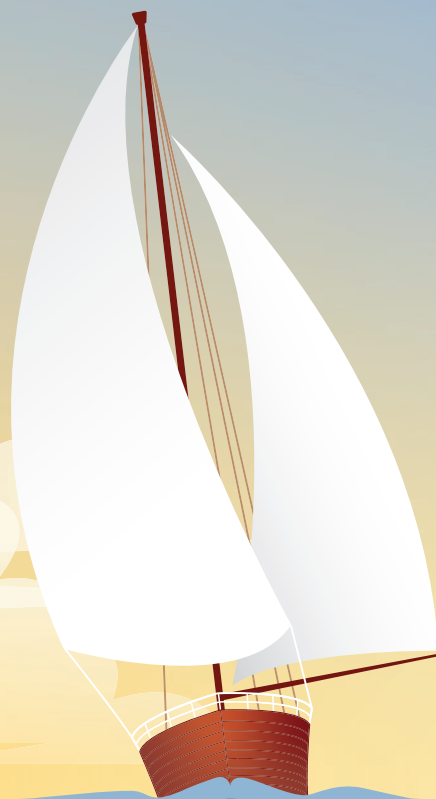


CHECKS & BALANCES

Volume 24, Issue 3



PROSPECTION

Towards the Horizon



**Sofie Raven**

Dear reader,

The academic year has almost come to an end and therefore I am welcoming you for the last time to a new edition of the Checks & Balances magazine. I want to start this editorial with a shout out to the Editorial Staff. You have worked tirelessly on all of the editions, creating intriguing stories, sharing your passions, and enchanting your readers with your designs. The entire year I have been in awe of your work and therefore I want to warmly thank you for your efforts and enthusiasm.

With the end of the academic year, we are faced with a lot of choices and thoughts for the future. Thinking about the next year, we are looking forward to choosing a new Clio committee, a minor, maybe an internship, or even a master. One would need a master's in philosophy to even be capable of making these important life decisions. Of course, our multidisciplinary bachelor programme does not help in decision-making. Our interests range from economics, to politics, to law, and history, but what is going to be the passion that will decide our career paths?

Fortunately, our lovely association will be there along every step of the way. From the Clio Buddy Programme for the freshmen to the Exchange Buddy Programme for the second years, and of course the Career Platform, Clio is there to help out and support her community. However, before we conquer the future, I think we should appreciate our summer vacation and certainly this wonderful magazine.

Enjoy reading!

On behalf of the 35th Board of Clio and with much love,

Sofie Raven

Chair of the Clio Board

**Erin Deandra Murdiadi**

Dearest gentle reader
(props to whomever understands this reference),

As the academic year slowly reaches its end, we all start to reflect on how quickly time has passed, the many memories we've made, and even things we wish we'd have done differently. Reflecting on the past is innately human, attributed to our high level of self-awareness, and not many species are blessed with such a peculiarity.

Reflecting on my own year, it is hard to express in words the immense emotions that I have for the past time working on Clio's Checks & Balances Magazines, but even more difficult to express the pride, joy and thanks I have for the Editorial Staff of '22-'23. Not only were they my committee members, editorial staff, and colleagues, but a new found family that I shall hold dear to my heart for many years to come.

Nevertheless, dwelling on the past is not something we should be stuck on. Reflecting is only useful if its lessons are learned from and used to move forward in time. Hence, we would like to offer our thoughts on what is to come, in our third and final edition,

'PROSPECTION Towards the horizon'

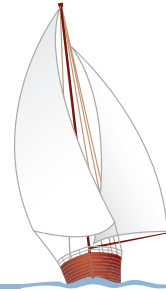
Following our trend of themes ending in -tion, we settled on *Prospection*. Not a word in common language, prospection is defined as the act of anticipating, or foresight. In psychology, it's used to describe mental representations of possible futures, which we have contextually taken up to define prospection. In the edition we discuss what is to come in the future in regards to current global contentions, as well as ongoing regional issues.

I can say with all my heart and soul that this magazine will be a great read and filled with several enlightening and engaging thoughts, and I hope that you can feel the same. I wish you all happy reading, good luck with your studies, and many thanks for picking up this magazine and taking the time to read through it.

With love, on behalf of the Editorial Staff of '22-'23,

Erin Deandra Murdiadi

Editor-in-Chief



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Navigating Rough Waters

Kenya's Bid to Achieve its Development Ambitions While Balancing the Great Power Interest

PAUL JOHANN LINDHORST

Jambo! - That is the traditional greeting in Swahili, Kenya's second official language and one of the most widely spoken ones in East Africa. The first official language in Kenya is still English – the tongue of its former colonial mother country UK, and although the country achieved independence under leader Kenyatta in 1963, it still has close ties to its former suppressor. The UK ranked 5th biggest importer of Kenyan products in 2021 and is still partnering up with the USA to assist the Kenyan government in fighting the Al-Shabaab terror group in the region. Just in 2021 the UK and Kenya renewed their Defence Cooperation Agreement. Furthermore, Kenya gets much of its weaponry from the USA, with arms trade lying at 44 million dollars between 2010-2020, making the US its 3rd biggest partner in that field.

On the other hand, Kenya is relying massively on FDI from China to achieve its "Vision Kenya 2030" which aims at making Kenya a "newly industrialising, middle-income country". The 313 Chinese investment projects in Kenya are valued at 1.55 billion dollars, way ahead of the US's 353 million dollars committed to projects in Kenya. Several huge infrastructure projects are being realised with Chinese financing. One example is the current advancements on Standard Gauge railway connecting the capital Nairobi with Mombasa on the East coast. Furthermore, last year, Huawei announced its plan with the Kenyan government to install 43000 kilometres of fibre cable in a bid to improve the country's digital infrastructure. All this will further increase China's leverage over Kenya as well as its economic and technological dependence.

Thus, we can analyse a potentially dangerous contradiction in Kenya's policymaking. As the

country expands its security partnership with Western powers, it increasingly relies on Chinese technology and investment, which could force it into difficult situations and compromises as tensions mount between China and the US. Additionally, the dwindling influence of liberal democracies can become a problem for sexual minorities in Kenya, which recently seem to be under increasing pressure in the region. While homosexuality has long been criminalized in many countries of Eastern Africa, the murder of LGBT-activist Edwin Chiloba in January and bordering Uganda's harsh new "anti-gay bill" have sparked international criticism. If "the West" loses its influence on Kenya to China, whose regime often emphasises non-intervention in other countries' internal affairs – although recent revelations about Chinese police stations abroad show that reality looks different – the possibility to take action for protection of sexual minorities is in danger. This might result in a further deterioration of the situation for the aforementioned and encourage authoritarian leaders to rule more 'hard-handed'.

This remains speculation, of course, but what is sure is that Kenya will have to navigate a sketchy foreign policy environment for the foreseeable future. Luckily, