraged a culture of compromise in Swedish politics. Furthermore, and interestingly enough, a centred government could come close to forming a majority cabinet if the Social Democrats (and potentially the Green Party if they make it over 4 percent) are included. Looking at recent polls, some suggest that the parties of a centred cabinet could together get over 50 percent of the seats in Parliament, giving them the leverage needed to push away influence from the flanks.

**AT THE END** of the day, these are but vague speculations. It might appear as if the historical division between the left and right blocks is rooted deep in Swedish political practice. Nonetheless, it's worth discussing whether we are witnessing a shift in Swedish politics. If it's for the better or the worse, if we are looking at a brighter future or not, is in the eyes of the beholder. However, we can, hopefully, agree upon that these are interesting times. ●



# THE DAY I DROPPED ICE CREAM

## ON MY SHOES

*Photo: Unsplash*

Somewhere around 5 meters above me, a single sunbeam paints an isolated oval bright spot on the 500 years old stone floor. My slow steps echo between the high marble columns, the distant sounds of motorbikes and street music seem like mumbling from a world far, far away. This is a strange place, swallowing the roaring turmoil of the Italian capital, with walls so cool that I can almost feel a cold shiver running down my spine by just standing close to them. Doesn't it sound like a magic world I'd stumbled into? Well, for me it somehow was.

**L**et's face it, most of us are stressed about life, at least every now and again. If you're not, you must be a Zen master of some sort. Stress per se isn't something negative. It is your body's chemical reaction to push your limits by producing adrenaline, a stress hormone. When we're in danger we can run faster than usual, it can make us energetic and more focused. Like many things in life though, too big an amount is unhealthy. Instead of experiencing phases of stress, taking turns with phases of relaxation, many students

risk burnout due to a constantly high stress levels. Some factors that trigger and increase feelings of stress are external, so we can't change or get rid of them. We can only influence how we cope with them. Others are internal, created and nurtured by attitude, which we can effectively change. My favorite, and very personal, example of how to make a conscious attitudinal change occurred during my Erasmus semester in Rome.

**ROME IS A** crazy city. There are only two subway lines because of all the archeological remains un-



derground. Busses and trams are a total mess and very unreliable, if they show up at all. It's extremely noisy and bustling, people scream at each other across the street or into their phones, cars honk, police cars and ambulances have the most annoying sirens, and men catcall you every five meters. You can't get dinner before 9 pm. Nobody seems to bother speaking slowly so you may understand their bubbly loud Italian. During the first weeks living in Rome, I thought I was going to lose my mind. It wasn't as easy as it might sound, written down here now, but after a few weeks I reached a point after which everything became different.

**I REALIZED THAT** if I were to continue the way I did, I might not be able to look back at my time in Rome with a smile. A horrible thought, because all I'd ever wanted was to live in exciting and exotic places, meet interesting people, explore the art, the vibe of the eternal city, and the traces of ancient times, eat pizza, pasta, gelato, and drink liters of amazingly good coffee. I'd forgotten though, that all of it had always been there right in front of me; I'd just overlooked it because I was too busy focusing on what was irritating me. But it hit me then: instead of trying to cope with public transport, it was more rewarding to explore the city by foot. Rome never sleeps, but there are many quiet places to recover, like churches or subterranean excavation sites. I could combat hangriness due to late dinner times by going out for aperitivo, and the non-existing language sensitivities of the locals simply forced me to develop nice street-Italian. With this slight change of perspective, the world appeared so much brighter.

**YOUNG PEOPLE ESPECIALLY**, who are naturally afflicted with insecurities, get easily caught up in the maelstrom of today's hecticness. One of my lecturers in Rome conducted studies on how the pressure that modernity imposes on us, pushes kids to do life-threatening activities like planking (lying down between rails and getting "run over" by a train) or playing the choking game (cutting off oxygen to the brain by getting strangled or cause hyperventilation). Through such near-death experiences, young people seek to actively get rid of all control and to break the circle of pressure - even for a second. These cases really opened my eyes to

how important it is to deal with the everyday-life stress in a constructive way, before it overwhelms you and forces you to take hazardous actions.

**WHAT I CAN** promise you is that Gandalf was right when he said: "it's the small things (...) that keep the darkness at bay." It can be so simple to turn our perspective just one degree, and yet it can have a great effect on our wellbeing. Facing that there is something out of balance that needs adjusting does indeed require some self-reflection. This is usually a challenge, but definitely one worth being tackled, because the reward is a relaxedness that makes dealing with stress much more bearable



*Photo: Unsplash*

and leaves you with more energy to spend on having a good time. In Rome, I had transformed my everyday-life from a parkour of obstacles to a playground of practice. Moments like the one I painted in the beginning of this article increased, leaving me with the feeling that I was making the most out of my days. Even a permanent stain of chocolate ice cream on my light blue canvas sneakers wasn't as annoying anymore, because months later, it would remind me of a great afternoon with a friend. Today, the stain, together with many other things, makes me look back at my time in Rome with a smile. ●







# THEME: **A BRIGHTER FUTURE**

A BRIGHTER FUTURE, ONE MIGHT NOT EVEN DARE WISH FOR IT WITHOUT FEELING NAIVE. HOWEVER, THE PERSPECTIVE CHALLENGE YOU TO POLISH YOUR LENS OF OPTIMISM AND VIEW THE WORLD FROM A LESS GLOOMY PERSPECTIVE. WHEN PONDERING ABOUT WHAT THE FUTURE MIGHT HOLD, IT IS EASY TO FORGET THE INHABITANTS IN IT. WE ASKED A GROUP OF FIVE YEAR-OLDS AT A KINDERGARDEN IN ESLÖV TO PAINT THEIR FUTURE. WHETHER OR NOT THEIR VISIONS WILL TURN INTO REALITY, IS HARD TO PREDICT. HOWEVER, WHAT WE DO IN OUR PRESENT WILL UNDOUBTEDLY AFFECT GENERATIONS TO COME.



# HUMANITY'S PERPETUAL QUEST FOR IMPROVEMENT



Photo: Jeff Eaton/Flickr

We live in a world that is constantly undergoing immense societal change. Over time we have come a long way forward regarding human rights and freedoms. Yet, we are left with a feeling that the world today is headed south when faced with the many challenges of the world. With this in mind, can we really build a better future for ourselves, or are we forever doomed to spiral down into a state of nihilism?

What did you read in the news this week? Perhaps it was about a terrorist attack somewhere, or something about Donald Trump and North Korea, or maybe about how democracy is failing in some Eastern European countries. Does this sound familiar? Yes, because the same news, or at least a version of them, were 'new' last week and the week before that, and so on. They all seem to cluster because that is what you get from news outlets: the same content recycled over and over

again, just from different regions in the world. But these news would not be 'new' if they were considered normal or natural. You won't see news like: "Excellent traffic today; no disruptions on the roads", or "All politicians are good and moral people". No, such headlines won't sell. Humans have, apparently, an inherent need to read about death and destruction. This has to do with the fact that such news is highly anomalous, otherwise, they would not be 'news'. Sadly, somehow it also makes us feel good about our lives when we compare them to the misery of other people.

# “HUMANS HAVE AN INHERENT NEED TO READ ABOUT DEATH AND DESTRUCTION

**IRRELEVANT OF WHY** they do it, the news most often portrays the bad side of humanity, which leaves us, humans, with the feeling that there is something inherently wrong with our societies, and perhaps the future will bring some sort of improvement. However, if we lived in the 1950s, 2017 would be the future for us. If we compare the two periods, we find that the Cold War has ended, humans have been living longer lives, and overall life conditions have improved for a large part of the world.

**NOW IF WE** go back a hundred or five hundred years back, our current age will look like a utopia to the people living in those times. But it is hard to take all of this into perspective nowadays when you constantly read about what went wrong in the world overnight. We know that poverty is an acute global issue, along with climate change, armed conflicts, and many other problems. Because of this, we believe the future will be better, it has to be... Indeed, this line of thinking has been central to the human history and has probably led to all major changes in the world.

**THINK ABOUT PARAMOUNT** Western works, like Plato's Republic, More's Utopia, Hobbes's Leviathan, Marx and Engels' The Communist Manifesto, just to name a few, in which the authors put forward their ideas and aspirations for a better world. Think also about some of the major revolutions that have happened throughout history: the American one (1765-1783), the French one (1789-1799), the Communist one (1917), the list goes on and on. All of these socio-political works and movements, irrelevant of their agenda or means of actualisation, were built on the idea that something is not right with society and a change is needed in order to move forward to something

that is better. Of course, notions of what is good or bad are subjective, but things like human rights and freedoms, that most of us take for granted nowadays, were hard-fought, precisely because a change was wanted and perhaps needed.

**THIS LEADS ME** to think that secretly, deep down, we all want to live in a utopia, a perfect world, where everyone is happy and well-off. However, utopias are viewed as impossible. The biggest communist experiment of the 20th century ended in failure when the USSR disintegrated into its constituent parts in 1991, which demonstrated the infeasibility of utopian societies, at least up to that point. But that hasn't stopped us from believing that a brighter future is possible. This is evident from humanity's constant toil to reform its societies using the crutches of science and medicine.

**HOWEVER, WE ARE** not perfect as individuals and we will never achieve perfection. We will always do something wrong, or at least not well enough. We won't look quite like we would like to, nor have the most meaningful job, nor read all those books we have added to our reading lists on Goodreads. It will not happen. Neither with us as individuals, nor with society in general.

**IN THE END**, the question remains: are we living in a brighter future? Yes, in comparison to how people used to live in the past, most of us do. Is there more to be done? Yes, so much more. With this in mind, we should continue to strive for a vision of a better and brighter future, both as individuals and as a society, even if we cannot achieve true perfection. For what else is there to do? ●

# “ARE WE LIVING IN A BRIGHTER FUTURE?

# CHASING THE DAWN: POSITIVE HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE COP 23

When the US decided to pull out of the Paris agreement this summer, it sparked a sense of gloom across environmental enthusiasts all over the world. The biggest player in the game had suddenly decided not to play. However, a quick look at the Bonn COP 23 shows us that the game seems to have changed for the better, with more winners emerging.



*Photo: /Unsplash*



*Bonn, Germany - the German city of Bonn hosted the 23rd UN Climate Change Conference of Parties or COP-23 from November 6th to 17th this year. The small city by the river Rhine transformed into a world festival, with the sheer diversity of participants who had gathered, all united for one cause. The entire Climate Campus was organized in two zones: the “Bula Zone” and the “Bonn Zone” where the conference of parties convened to make progress on operationalization of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Free public transport, shining bicycles and electric buses ferried people between the venues, thus keeping up with the green spirit of the event.*

### **Fiji**

#### **A small island nation presided the international climate conference**

Fiji and other similar islands across the South Pacific, are facing immediate threats from rising sea water levels and extreme weather events. The island nations suffer from delayed decisions on investment to adapt to climate disruption. Fiji’s presidency shed more light on their plight by bringing the issue to the center of discussion.

### **Syria on board**

#### **Leaves the US in stark isolation**

Day 2 of the COP 23 brought in positive news from Syria. After the past years of dealing with warfare, Syria’s reasons for not joining the Paris Agreement were sadly valid. Until COP 23, Syria and the US were the only countries in the world to refrain from signing the climate deal. Now that Syria is also on board, it has left US as the only country not joining in on combating climate change. While this adds renewed pressure on the US, it plays a much stronger role in galvanizing the other countries to actually set and achieve higher goals and thereby strengthen the Paris Agreement.

### **Indigenous peoples power An environmental victory**

Emphasizing on their wealth of traditional wisdom and knowledge about adaptation methods, indigenous people made their presence felt with their call to be part of the solution to climate change. Indigenous communities have sought international recognition of their rights over land, and the right to life and autonomy. Their increased participation would mean victory for all. Collectively the nations agreed to create a platform for indigenous peoples to take more active part in the UN climate negotiations.

### **Talanoa and Bula**

“Talanoa” (Pacific word for sharing ideas and speaking) and “Bula” (Fijian word for blessings of health and happiness) - were clearly the buzzwords of the conference - promoting a friendly and all-inclusive spirit for dialogue in the hope of a brighter future and a calmer climate.



*Photo: Ende Gelände/Flickr*

# HUMANS OF ACTION

Interviews with activists from the recent Ende Gelände action outside Bonn in connection to the COP23 meetings.



Photo: Line Skov

**I**t is hard to be an optimist with the constant media buzz of alarming articles describing how the climate is changing for the worse, and at a faster pace than previously expected. Climate depression, or eco-anxiety, is a medical condition that has been increasing rapidly in recent years. Induced by watching the seemingly irrevocable impacts of climate change unfold, it affects a great, and growing, number of youths and children. It seemed to me that one has to either be blissfully ignorant of the state of climate politics, or aware and depressed.

**SHORA ESMAILIAN'S SPEECH** at the end of the climate demonstration "Be the Red Line" that was held in connection to the climate meetings before the actual COP 23 in Malmö at the end of October. Her words sparked my interest in climate activists. She said:

*"Why do we talk of climate depression instead of climate rage? We never talk of class depression or patriarchy depression. Then we talk of anger and rage. Anxiety and depression are feelings that are aimed inward and leads to passivity. Anger, on the other hand, makes you feel like something has to change. It makes you act together with others in rage. So that's what I think we should do."*

**THE FOLLOWING WEEKEND**, the days before the big climate meetings at COP 23, I found myself among several thousands of climate activists who had gathered in Germany for a massive climate action called Ende Gelände. The name can be loosely translated into "here but not further". The goal was to stop, if only for a couple of hours, Europe's largest brown coal mine through a massive, peaceful act of disobedience. Ironically the mine is located just 50 kilometers away from Bonn, where the COP 23 meetings were held. The activists were students and people working within everything from geology to botany, anthropology to environmental science. They came from all over Europe, some had even biked all the way from London. United they shared the common dream of the end of fossil fuels. I wondered: If awareness leads to depression, and depression fosters passivity, how could it be that the most enlightened also were the most active? How do they see a brighter future with such a bleak outlook?



### **JESSIE - IRISH ACTIVIST**

My mom and dad used to take me to rally's and protests all the time when I was a kid. I was maybe 13 or something the first time I went to gay pride. There was just something about how these usually scary concepts, that were kind of taboo, instead became something that you could feel brave about. Something you could celebrate. I feel like that is kind of what climate change activism is for me now. Community and taking mass action makes scary things less scary because you realise how much people fight and care for the same thing, and how much people support each other as well. I know so many people who are working so hard trying to find justice in all kinds of aspects of life. The support you find in those kinds of communities is just insane. I do not think I would be able to do half as much in activism and campaigning if I did not have friends in those spheres. We support each other and enjoy ourselves at the same time.

### **COLM- IRISH ACTIVIST**

The interconnected nature of the climate change issue is really motivating. Even in your corner of the world, where it is just your little group trying to do something that feels impossible, what you are doing is happening all over the world. To tap into that, like at Ende Gelände or with the divestment movement, is really empowering. I think a big reason for the huge success of the divestment movement is that it is tangible and can be a quite easy win. When people see that, they can also see that they can make a difference.



### **JESSIE- IRISH ACTIVIST**

There has been five giant extinctions in the history of the planet earth where more than 90 percent of all species have gone extinct. A lot of biologists are saying we are now facing the sixth big extinction. My grandparents used to live in Australia and always sent me pictures of all the birds and all the trees and stuff. The thought of them all being gone used to really scare me. A lot of people have had to leave biology because it is all too depressing to think about. But there are moments of inspiration and resilience everywhere you look, in the nature and in the people around you. Like we just pulled up all these rocks in my garden because I wanted to plant more things. When I got home from Germany, plants were already growing. I had not even planted anything yet, things had just been there, in the ground, waiting under the stones for the opportunity to grow.

### **LINE-DANISH ACTIVIST**

"Being an activist can mean a lot of things, but the main role is to create attention. That is also why I chose to bring my camera with me. It is one thing to go, and with our bodies directly stop the coal diggers, an important act in itself, but even more so because it is a symbolic act. We create media attention, and media creates awareness through pictures of this, the biggest hole in Europe, that no one would have seen otherwise. After Ende Gelände I stayed in Bonn and participated in some of the COP23 meetings. One of the panel debates explained how, actually, only 10 percent of Americans are hard-core climate change deniers. Still, these 10 percent have such a big influence over politics and people. The thought I walked away with was that, we need the climate movement to organise better than those 10 percent. Maybe that's the most important aspect of ende gelände, even more than the outreach of the specific action."



*Photos: Ende Gelände/Flickr*

## BACK IN LUND

**ANDREAS MALM-PROFESSOR IN HUMAN ECOLOGY  
LUND UNIVERSITY**

I was at the very first COP meeting in Berlin. We blocked the exits when the talks were over to force the politicians to stay and reach better agreements. This was in 1995. Not a lot has happened since. Without the climate movement it would be a lot less though. In the last years it's been pretty clear that the activism around the fossil industry has been quite crucial in driving the question forward and putting spotlights on coal and mad oil projects. That kind of causality is hard to prove in exact detail, but it is my conviction that the climate movement has been a very important player. Look, for example, at how the resistance against Keystone XL pushed forward the decision to shut down that pipeline. Then again some mean that the Trump administration

is an answer to the social movements upsurge in USA. That it's a kind of counter revolutionary process, a push back against what those movements won during the last years under Obama. I think the climate movement has a central political role. It's too weak at the moment of course, but that's just another argument for more to join in. Bill McKibben held a lecture in Lund a couple of years ago and got the question "what can I do as an individual?" His answer; "seize to be an individual, that's the most important step". We need to go beyond all the talk about how we as individuals should solve this whole thing with different consumption choices. That will never change the big structures. For that we need to get together and try to drive change. ●



# THE FALL OF THE CALIPHATE

In its most important aspect, the Islamic State is defeated.  
Still, there remains a long way to go.





**T**he end times draw nigh in jihadist utopia. In only a few months the Islamic State has lost several important strongholds. Most important of these, symbolically as well as geopolitically, are Mosul in Iraq and Raqqa in Syria. Mosul was where ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi first proclaimed the caliphate in the middle of 2014, and it remained a central base of operations and strategy ever since. Raqqa was the group's self-proclaimed capital, from where, would the caliphate successfully have been established, its brutal doctrine would flow.

**FROM LARGELY INEXISTENT** and unheard of, the Islamic State managed to ascend as proprietors and rulers over circa ten million people and an area the size of Great Britain in a matter of months. Their mission, which initially seemed spectacularly successful, was to create a society in God's image, such as they conceived this; to transform religious doctrine into geopolitical reality. In this the project of the Islamic State was always different from that of other jihadists: it aimed to go beyond terrorist attacks and insurgency and try instead to revive the ancient idea of the caliphate. In effect, this is a society centered wholly around religious life and law such as originally preached by Muhammad and ruled by his successor, the caliph. For a while, this ideal became everyday life for those inside the caliphate. For those that obeyed, life in many aspects carried on. But at the same time, gruesome punishments were doled out for the slightest violations, all freedoms were thoroughly restricted, and non-Sunnis were categorically enslaved or murdered.

**SINCE THE ISLAMIC** State's first year of unbelievable triumphs, its holy favour gradually turned. Today, between six and eight million people have been liberated from the theocracy. Only a fraction of the caliphate remains. Most of the revenue streams have dried up. The intense flow of propaganda has ebbed. At peak levels foreigners came to join the cause in numbers of 1500 to 2000 per month; today that number is practically zero.

**THE INITIAL SUCCESS** of the Islamic State made it seem to many as if it really did arrive with a mandate from God. Its cause gained legitimacy with the hope of its possible implementation. It is with regard to this that the decay of the caliphate can be seen as a spectacular triumph for the free world. Not only has the Islamic State been weakened

physically: the ideal that it strived for has been incapacitated. What burned in the flames of Raqqa was really the hope of a land in which Islamist life could flourish. Regarding its ultimate goal, the Islamic State has been defeated; the ideological empire has fallen.

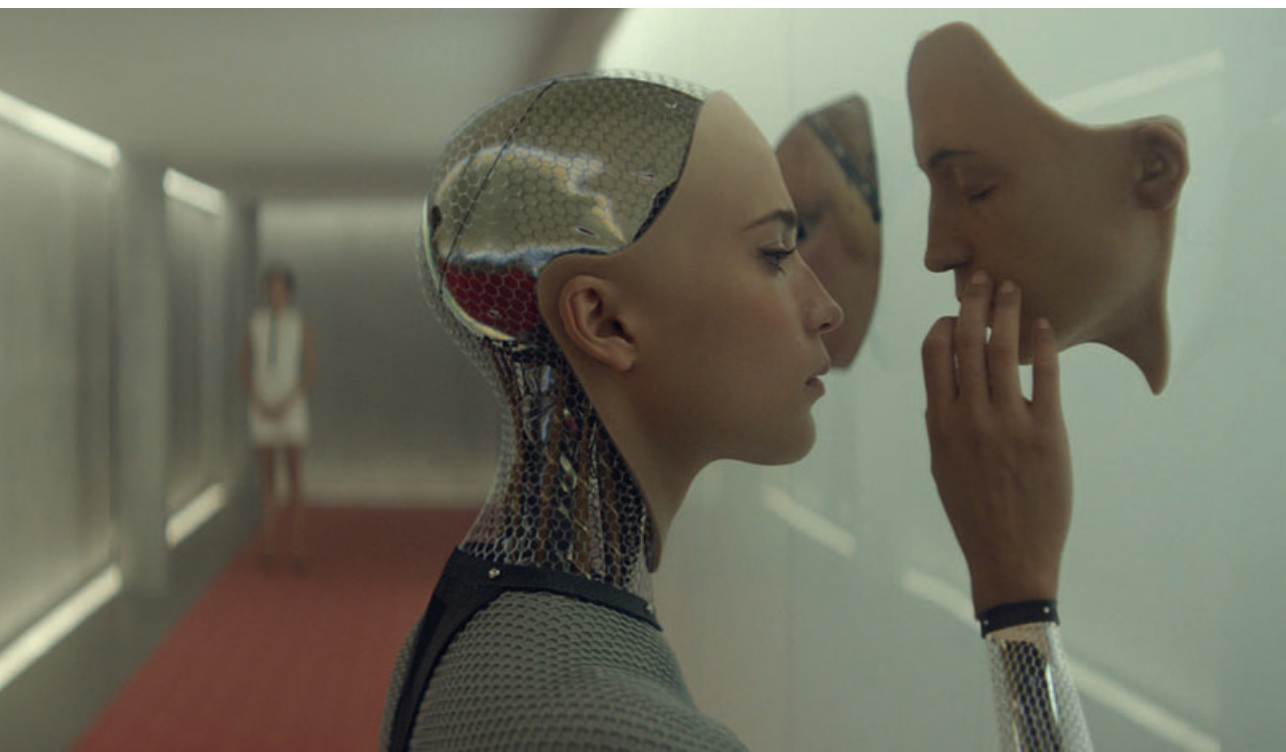
**THOUGH THE CALIPHATE** is on a downward trajectory, there is no necessity of the Islamic State spiraling down with it. On the contrary, observers agree that most likely is a return to what it was before 2014, and what many in the West mistakenly believed it to primarily be after that too: a terrorist group. Thousands of ISIS fighters remain in the shrinking caliphate. With their backs against the wall, unwilling or unable to return as citizens of their respective nations, they have few options. Whether in desperation or from conviction, they are likely to go down violently. It is thought that almost 6000 fighters have returned home after serving ISIS in the field. Just above 1000 of these are Europeans, but most from different parts of the Middle East and North Africa. The primary ideological goal might be shattered, but the despair is not. In Europe and America the call to act on the Islamic State's behalf still rings, and to the disillusioned Islamist ideas might still seem attractive.

**THE DECLINE OF** the Islamic state could also, counterintuitively, pose a risk for escalated conflicts both in Syria and Iraq. In an odd episode of 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend'-politics the struggle to suppress ISIS formed some surprising coalitions that today seems to be corroding. Just as Raqqa was about to be liberated from ISIS rule, Iraqi tanks thundered into Kurdish-held Kirkuk. Over the past few years, while Iraq and the Kurds have directed their attention towards defeating the Islamic State, conflicts between the two parties have been less intense. This might now be over. A similar fate is possible between the rebels and the government in Syria and between Shiites and Sunnis who have resisted ISIS. Not only might the weakening of ISIS entail intensified warfare among other parts of the neighborhood, it might also give the group the break it needs to gather its wits. That is, the thought that the finish line is already passed could lead to resistance against ISIS being downsized. Therefore, the decisive moment in the fight against the Islamic State is now. The recent victories are important, as much symbolically as geopolitically, yet the greatest danger lies in thinking the fight is over. ●

# EX MACHINA

The picture of a nearby future in which robots have taken over most jobs due to improvements in technology and the development of Artificial Intelligence worries workers all around the globe.

Is this future scenario a likely one?



*Photo: Badoo Games/Flickr*



**T**his is not the first time that people worry about the substitution of human labor by machines, as it has been a recurring problem since the rise of the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century. A well known case is that of Luddites, a group of English textile workers who, in the beginning of the 19th century, destroyed weaving machinery because it threatened their jobs. However, this was not an exceptional case. The general perception at that time was very pessimistic. For example, Marx predicted that machines would substitute humans as the productive force, making labor obsolete and leaving most of the population unemployed. This would trigger the inherent contradictions of capitalism as people, freed from the alienating capitalist exploitation, would become aware of the injustices of the system and ultimately turn their back on it, putting an end to capitalism.

**HOWEVER, THE REALITY** was quite different. During the last two centuries, not only did technological progress not cause unemployment (even considering the increase of labor force participation rates due to the growing proportion of women working), it improved productivity, increased income per capita and allowed the rise of wages along with the decrease in working hours. Despite this, we tend to think that this time things are different, and maybe they are. One of the most pessimistic reports warns that 47 percent of US jobs are threatened by automation and could disappear. Research in developed countries points out that the jobs with the greatest risk of disappearing are manual jobs with low educational requirements, coinciding with past trends.

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**NEVERTHELESS, MORE RECENT** investigations suggest that automation does not have a negative effect on overall unemployment. In fact, countries with a higher degree of automation tend to have less unemployment (which does not imply direct causality). This means that even though there is a disruptive effect on some jobs, the net effect is positive due to externalities produced by a rise in productivity and income per capita. As the 20th century Austrian economist Schumpeter explained, progress always involves a process of creative destruction and structural transformation (i.e. reallocation of employment from low to high productivity sectors and the creation of new types of jobs). Therefore, it is clear that at least in the short run, we are not going to witness the feared dystopia of massive unemployment due to Artificial Intelligence. However, this does not imply that we should not care about the effects of automation.

**ALTHOUGH THERE MIGHT** not exist a negative effect on overall employment, the disruptive process of creative destruction has other implications that may affect social stability. Further research shows that technical progress benefits workers with higher human capital because it is complementary, while the effect on workers with lower human capital is very negative, taking away their jobs. This implies a polarization in employment, where highly skilled people enjoy higher demand for their skills and therefore higher wages.



Photo: Ant Rozetsky/Unsplash

**THE CREATION OF** new jobs that require specific qualifications and high cognitive capacities generously reward people that meet these requirements with high salaries and great working conditions. On the other hand, people who do not have these capabilities observe a decrease in demand for their skills and have difficulties finding a new job. Thus, the benefits are concentrated to the highest classes and the losses in the lower classes, causing an increase in inequality.

**THIS DOES NOT** imply that increase of inequality is unavoidable, but it represents a challenge for governance in the years to come. So far, there is no evidence for increased inequality in countries where automation is more advanced, but it may be because those countries are the most developed, with more effective governance. The goal should be to ensure protection to the workers suffering the disruptions and to provide equality of opportunities for younger generations.

**EDUCATION IS CRUCIAL** when it comes to fighting inequality in the future, as it is one of the most important determinants of future jobs and the main predictor of future income. Hence, equal opportunities regarding access to education is key to enabling intergenerational mobility and a fair distribution of benefits. It is also important to support people who are already suffering the cost of the transition from one job to another with

“ WE MUST DISTRIBUTE  
THE NEW WEALTH,  
NOT PREVENT IT

monetary unemployment transfers and active employment policies. Other major redistributing schemes, such as Universal Basic Income, are being experimented in pilot studies and debated in the public sphere as measures to fight inequality.

**WE DO NOT** know whether machines will replace most of us in our jobs in a distant future, but we do know that we are limited when it comes to imagining the future due to our lack of imagination concerning new paradigms. Meanwhile, in contrast to the neo-luddite voices that advocate for retarding the development of technical change, the challenge is to take advantage of the benefits of technological progress and to deal with the problems that emerge. Trying to achieve equitable and balanced improvements for the whole population, protecting persons and not jobs. We must distribute the new wealth, not prevent it. ●



# *ACTIVISM*

## SHAPING A BRIGHTER FUTURE

Global civil society is under more pressure than ever before. As a consequence of the perceived constant flow of negative news, we often look quite pessimistically into the future. Nevertheless, beyond populist headlines and perceived standstill, there is an increase in activism. People take action when the institutions in place fail to do so. Can frustration be converted to advocacy and therefore be the engine for a brighter future?



One situation that sparked a new wave of activism was the high number of arriving refugees to Europe since 2014. This event made clear that many countries were not properly prepared, as they failed to provide even basic support for people arriving at its borders. According to international law, the European Union has a clear responsibility to provide protection to refugees, including the obligation to rescue people in danger at sea. Nevertheless, the number of refugees who have lost their lives when crossing the sea has risen to over 4,500 by now, only covering the registered deaths. A sad number, challenging the values Europe once promised to protect.

**THE FRUSTRATION** DUE to Europe's lack of response has been shared by a group of young people in Berlin who refused to stand idly by as refugees drowned in the Mediterranean Sea. After 800 refugees lost their lives in one of the biggest human tragedies, Jacob Schoen, by that time only 19 years old, decided to not give in to his feeling of powerlessness. Together with a core team of young people, he took action and founded the organization Jugend Rettet, "Youth to the Rescue". After the activists had managed to collect 290,000 euros via a crowdfunding campaign, they purchased, renovated, and equipped a fishing vessel. They gave it the name *Iuventa*, the Latin word for youth. In the summer of 2016, the *Iuventa* started its first rescue mission with a boat crew consisting of an international team of amateurs and skilled maritime professionals, all of them volunteers. The goal was clear: "to limit the number of deaths on the Mediterranean", as it is stated on the organisation's website. When having discovered a refugee boat in distress, either by active search or directed by a rescue coordination centre, the *Iuventa* gave the refugees safety on board. There, they received immediate medical attention and drinking water, before larger NGOs or Italian coast-guard vessels transferred them to safety ashore. Until this summer, the organization was involved in the rescue of 14,000 people, countering the humanitarian catastrophe.

**HOWEVER, IN EARLY** August, the mission came to an abrupt end. As a preemptive measure, the *Iuventa* was seized on the island of Lampedusa by the Italian authorities in order to prevent possible criminal acts. The crew was accused of transporting refugees instead of rescuing them, thereby sup-



porting illegal immigration and human trafficking. Images released by the Italian authorities seem to show an inflatable boat of the *Iuventa*, towing an empty wooden boat into Libyan waters and volunteers later in contact with smugglers on a boat crowded with refugees. Despite Italian politicians acknowledging that the intention of the organization might have been solely a humanitarian one, the serious accusation of human trafficking is still under subject of criminal prosecution. Therefore, as the humanitarian disaster on the ocean continues, the *Iuventa* is forced to passively observe the tragedies from its trapped position in the harbour.

**THE ORGANIZATION FULL-HEARTEDLY** denies all involvement in human trafficking and rather shows its willingness to transparently discuss all underlying accusations by publishing detailed reports of the corresponding situations, showing how the sole pictures have been put out of context. They claim that important contextual information is omitted, falsities are used to prove accusations, and conclusions drawn by the Italian government often rely on personal, subjective opinions, rather than any actual facts.

**HOWEVER, ITALIAN OFFICIALS** do not seem to be in a hurry, as preventing NGOs from actively being involved in the sea rescue serves the aim of closing the human corridor over the Medi-





*Photo: Ann Wuytz/Flickr*

# “JUGEND RETTET ILLUSTRATES YOUNG ACTIVISTS’, AT THE GRASSROOT LEVEL, ABILITY TO CONTINUE ACTING DESPITE OBSTACLES BEING PUT IN THEIR WAY

terranean Sea route. Far from being one single case, Jugend Rettet is only one of many NGOs who has been prevented from continuing their current actions due to similar accusations.

**NEVERTHELESS, THE ORGANISATION** continues to serve as a platform for raising awareness and discussing solutions. By uniting young Europeans, Jugend Rettet stresses the importance of developing a more humane European immigration policy. Since

its foundation, the association has pointed out that private rescue organizations are filling up the existing gaps. The boat itself was not meant to constitute a long-term solution, but saved many people’s lives and encouraged reflection on why young people are stepping up and taking direct action, rather than the European Union and its member nations. The organization demands that Europe guarantees the right to life through its own search and rescue program, that it guarantees the right to safe passage through humanitarian corridors, and ends the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding at its borders and in neighbouring countries.

**JUGEND RETTET ILLUSTRATES** young activists’, at the grassroots level, ability to continue acting despite obstacles being put in their way. Actions which have been able to contribute to real change in the faith of many, by rescuing thousands of lives at sea. They portray how individuals can decide to take responsibility in order to improve the world, ignoring political processes, focusing on the worth of human lives. They left the comfort of their everyday life, as they strongly felt that someone had to do something. Too often we are convinced that we cannot do anything. But we can, and it can happen at the very grassroots, far from the decision-makers. Activism in the face of injustice and crisis can help to create a brighter future for all of us. In this case, actions do speak louder than words. ●

# BACHA POSH

## A BRIGHTER PRESENT FOR GIRLS IN AFGHANISTAN

In the patriarchal society of Afghanistan girls and their families have adopted a unique coping strategy for tackling the cultural stigmas of only having daughters and being a girl. In Jenny Nordberg's Book "The Underground Girls of Kabul" we can read about the practice of Bacha Posh.

**I**t is early morning and Amena is getting up from the bed. Today is like any other day, she will run errands: buy food, collect plastic bottles to recycle, and sell water just to get a few extra coins. Amena is the daughter of a poor family and is one of seven sisters. She helps her father with the errands and works since he produces the household's only income. But the family has a secret. Amena is only Amena within the four walls of their home. As soon as she steps outside, she is wearing boy's clothes and is called Hamid. She is a bacha posh, and this is the reality for many girls in today's Afghanistan.

**THE CONCEPT** of bacha posh has been around longer than many of us would have believed. It is a tradition in Afghanistan that not many people in the outside world know about. Jenny Nordberg, a Swedish journalist and writer helped to bring light to what a bacha posh is and what their lives look like. She wrote the book "The Underground Girls of Kabul" where she explores what it is like to be a girl and a woman in the Islamic conservative country of Afghanistan.

**IN SHORT,** a bacha posh is a girl who is dressing like a boy. The "transformation" to a boy, as it is called,

usually takes place when the girl is around 7 years old. Some girls are forced by their parents to be bacha posh, like Amena, while others choose it freely. In many poor families, especially families that do not have sons, it is common for at least one of the daughters to become a bacha posh. In Afghanistan, it is considered more desirable to have a fake son than no son at all. These girls often become bacha posh in order to help support the family, since it is difficult for girls to work outside domestic chores.

**IN NORDBERG'S BOOK,** we also meet Zahra, who is also a bacha posh. She refuses to change back into a girl. She is now sixteen years old and dreams of moving to a western country where there are more people like her. Her mother wants her to change back into being a girl so that she can marry but Zahra does not want to marry, ever. However, Zahra has something that not all Af-





*Photo: Wikimedia commons*

ghan girls have: the support of her father who has said that he will never force her to marry.

**EVEN THOUGH MANY** might think a bacha posh would be provoking to the conservative society, it is a concept that many people are aware of. Their neighbors know that Hamid is Amena, but surprisingly people don't mind a girl dressing as a boy if the bacha posh transform is reversed back again into a girl when she reaches puberty. This comes as a liberation to some girls, but not all. Amena, for example, doesn't want to be a boy and she can not wait for the day when she gets to be turned back. However, not all girls are as keen to be girls again. Many enjoy the freedom that comes with being perceived as a boy. As boys, these girls can play outside with other children and roam around by themselves. Usually, they also get more attention from their fathers and aren't required to be silent

and take up as little space as possible, as other girls are. They can be outspoken and they are allowed to argue. For many girls, this is the life they want to have and when they come into puberty they refuse to change back, causing mental health consequences such as depression, anxiety, and identity crisis.

**BEING RAISED AND** viewed as one gender, and then, suddenly, over a night having to change, is something western countries have little to no experience with. There is barely any research done within this field so the long-term effects of bacha posh remain unknown. However, experience has shown that there are also physical challenges for some of these girls. Many never properly develop physically as women. They have inconsistent menstruations, therefore making it difficult for them to have children later in life. Some girls believe that if they pray enough to Allah and





*Photo: Unsplash*

manipulate their brains to force them to think that they are boys, Allah will grant their wish.

**EVER SINCE THE** Taliban regime fell in 2001, the rights of women and girls have been fought for in Afghanistan and some great success has been made. The literacy rates of girls have seen steady improvements, and today women can attend university and work outside the confines of the household. However, the bacha posh is still a big part of the everyday life of many girls. As women can't go outside without being accompanied by a male relative or husband, the bacha posh system provides young girls with opportunities they wouldn't have if they remained as girls. It is also very shameful for the family to not have a son, something that Mohammed, Amena's father, is constantly reminded of by his neighbors.

**HOWEVER, EVEN AS** a bacha posh, women in Afghanistan don't have the same rights as men. The culture doesn't allow them to do the same things

as boys, even though progress has been made in regards to gender relations since the crack-down on the Taliban regime. Bacha posh is not really about provoking gender roles and norms of society, it is a mean for coping with it. Nevertheless, cultural change takes time, for women to dress how they want and still work, be outspoken, go to school, and to only have daughters without shame will require the full emancipation of women in Afghanistan. Bacha posh is about adjusting and working with the faulty cultural system already in place, but it is also about surviving. With women's rights improving in Afghanistan, maybe one day, bacha posh will no longer be necessary. In the prologue of "The Underground Girls of Kabul", Jenny Nordberg describes her translators, women with different backgrounds and stories, what they had in common was that they adjusted to the different challenging circumstances they faced. Adapting as Afghans do, as bacha posh do, as women do. ●



*Photo: Wikimedia Commons*

# SOLAR GEO-ENGINEERING: REFLECTING A BRIGHTER FUTURE?

*"It's a bird! It's a plane! It's a massive metallic balloon, seeding the clouds with sulfate and other types of aerosol particles!"* is what researchers spearheading the Stratospheric Controlled Perturbation Experiment (SCoPEX) at Harvard University, expect to hear in the coming future.

**I**n 1989 the pioneering engineer and cunning inventor, James Early, envisaged a solution for global warming that was so "far out" that it was considered ludicrous to the international community: a 2,000 km wide space umbrella. While such an idea has so far only been realized within the realm of science fiction, Early's premise — that global temperatures could be regulated by systematically decreasing Earth's exposure to the sun's radiation — has, more recently, been taken up by climate researchers.

**SCoPEX**, COMPRISED OF a curious group of atmospheric scientists, is a climate project aiming to delve deeper into research on the highly adversarial field of geoengineering. This is the less-pronounced, technological branch of climate research that is attempting to counteract climate change through intentional, large-scale manipulation of the environment. While this concept of climate engineering isn't entirely new — similar but less scientific strands of "weather modification" have been centerpieces of atmospheric re-

search since the 1950s and 1960s — for the most part developments in the controversial field have been confined to computer simulations, largely ignored by global leaders. The concept of tinkling with the Earth's fragile systems has historically been considered taboo and pushed away in the face of more tried and true mitigation methods.

**IN LIGHT OF** more recent and comprehensive simulation studies, scientific bodies like the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) are beginning to reconsider the field they once eschewed. Over the past decade, environmental studies have burgeoned in response to more fervent climate initiatives. The upshot of such intensified data collection is greater insight into alternative climate solutions, which is reflected in meatier climate impact assessment models. Such climate models have highlighted innovative geo-engineering proposals that, like Early's groundbreaking sun-shading theory, could alter the planet's radiation balance, which would help to maintain global mean temperatures, or at least slow down the rate of change



**THE MOST TENABLE** of these proposals, stratospheric aerosol injections, has attracted the lion's share of interest from the scientific community. According to statistical predictions, when deployed in a backdrop of high-emissions scenarios this radical practice could recreate radiation levels at what they would be in more moderate-emissions scenarios. The proposal involves sprinkling innocuous aerosols up into the sky that would increase the amount of sunlight reflected back into space, decreasing the amount absorbed in the atmosphere. It does this by either directly scattering light particles or by, more indirectly, acting as cloud condensation nuclei, decreasing the average droplet size, which increases the longevity and reflectivity of the clouds. Like combating the heat of a scorching summer day by slipping out of a heat-absorbing chunky black sweater and into a heat-reflecting white t-shirt, the effects of such climate meddling would theoretically be a uniform cooling of the Earth.

**CLIMATE RESEARCHERS HAVE** begun to consider these solar geo-engineering solutions as complementary measures because, despite the adoption of more stringent commitments to hold global average temperature below 2°C above pre-in-

dustrial levels, carbon concentrations continue to race upwards at a rate that is likely to surpass global tipping points. In this context, experts have looked to solar geo-engineering as a sort of climate stopgap, temporarily stabilizing global environments so that greater energy can be channeled towards reducing carbon footprints.

**NOTWITHSTANDING THESE POSITIVE** computerized projections, many are still apprehensive over the potential environmental and societal risks. Of particular concern is the threat large-scale, decades-long injections may pose to the Ozone. The depth of this concern, which remains at the heart of geo-engineering debates, is what has prompted small-scale experiments, like SCoPEX, to set the ball rolling and start testing these impacts in real life settings. These tests are currently still in the advanced stages of planning, meaning that if projects like stratospheric aerosol injections are ever to be deployed it won't happen in the near future. Proponents of the research emphasize the need for meticulous research in attaining greater knowledge, because as of now the vagaries of the climate are hard, if not impossible, to calculate with just a computer.

“ LIKE COMBATING THE HEAT OF A SCORCHING SUMMER DAY BY SLIPPING OUT OF A HEAT-ABSORBING CHUNKY BLACK SWEATER AND INTO A HEAT-REFLECTING WHITE T-SHIRT, THE EFFECTS OF SUCH CLIMATE MEDDLING WOULD THEORETICALLY BE A UNIFORM COOLING OF THE EARTH



# “ FEAR OF SOLAR GEO-ENGINEERING IS ENTIRELY HEALTHY... YET THAT HEALTHY FEAR CAN DISTORT DISCUSSIONS IN UNHEALTHY WAYS

-D. KEITH AND G. WAGNER

**OUTSIDE OF THE** more obvious environmental considerations are greater concerns over political agency and moral culpability. Unlike individualized efforts to reduce carbon emissions, critics have argued that geo-engineering initiatives require more centralized operations, raising overarching questions of security, sovereignty and liability. Who will be authorized to monitor experiments, decide the limit between a small-scale and full deployment, or regulate the global thermostat if full deployment is carried out? In instances where harmful climatic events do occur, how will such operators be held accountable? Moreover, environmentalists have disputed the ethicality of such practices, fearing increased geo-engineering research could discourage mitigation efforts by encouraging “quick fix” mentalities in the face of more substantive behavioral changes.

**EXPLORING ALTERNATIVE CLIMATE** solutions requires strong critique of its ethical, environmental, and political dimensions, as this is vital for future considerations. That said, the paucity of such knowledge in the subject shouldn't be used to disparage it but rather used to encourage further scrupulous research. As with the case with solar geo-engineering, the potential it has for the well-being of future generations is something worth exploring. As SCoPEX researchers David W Keith and Gernot Wagner assert, “fear of solar geo-engineering is entirely healthy... yet that healthy fear can distort discussion in unhealthy ways”. Ignorance isn't conducive to innovative climate solutions. The future of humanity is bright, so long as it's reflective. ●

# #METOO

## A HASHTAG FOR HOPE



Photo: Alexa Mazzarello/Unsplash



I recently passed my driving test. My inspector was an elderly man whose belittling language immediately made me uncomfortable. Two minutes into the drive he started talking about the #metoo campaign. The last thing I expected.

I'd have no objection to discussing the #metoo campaign if the power dynamic in the car wasn't so obviously divided between a young girl and an old man, a student with no power versus an inspector with power. He initiates his sermon by stating that sexual harassment and assault against women is a difficult issue to solve because of biology. According to him, men are physically stronger, and apparently, biologically predetermined to sexually harass and assault women. It's got nothing to do with culture, social constructions, or mentality. Because of the obvious power dynamic between us, and because I didn't want to distract myself from performing well on my test, I simply clenched my fists around the steering wheel and told myself that I was in no position to take on the fight. Literally, I was in the driving seat. Metaphorically, I wasn't.

**THE #METOO CAMPAIGN** was created back in 2006 by activist Tarana Burke, however, it was in the wake of the recent Harvey Weinstein scandal that the campaign gained momentum. As a response, actress Alyssa Milano tweeted that if women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote "Me too" as a status on their social media platforms, the magnitude of the problem might be understood. Of course, women are not the only subjects of sexual violence and assault, but they represent the vast majority. Therefore, I will mainly focus on men's sexual assault and harassment towards women. As a result of the massive social media wave of #metoo posts, and the near constant media coverage of the campaign, there is one question to be asked: is this cam-

paign a turning point in how we discuss, perceive, and respond to sexual assault and harassment?

**AT FIRST, I** was sceptical. It's just another social media campaign that'll be forgotten in a week. Right? Wrong. Despite seeing less #metoo posts on my Facebook feed, the campaign continues to influence various media outlets. Here are some examples: Radio Sweden recently reported that sexual harassment in schools is a big issue. On the 1st of November this year, the BBC announced that the British Defence Secretary Michael Fallon resigned as a result of allegations of sexual misconduct. The production of the Netflix series *House of Cards* has been suspended due to sexual assault allegations towards main actor Kevin Spacey. In Sweden, several TV and media personalities, such as TV host Martin Timell, have had their contracts terminated after revelations of sexual harassment. The Swedish newspaper "Svenska Dagbladet" recently published an article where over 700 Swedish actresses gave anonymous testimonies of sexual harassment and assault within their industry. The public has acknowledged the magnitude of the problem and perpetrators face consequences.



**THE ISSUE IS** not only addressed in the mass media, but also in everyday conversations, in a way that I've never experienced before. People talk about #metoo before lectures, in seminars, at parties. The campaign has influenced people to reflect upon the issue as a whole, with its underlying mechanisms and consequences. Many seem to realise that some things they do are derogatory, unacceptable, and simply put, acts of harassment and sometimes assault. Hopefully, this campaign will continue to raise awareness about the issue to the point where men will understand that acts of sexual assault and harassment come in many different shapes. Maybe, just maybe, the idea of the #metoo campaign will turn into a movement that can lead us towards a society where a person who sexually harasses and assaults can't justify their action by claiming it to be "just a joke" or "a compliment".

## “ IS THIS CAMPAIGN A TURNING POINT IN HOW WE DISCUSS, PERCEIVE, AND RESPOND TO SEXUAL ASSAULT AND HARASSMENT?

**So, as I** shake the hand of the man who has just given me my driver's licence, I realise that he'll never change his mind. He'll continue to believe that men sexually assault and harass women because it's in their biological nature. However, what does make me hopeful is the thought that the #metoo campaign might change the mindset of men from younger generations. I've seen indicators of this in conversations with men my own age. Let's, therefore, make sure the campaign doesn't die out. Let's not bury it in the graveyard of dead social media campaigns. Let's keep it alive, so it can potentially be the turning point we sorely need. ●

**FURTHERMORE, THE #METOO** campaign has highlighted the importance of strength in numbers. Many women that I've talked to have said that the campaign made them feel more comfortable speaking out about their own experiences of sexual assault and/or harassment. It has shown them that they're not alone, that their stories matter, and that what has happened to them is not their fault. However, it's important to remember that it shouldn't be women's responsibility to stop men from sexually harassing and assaulting women, because it's not women's fault, but the fault of the perpetrators. At the end of the day, the goal of the campaign is to raise awareness about the issue, which it has definitely achieved.

# THE SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE IS POSSIBLE





Hans Rosling was one of the very few, hard-core optimists in a world full of cynicism and pessimism. If one were to have any hopes for a better future, a brighter future, Rosling's many TED talks, interviews and articles will serve as your waterhole, in a desert of disparities about the world's future.

**T**he Danish news anchor stated, leaning over the table: "If we view it from a media perspective, the news outlets are reporting on the current situation, and as of right now the current situation consists of wars, conflicts, chaos."

**"No, no, no** that is completely wrong. You are wrong..." "If you choose to only show my shoe, which is very ugly, that is only one part of me. If you then choose to only show my face, then that is another part of me. News outlets only care about a small part, but which you then call the world..." Hans Rosling answers while putting his foot on the table and pointing at his shoe.

**"THE BIG DIFFERENCE** is that girls do attend schools, the children are vaccinated, and most of the world population has electricity. Those are the things that are important to report on, but it happens so slowly that it does not make the news" ... " ...these facts are not up for discussion. I am right, and you are wrong".

**HANS ROSLING WAS** born in Uppsala, Sweden and graduated from Uppsala University in medicine and statistics. He continued studying public health in India, where he first came to terms with his own presumptions about the world. The students at the university in Bangalore knew a lot more than Hans did, even though he supposedly came from a

**"THESE FACTS ARE  
NOT UP FOR DISCUSSION.  
I AM RIGHT,  
AND YOU ARE WRONG**

better academic background, as one of best in his class in Uppsala. After getting his licence as a physician, Rosling worked many years in Mozambique as a doctor, discovering an outbreak of a paralytic disease called Konzo which earned him a Ph.D. at Uppsala University.

**HE CONTINUED WORKING** as a central figure in teaching global health at Uppsala University. When Ebola broke out in the West African nations, Hans worked on the ground, facilitating the battle against the epidemic. The explanation on how the epidemic was confined and controlled was, in true Rosling fashion, because "they just had to succeed". Hans Rosling cancelled all his upcoming public lectures and demanded to be reemployed at the Karolinska Institute, after his retirement. After receiving grants and a UN visa, he flew down to Lagos. After some negotiations he became the senior state epidemiologists at the health ministry

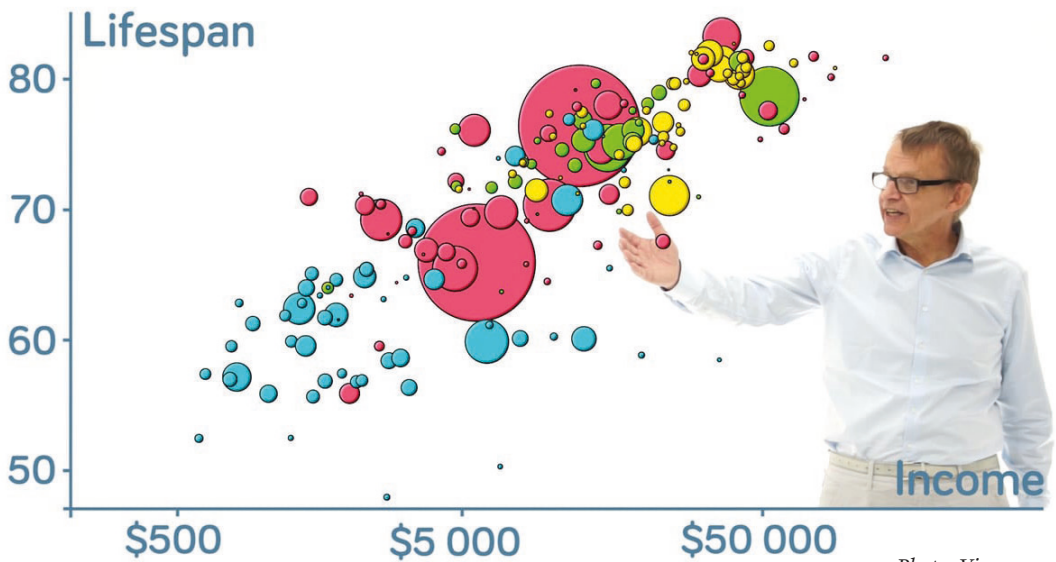


Photo: Vimeo

in Liberia. Hans described Ebola as a “flesh-eating monster with tentacles” that wreaked havoc in Lagos. The battle was mentally and physically exhausting. Nevertheless, Hans describes the victory against the virus as something beautiful. He praised the work done by the many young experts provided by the African Union and how the world came together to fight this monster where it resided, instead of waiting for it to come to them. The true heroes of the war against Ebola, according to Hans Rosling, are the handful Liberian experts facilitating the work and following the evolution of the disease.

**AFTER HIS BREAKTHROUGH** in public speaking, the whole world wanted to listen to the energetic and eccentric Swede. He spoke in front of everything from UN assemblies to CEOs of big oil companies. He was rewarded with many prestigious awards such as Time 100 most influential persons, Honourable Lecturer at Uppsala University, Harvard humanitarian award and United Nations Population Award, to name a few. Sadly, Rosling lost the battle against cancer the 7th of February 2017 at the age of 68. The world lost its statistically enlightened messiah of optimism and above all, a great human being.

**HANS ROSLING WAS** a lodestar to people working towards a better world. He was not only the bannerman of optimism, Rosling also fought for the world to be perceived for its great diversity, on the basis of statistics and data. Rosling used the latter part of his life, battling the many presumptions, ignorance, and myths regarding less developed nations. Using graphs with country bubbles, talking with the enthusiasm of a sports commentator, Rosling displayed the historical global development of the world. Showing how it is actually becoming a better place for a lot of people, with an increase in world health, longevity, world income, and a general decrease in child mortality. According to Rosling, people miss the majority of the goodness in the world when they are making up their minds on the status of the world.

**WESTERNERS AND STUDENTS** tend to have presumptions regarding less developed countries, viewing them in a very un-nuanced way, clustering them together. Countries in Africa and Asia in particular, have major differences in their level of development, even within national borders. If development projects and recommendations were to do any good they need to be much more varied, and specifically target the needs of specific nations,

regions, and people. “The first thing before thinking about the future is to know about the present” Hans shouts in one of his TED talks. Hans Rosling stressed that there is not some major gap between the global population, most people reside in the middle of the development scale, whereas there are, of course, huge differences between the top and the bottom. The inherited ignorance and pessimistic views of the West ignores the point of departure on the development ladder that many exploited and destabilized countries had. Arguably, the improvements of the last decades may be seen as a miracle, rather than a failure, if one were to stop only comparing global growth figures. Certainly, a critical lens is necessary in order to know how to improve any situation, but restraint towards generalisations and assumptions about the world is one elemental first step towards understanding it. The website Gapminder.org where you can access and compare development statistics between countries and regions, designed by

Rosling together with his son and daughter-in-law, was his legacy in order to combat the ignorance.

“**THE SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE** is possible”, was Rosling’s mantra during his second TED talk as he presented the graphs of the remarkable global development in the past decades. If our planet is going to survive, people need to live on more or less equal terms. The more developed and richer countries need to radically cut their carbon emissions while providing whatever assistance is needed for less developed nations. “The seemingly impossible is possible” Hans chants again, unbuttoning his shirt on the stage in front of the big crowd, revealing a sparkling tank top underneath. “The seemingly impossible is possible” -he continues, briefly leaving the stage, only to return with a large bayonet in his hands. “The seemingly impossible is possible” he says, pushing the blade down his throat, skilfully swallowing it whole. ●

## Babies per woman

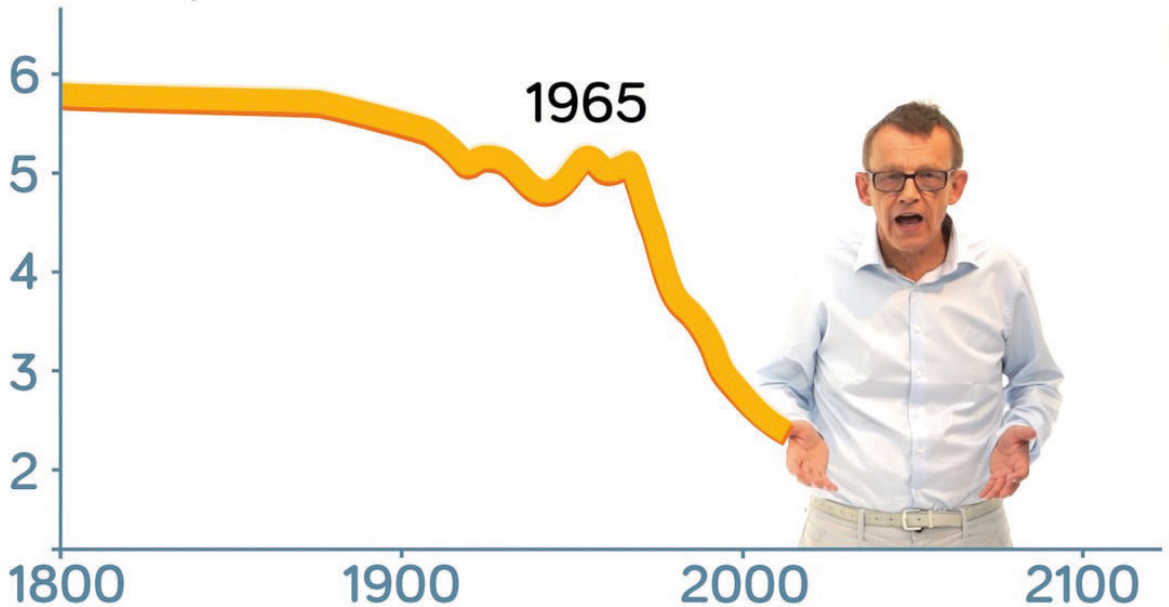


Photo: Vimeo



*Photo: Mike Wilson/Unsplash*

## HIV/AIDS IN TODAY'S WORLD FROM A 1980S-PERSPECTIVE: A BRIGHT FUTURE?

When talking about HIV and AIDS today, the situation is often compared to the situation during the beginning of the epidemic in the 1980s. Media reports often argue that a lot has changed for the better. But what are the issues that are still problematic? And what were the positive developments back then, that we might have forgotten about?

**D**uring the 1980s, being diagnosed with HIV usually meant that there was no hope. Being infected with HIV would eventually lead to the development of AIDS. As a result, patient's immune system would be infected to such an extent that a simple cold could potentially be lethal. Out of the 270 people diagnosed with HIV in the US in 1981, 121 died within the same year. Moreover, knowledge about HIV/AIDS, their consequences and the ways one could be infected were mostly based on misinformation, assumptions, and prejudices. Patients diagnosed with HIV/AIDS were often treated as pariahs; seen as having the disease brought upon themselves through immoral behaviors, such as drug use or sex work.

**MANY THINGS HAVE** changed since the 1980s: HIV does not equal an early death anymore. Even though the HIV-infected population is still rising, this is mainly because less and less people die of the disease every year. New treatments are available, which enable patients to live fairly normal lives, despite weakened immune systems. Contracting HIV, per se, does not lead to the development of AIDS anymore. Moreover, when diagnosed early, the development of the disease can be countered. The progress of HIV can even be slowed down to such an extent that the virus in a patient's body becomes 'undetectable', which means it is unable to infect another person. What has been described as a real breakthrough came in 2016: for the first time after receiving a new treatment as part of a trial, a patient in the UK showed no signs of HIV in his blood. Media outlets have labeled as the first step towards a full cure for HIV.

**AT FIRST GLANCE**, it seems like great progress has been made in combatting HIV/AIDS since the 1980s. For an infected patient, there is now the possibility to live life to the fullest, without worrying about an early death. There are even concrete developments taking place towards finding a complete cure. Also, due to the spread of more knowledge and information about HIV/AIDS, some of the stigmas seems to have dissipated, giving a 'social' relief to the people living with the disease. However, this rosy outlook is unfortunately not true for everyone. Even though we have come a long way since the 1980s, there are still several

## “MANY THINGS HAVE CHANGED SINCE THE 1980S: HIV DOES NOT EQUAL AN EARLY DEATH ANYMORE

issues that are still overlooked in media reports about progress and development on this issue.

**FIRST OF ALL**, despite the recent progress in medical treatments, not everyone has equal access to them. In 2016, the same year when for the first time a patient was possibly cured of AIDS, an estimated 47% of the 36.7 million people living with HIV worldwide had no access to basic treatment. Data from UNAIDS website show that this figure rises to 57% when it concerns children aged between 0-142. Many of these live in Sub-Saharan Africa, where the effects of the disease can be felt on a big scale in wider society, such as in the early death of many young men or women with children. In such cases, many families are not only disrupted but are also left without a breadwinner or income, thus making the access to treatment for other HIV-infected family members even more difficult.

**ANOTHER IMPORTANT ASPECT** of the HIV/AIDS-crisis is stigmatization. Foremost, the stigmatization of those infected with HIV has in no way completely ended yet as the disease is still often associated with death and behavior that is considered morally wrong such as sex work or homosexuality. Furthermore, adequate knowledge about the disease and its transmission is still lacking in regions and among certain groups, which leads to a lot of misinformation. People (perceived to be) infected with HIV worldwide still have difficulties being open about their disease, out of a fear of discrimination. But it is not only stigmatizations of those that are infected that is the only issue here; in various societies certain vulnerable social groups – e.g. members of the LGBTQ-community or sex workers – experience strong discrimination and marginalization in the first place. This makes them more likely to engage in behavior that comes

with a strong risk of contracting HIV such as unprotected sexual intercourse or intravenous drug use. A major problem stemming from stigmatization of both HIV-infected people and risk-prone groups, in general, is that many are being denied health services by professionals, which is one of the causes of the high number of HIV-infected without treatment.

**FORTUNATELY, NOT ALL** is bad. As most media argues, we have come a long way since the 1980s, when the transmission of HIV to humans is thought to have started. This is especially true for the developments in treatments and in possible cures that were deemed unthinkable in the 1980s. However, when looking back at this decade, one should be careful to not only look at the negative side and downplay what was already achieved. When it comes to the encouraging the prevention of HIV/AIDS and the care of patients, a lot was being done early on. For example, the World Health Organisation (WHO) held a meeting during the 1980s to assess the global situation about HIV and AIDS, and halfway through the decade, many countries had already adopted AIDS/HIV policies in their national agendas. A lot was being done, not only on the global level, but also on community level. In various cities in the U.S., such as New York and San Francisco, community organizations support-

ing HIV patients rose. These were very successful in organizing informal networks of caregivers to people with AIDS. Very ill patients that were left behind by the institutional care system, because for example, local nurses refused to help patients with AIDS, could through these networks find people that were willing to take care of them without prejudices and stigma. Even though it did not directly lead to better treatments, it made the lives of the patients a little easier.

**ALL IN ALL**, whereas the media often describes current developments in the field of HIV/AIDS as positive, it is necessary not to close our eyes to the ones that are left behind. Stigmatization of patients is still prevalent, and not everyone has access to even basic treatment. Of course, we have to commend the progress that is being made when it comes to the development of treatment and the care and compassion that many patients receive nowadays. However, we should also be able to look outside this bubble of positivism and make sure that the progress reaches all social groups all over the world. One might argue that we should do what was being done in the earlier mentioned care networks in cities in the United States during the 1980s: we have to look out for the ones that are left behind and make sure that for them the future will be bright too. ●



*Photo: Jon Rawlinson, Flickr*




# A NEW APPROACH TO FIGHTING GLOBAL POVERTY

Everyday violence is one of the main causes of global poverty. Every conversation on global poverty that does not include the problem of violence must be deemed not serious. According to Gary Haugen, humanitarian aid programs have not addressed one of the reasons why people live in extreme poverty. Gary illuminates this issue through some riveting examples and chilling facts in a new approach he calls "The Locust Effect".







**H**umanitarian aid is a fundamental expression of the universal values of solidarity between people and moral imperative. It is one of the greatest successes in history relating to human compassion. Let's start by looking at some of the good news. 37 years ago, 40,000 children died every day of malnutrition. Today, the number is down to 17,000. In the same timeframe, 37 years ago, people who lived on 1,25\$ a day, which is defined as extreme poverty, have been reduced by 35 percent. From 2000 to 2010, the number of people living in extreme poverty have been reduced by 21 percent, only in those 10 years. These are pretty impressive numbers. Experts say that if we continue on this path, no one will be living in extreme poverty in 2030.

**HOWEVER, THERE IS** another side of this issue which is often overlooked. If you move the 1,25 dollar mark up to 2 dollars per day, you will see that the people who were stuck at 1,25 dollars 37 years ago are pretty much still there, now earning 2 dollars (more than 2 billion). That is because most of the traditional foreign aid and humanitarian programs do not actually address one very crucial aspect of why people are stuck in this harsh poverty. The UN Millennium Development Goals jump-started the world into collectively fighting global poverty. The document did not, however address or even mention the violence against the poor.

**GARY HAUGEN, THE** founder of International Justice Mission and the co-author of *The Locust Effect* sheds some needed light on this issue. Haugen is a civil rights lawyer with some first-hand experience in the fight against global poverty. Haugen launches a theory which he calls "the locust effect". The locust descended on the American Midwest in 1875 and destroyed not only that year's harvest, but devastated years of hard work for farmers who just wanted a better life, in just one day. Haugen uses this to describe the effect of violence in poor regions. It can swarm down like locust and destroy all progress. It does not matter what the poor people did to the land because if the locust swarmed down, it was lost. *The Locust Effect* highlights how even though the UN, countries, private companies, and people try so hard to alleviate people from poverty, it will be constant as long as violence is present.

**ACCORDING TO THE UN,** 4 billion people live outside law enforcement and that "most poor people live outside it". The problem is not that they do not have laws, but rather the absence of stable institutions and people who actually enforce them. Courts, police and local/national governments are so corrupt and broken that they are not able or willing to enforce the law and therefore shield these people from everyday violence. If one were to survey poor communities, the survey would find that what the residents fear is not war or genocide, but violence. Everyday violence is the biggest threat to their living conditions.



**THIS DOES NOT** mean that traditional humanitarian aid is bad, on the contrary, but if you cannot restrain the hands of violence that take it away from poor people, the long-term effects will be very disappointing. Financial auditors could not even find 1% of humanitarian aid going to the prevention of the everyday violence. Criminal violence is a very complex social phenomenon with many contributing factors. Haugen argues that any effort to stop that violence, without a credible regional law enforcement, will fail. You hear stories of a new water well in the developing world, where women who go to fetch water and gets raped on their way. International organizations or local communities then move the water well, that shorten the distance for the women, and view it as a solution to the

problem. However, rapists are still at large in the community. That is a non-acceptable solution.

**THE GIRL EFFECT** is a theory that highlights that the ultimate way women can get out of poverty is to attend school and get an education. In a lot of regions and countries in the world, women have the possibility to go to school, but many do not because it is simply too dangerous walking to and from school every day. You might decide to fund the building of the school, hear that it got built, and then feel very proud of it. You probably will not hear, however, that nobody is attending the school because it is too dangerous to do so.

“IN SOUTH EAST ASIA, YOU ARE MORE LIKELY TO GET STRUCK BY LIGHTNING THAN GOING TO JAIL FOR ENSLAVING A POOR PERSON

- GARY HAUGEN





“IN MANY DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, HIGH LEVELS OF CRIME AND VIOLENCE NOT ONLY UNDERMINE PEOPLE’S SAFETY ON AN EVERYDAY LEVEL, THEY ALSO UNDERMINE BROADER DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS TO IMPROVE GOVERNANCE AND REDUCE POVERTY”  
- THE WORLD BANK



Gary Haugen receiving an award

**LOOKING AT THESE** facts and stories, one cannot help but feel a little pessimistic and hopeless about the fight against global poverty. A very insightful example made by Haugen, highlights how easy it can be to enforce the law in areas where it has been absent, and to end the violence that makes it difficult for people to escape poverty. The Philippines serves as an example, where the Grant Foundation shared their expertise and resources to the local law enforcement. After only four short years, they were able to transform the corrupt local law enforcement, and there was a decrease in sexual abuse and assaults with 79 percent.

**GIVEN THE RIGHT** tools and insight, the strengthening of law enforcement will have a positive outcome, and serve as a step closer to minimizing poverty. One could see a positive future, where the

amount of people living in extreme poverty are minimized drastically by restraining the hands of violence. Broken law enforcement can be fixed, violence can be brought to an end, expertise and resources can be shared when the developing world is creating new and public systems of justice. There are several international organizations now funding projects to train and assist local law enforcement in developing countries. Sharing expertise and resources have proven, in many cases, to be extremely successful. To Gary Haugen the path forward is clear. We have to stop making violence indispensable to the fight against global poverty. Haugen’s message stands firm: The end of poverty requires the end of violence. We have to restrain the hands of violence to be able to alleviate some of those that are living in extreme poverty. ●

# AFRICA'S TIME TO SHINE?

"U.S. Investors Are Missing Out On  
Africa's Economic Growth"  
– Forbes 2016

"Africa: A hopeful continent"  
– The Economist 2013

"The 21st century is The African  
Century" – ONE 2017

**E**xperts often praise Africa's integration into the global economy as the key to a brighter future for the continent. Liberalization and market integration seem to be the recipe for success. Open markets bring economic development, which lifts people out of poverty, and that is something many African countries are in great need of.

**THE MANTRA OF** liberalization had one of its highs during the 1980s when structural adjustment programs were implemented in many developing countries as a response to the global economic crisis. Among other things, those programs would grant struggling countries debt relief and monetary assistance under the condition that they would privatize and liberalize their economies. In many cases, however, these policies did not bring about the wished-for effect. This, in combination with the troubled colonial past of the continent, strength-

ened the negative picture of the imperialistic West.

**WITH THIS IN** mind, it is not too surprising that the new friend and helper from the East poses a tempting alternative to the Western system. We are, of course, talking about China. With the Middle Kingdom entering the scene, scholars are sitting up in their chairs and rubbing their eyes.

**AS CHINA HAS** recently entered the arena of the developed countries, it seems to want a bigger piece of the world-power-cake. And Africa is one of the regions where it has found unused potential. China has become the largest trading partner in the African region since its growing industries demand more and more resources in the form of raw materials. Furthermore, China has become increasingly active in financing development projects in Africa. In recent years, China has provided about one-sixth of the external infrastructure financing for Africa.



**WHICH BRINGS US** to the largest infrastructure project in the world: China's Belt and Road Initiative, also known as BRI. A network of inter-linked rail lines, roads, oil and gas pipelines, and communication networks running all the way from Chongqing in China to Duisburg in Germany in combination with a maritime net of shipping lines is supposed to resemble the ancient Silk Road. The project will involve 65 countries and cost around one trillion US-Dollars.

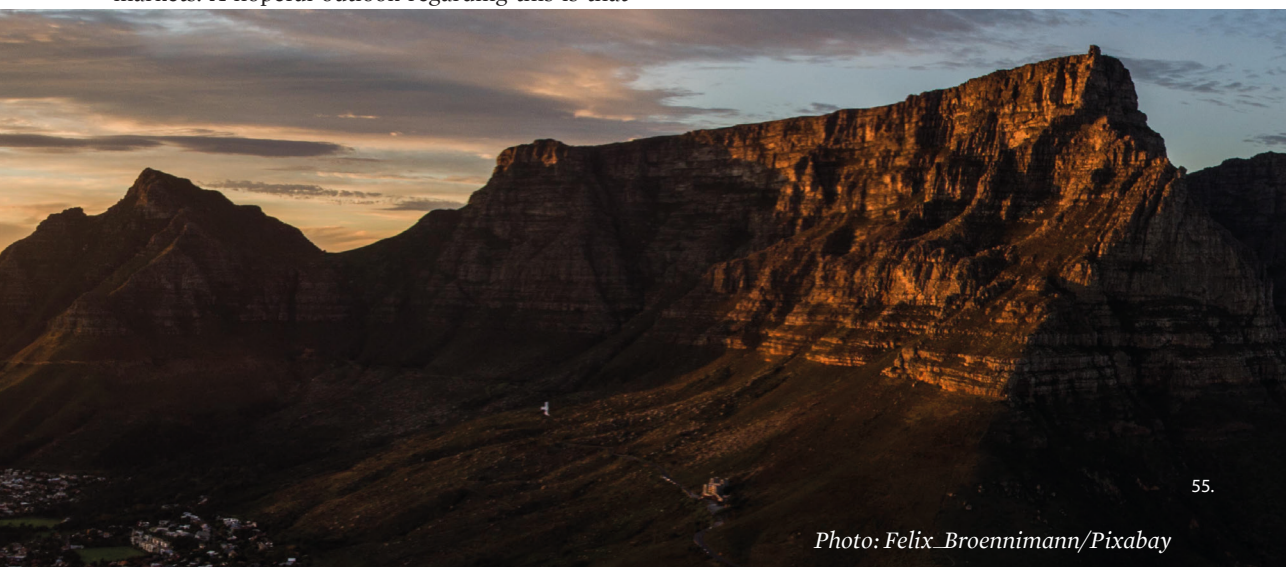
**THE BRI HOLDS** a lot of potential benefits for Africa as it would connect it both to Eastern as well as European markets. Lacking infrastructure is still one of the main obstacles to economic integration both within Africa as well as to other markets. The BRI will not only influence Kenya and Egypt, which are directly integrated into the project, but also many other African countries since the Chinese are funding a lot of additional infrastructure projects to connect countries like Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Tanzania to the BRI route.

**WHILE THIS ALL** sounds promising, there are a few concerns. African countries have gone through many cycles of boom and bust and the question is whether the "new growth" will actually be sustainable. It has shown in the past that growth based on the export of raw materials could not be sustained because of the strong price fluctuations on the global market. A large portion of the foreign direct investment is, however, still directed into the natural resource sector, among them the prominent mining sector. Whether the "new growth" will last, depends heavily on African countries' ability to diversify their exports and enter more stable markets. A hopeful outlook regarding this is that

more and more labour moves out of the agricultural sector and into manufacturing and services. Also, while the Chinese state-owned investments go largely into natural resource extraction, studies have shown that private Chinese businesses invest to a large extent into the manufacturing and service sectors. Demographic changes are helping these trends along. While China's population is aging and the wages are on the rise for the reduced labour force, Africa's population is growing at a fast rate and the majority of it are young people. Africa thus provides a source of cheaper labour, which can work as a motor for outsourcing parts of value chains from Asia to Africa.

**A LARGE QUESTION** mark in Africa's future is whether the new BRI trade routes will indeed, as China is asserting, bring about a "win-win-situation" for everyone involved. It would be delusional to say that South-South co-operations are a complete game changer for Africa's future. To China, Africa is not only a welcome source of raw materials, it is also a huge export market: China, just like Western countries, exports more products to Africa than it imports, therefore de facto taking more money from Africa than it is giving it.

**IN THE END**, it seems that whether Africa's future will be brighter than its present and past will depend to a large extent on African agency. Will African leaders manage to steer foreign direct investment into sustainable sectors? Will they be able to turn the new relationship with China into a beneficial one? Africa's future remains uncertain, but there's a new sense of perspective and excitement in the air.●





# I'D MOVE MOUNTAINS FOR YOU



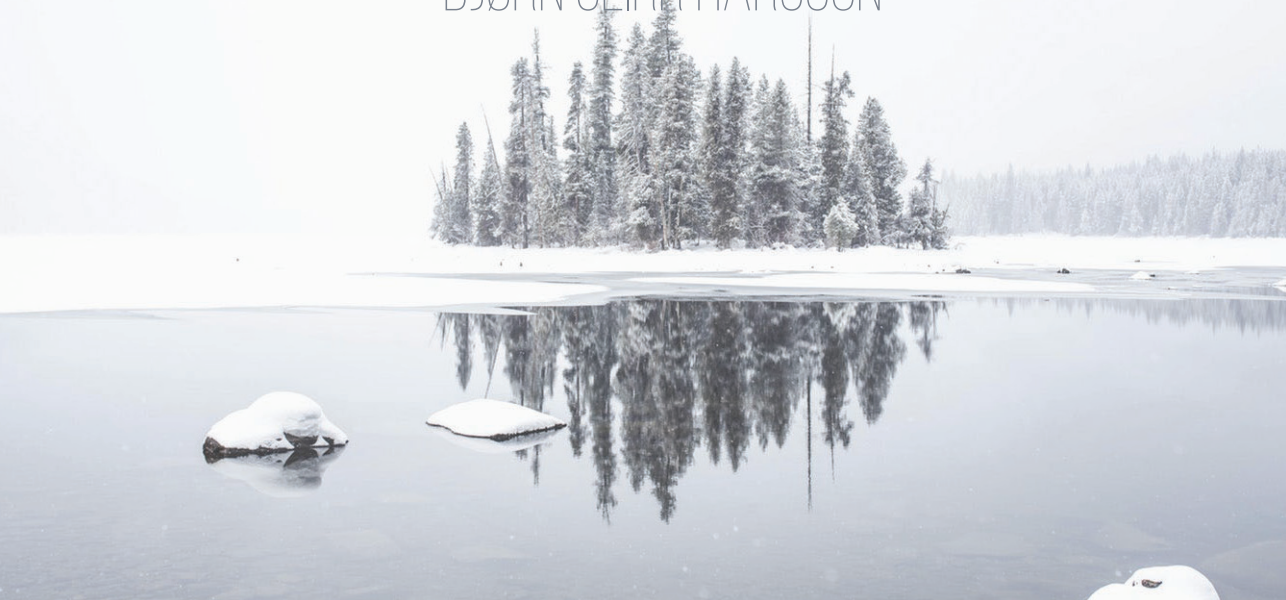


Around the world people bleed and die for the right to claim, save, or extend their territory. Other countries plan to build walls to keep the outsiders out. The idea that one state would fight to willingly give a part of their territory to a neighbour sounds unbelievable. Yet that is what is happening in Norway.



# “WE JUST WANT TO GIVE [FINLAND] SOMETHING REALLY NICE WHEN THEY CELEBRATE 100 YEARS AS A FREE NATION

- BJØRN GEIRR HARSSON



*Photo: Ryan James Christopher*

**I**n 1972 geophysicist Bjørn Geirr Harsson came up with an idea that could have been a show of unprecedented kindness in the world where many states still squabble over adding a few extra meters to their territory. While doing a gravity survey on the border between Norway and Finland, Harsson realized that the Finnish territory ended on the hillside of mount Halti, while its summit was in Norway. That in itself was hardly a world-changing discovery, and if it was any other mountain, he would probably have jotted down his measurements and continued his research. However, the hillside of Halti was the highest point in Finland, and so an idea entered Harsson's mind: why would not Norway gift the summit to their neighbour? So he penned a letter to the foreign ministry of Norway.

**THAT WAS 45** years ago. In 2015 Norway launched a “Birthday Mountain” campaign, to adjust the border in time for the Finnish 100th anniversary of independence in 2017. The mountain peak is located only 31 meters away from the border, so it would require a minimal adjustment. Arguably, how the current border was drawn back in the 18th century is an error, and, according to Harsson, “geophysically illogical.” The mountain

itself is located in a remote, uninhabited area beyond the Arctic Circle. Gifting the summit to Finland would raise their highest elevation point by 41 meters, whereas in Norway, Halti is not even among the top 200 highest peaks. Therefore, moving the border would hardly be a significant change to Norway, but, nonetheless, greatly appreciated in Finland. It would not be large-scale politics and it is not meant to be. “It is a gift from the heart of the Norwegians to Finland, so we do not expect anything back,” said Harsson, “we just want to give them something really nice when they celebrate 100 years as a free nation.”

**THE IDEA WAS** met with a tremendous support from the public, both in Norway and abroad. Everyone, from the streets of Oslo to American media seemed to love the idea. People from all over the world joined in the social media movement and Norwegians started sending letters to the government in Oslo to show their support. Even most of the Norwegian politicians were on board. As the anniversary approached, a short film called “Battle for the Birthday Mountain” was created to explain the reasoning behind the gift: what on the surface seems like a cute and slightly irrelevant idea, actually carries a deeper meaning. In the words of one



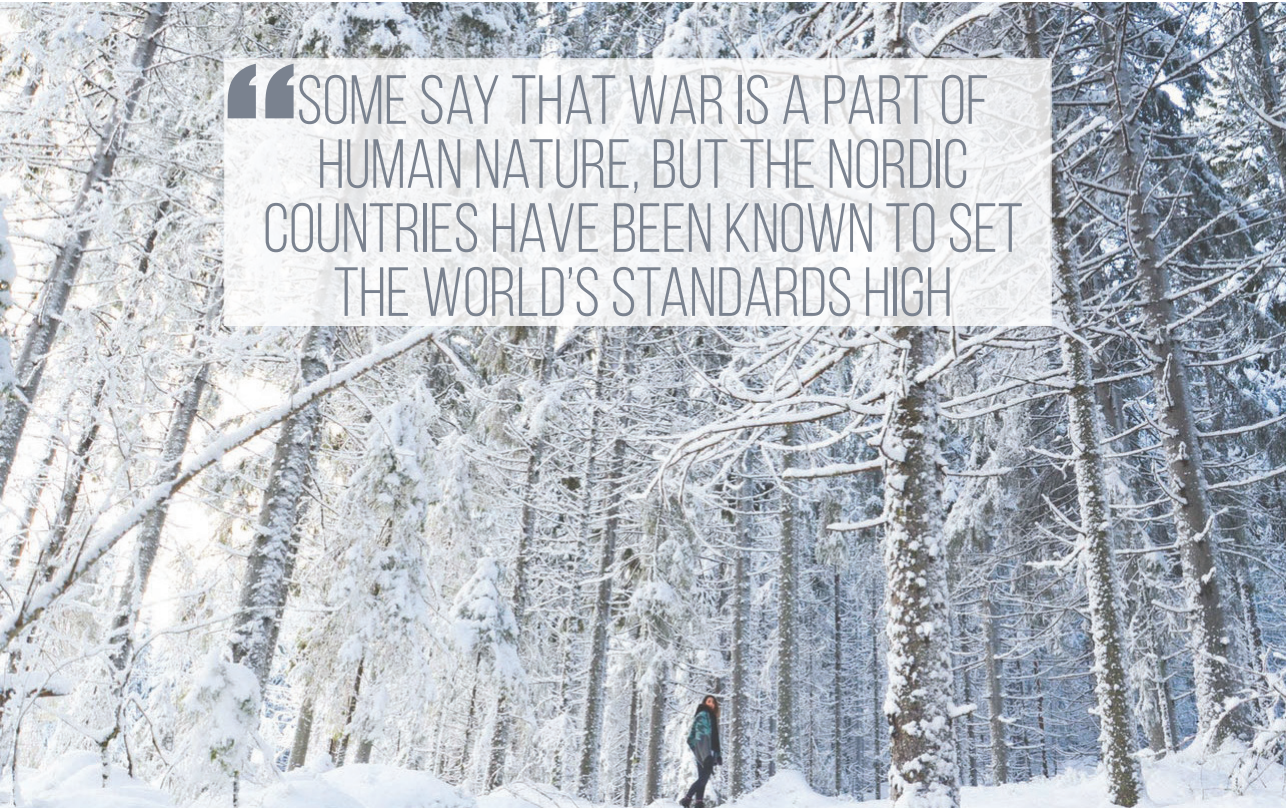
of the biggest supporters, Svein Oddvar Leiros, mayor of the municipality of Kåfjord where Halti is located: “I hope that it may be an example for other countries that are fighting over their territories.” It is a commonly echoed sentiment. As Norway is the country that awards the Nobel Peace Prize, Harsson said that it would set a good example of how to treat your neighbouring countries. It wouldn’t cost Norway anything to adjust the border, but it would mean a lot to the Finns.

**THE ONLY OBSTACLE** was the law – according to the constitution, Norway is “indivisible and inalienable.” However, not all experts agree that it has to be interpreted so straightforward. Oyvind Ravna, a law professor from the University of Tromsø, said that border adjustments are permitted. Further on, Bjørn Geirr Harsson says that this part of the Norwegian constitution dates back to the early 19th century and the fears that Norway would get divided during the Napoleonic wars, not worries over losing “a tiny patch of barren Arctic mountainside.” Despite that, the Prime Minister of Norway, Erna Solberg, said that whereas she loved the idea, the legal problems were insurmountable. Instead of a mountain, Norway would give Finland a monument and money for their anniversary.

**THERE WERE MORE** opposition voices. Aili Keskitalo, president of the Sami Parliament of Norway, said that the whole idea represents a colonialist way of thinking. How can one give away something that does not belong to them? Halti is a holy mountain to the Sami people, and, according to Keskitalo, setting and redrawing borders have only created problems for the Sami. Another Sami leader, Beaska Niillas, said that if the mountain was to be given to anyone, it should be the Sami people. There is a fear that if the summit was given to Finland, it would become a tourist attraction with cabins and cafés, hence disturbing their sacred space.

**ON DECEMBER THE 6th** 2017 Finland celebrated 100 years of independence from Russia. Though the plan did not go through and Finland’s highest elevation point did not change, the idea prevails. Bjørn Geirr Harsson said that he is not taking “no” for an answer, and that the battle for the birthday mountain will continue. Some say that war is a part of human nature, but the Nordic countries have been known to set the world’s standards high, in every thing from education and gender equality, to living conditions, and environmental brighter future, and that other countries will want to follow in Norway’s footsteps. ●

*Photo: Tommaso Fornoni*

A photograph of a person walking through a dense forest covered in snow. The trees are tall and thin, with snow-laden branches. The ground is a thick blanket of white snow. The person is wearing a dark jacket and is walking away from the camera towards the center of the frame.

“SOME SAY THAT WAR IS A PART OF HUMAN NATURE, BUT THE NORDIC COUNTRIES HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO SET THE WORLD’S STANDARDS HIGH

# BREAKING THE HEGEMONY TAKING DOWN PETRODOLLAR

China, the world's largest oil importer, recently announced that its crude oil contracts will be denominated in Renminbi (Chinese yuan), convertible into gold. A direct challenge to the US dollar, this power move on the part of China has caused a serious uproar in the global arena. The de-dollarisation of oil poses a threat to the hegemony of the US dollar, which has maintained its status as the global reserve currency since 1944.



**T**he dominance of the United States dollar (USD) can be traced back to the Bretton Woods Agreement in 1944. Under the Agreement, an international monetary system based on a stable exchange rates regime was established, whereby currencies were pegged to the price of gold. The USD fixed at \$35 an ounce and directly convertible to gold, assumed the role of global reserve currency as the US possessed the largest gold reserves in the world. During the 1960s, continued US trade deficits, especially due to spending on the Vietnam War and Great Society, began to shake the confidence in the dollar. Already regarded as being overvalued, with money supply increasing beyond the US gold holdings, other countries started converting their USD reserves into gold. In August 1971, President Richard Nixon unilaterally suspended the Bretton Woods gold standard, i.e. conversion of the dollar into gold, as the US gold holdings were shrinking. This “Nixon shock” resulted in a free-floating dollar, without being backed by any physical commodity, and left countries to opt for different exchange agreements, including the flexible/floating exchange rates prevalent today. Despite attempts to revive the gold standard, it was ultimately abandoned in March 1973. The gold standard was replaced by the existing fiat system under which a legal tender (paper money), without having any intrinsic value, is backed by the issuing government, and its value is based on the economy and stability of the country instead of a physical commodity.

**DURING THIS TIME** period, a series of events took place. After the collapse of the gold standard in 1973, gold was charged for oil. This was followed by the oil crisis of 1973-1974 where the Arab members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) had used oil as a ‘weapon’ by placing embargos on countries, such as the US, the UK and Canada, for supporting Israel in the October War of 1973. In an effort to dismantle the ‘oil weapon’ and to benefit from the oil wealth, the Nixon administration made the “petrodollar” agreement with Saudi Arabia. The agreement, in essence, stipulated that in exchange for US military aid and equipment, Saudi Arabia would sell oil exclusively denominated in USD and invest the surplus money back into the US treasuries (government security debts), in other words, “recycle” the petrodollar. This ‘secret’ i.e. Saudis confidential purchases

of US treasuries, was finally unearthed last year by Bloomberg, when information regarding the US ‘debt secret’ of over 40 years was released by the Federal Government under the Freedom of Information Act. The effect of this agreement with Saudi Arabia, holding the most proven oil reserves in the Middle East, was that by 1975 all members of the OPEC had started selling oil in USD, resulting in continued dependence on the USD while fortifying its status as the global reserve currency.

**THIS HAS NOT** gone without notice. In 2000, Saddam Hussein, threatening to stop Iraq’s oil exports, got approval from the United Nations, under the “Oil-for-Food Programme”, to sell oil in euros instead of USD which was the currency of the “enemy state”. In the wake of the financial crisis of 2008, Zhou Xiaochuan, Governor of the People’s Bank of China (PBoC), called for the reformation of the international monetary system. He raised concerns about the conflicting goals of countries issuing reserve currencies i.e. the Triffin Dilemma, and the inherent vulnerabilities and spillover effects on other economies. To avoid the Triffin Dilemma (outflow of ‘extra’ currency to provide liquidity to the world resulting in balance of payment deficits for the issuing country) and eliminate inherent risks associated with national reserve currencies, Zhou proposed adoption of John Maynard Keynes’s supra-national currency unit called “Bancor” (based on the value of 30 representative commodities), while in the meantime utilizing International Monetary Fund’s Special

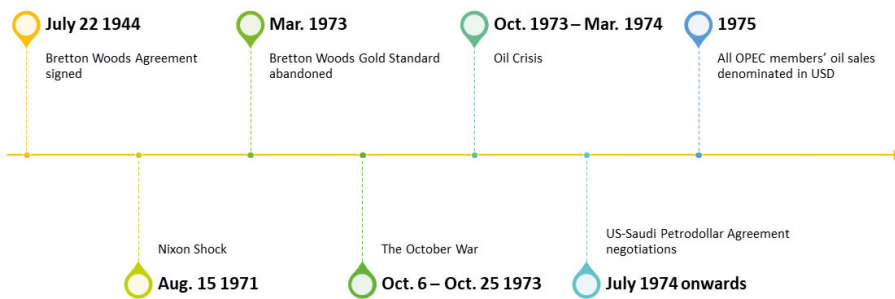
“**RUSSIA HAS ALSO  
ADVOCATED FOR A  
SUPRA-NATIONAL  
CURRENCY**”

Drawing Rights (SDR). SDR is an international reserve asset made by the IMF, which can be exchanged for “freely usable currencies”. The value of SDR is based on a basket of major currencies (or the “freely usable currencies”) which includes USD, euro, Japanese yen, British pound sterling and, since September 2016, the Chinese yuan.



**CHINA IS NOT** alone in this endeavor. Russia has also advocated for a supra-national currency, especially after the financial crisis of 2008. It is not just talk, actions of both countries suggest a move towards de-dollarization. Both countries have entered into bilateral currency swap (BCS) agreements involving local currencies instead of the dollar, amongst themselves and other countries. China, in a quest for the internationalization of the yuan, has announced its “petroyuan” with a catch to inspire confidence – crude oil contract priced in yuan will directly be convertible into gold. Being the top importer of crude oil, according to Carl B. Weinberg, founder and Chief Economist of High Frequency Economics, China will “compel” Sau-

litically, referring to the Cold War era where it may have had “tremendous” foreign policy advantages, but that too has become questionable today. He contends that it is not in the interest of China to replace the dollar, and in fact, during the past three decades China has done far more than the US to preserve US financial hegemony. On the other hand, Eswar Prasad, Tolani Senior Professor of Trade Policy at Cornell University, states that the yuan will never be able to replace the dollar unless China liberalizes the financial market as well as implements broader economic, political, legal and institutional reforms while limiting Beijing’s role in regulating the yuan to gain the confidence of foreign investors.



#### Key historical events 1944-1974

di Arabia to trade oil in yuan, thereby causing a paradigm shift in the oil market. The President of Venezuela, member of OPEC and possessing the largest proven oil reserves in the world, recently proposed to create a currency basket for trading crude and refined oil products that shall include Chinese yuan and Russian ruble, to “free” Venezuela from the dollar. Moreover, Russia, in order to bypass US sanctions and banking restrictions on dollar use for trade, for example in 2014, entered into a so-called barter trade with Iran, oil-for-goods, worth up to \$20 billion. Under the plan, as of March 2017, Russia is buying 100,000 barrels per day and selling Iran goods worth \$45 billion a year.

**HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO** Michael Pettis, a Professor of Finance at Guanghua School of Management at Peking University, the US does not benefit economically from the status of global currency, which is clear from it having the world’s largest trade deficit. He points out that it may benefit the US po-

**CHINA IS EXPECTED** to become the largest economy in the world before 2030, surpassing the US. With its grand projects like rebuilding the ancient Silk Road and infrastructure development of Africa, China continues to connect and expand its economic, political and military interests with a single thread of investment. It is too early to write off the clash of currencies in favour of the dollar. The question whether yuan’s rise to dethrone the dollar will result in a brighter or darker future is inherently linked to both national and international relations, politics and policies. However, the ideal path is clear – it is to adopt a supra-national currency, free from the sovereign nations’ interests with shared responsibility of the international financial system. Some would call this a step towards cosmopolitanism. ●

# Stöd Musikhjälpen 2017

## UPF FOR MUSIKHJÄLPEN 2017

Musikhjälpen is a Swedish charity event established 2008. For 144 hours each December, Musikhjälpen will broadcast live on Swedish radio P3 and live stream on SVT Play. With the engagement of the Swedish population, Musikhjälpen raises money and sheds light on forgotten humanitarian disasters, with a new theme each year. This years theme is 'Children Are Not For Sale', targeting the global sex trade and trafficking of children.

***UPF Lund will arrange a bake sale on December 11th, where all profits will be donated to Musikhjälpen 2017, keep an eye out on our facebook page for more information and how to get involved for this cause.***

***UPF's umbrella organisation UFS will have a donation box where the collected money unlimited goes for Musikhjälpen 2017 found at***

***<http://bossan.musikhjalpen.se/insamling/ufsmh17>***

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Further information, a full programme and details regarding the registration will be available on our web site in mid-December.



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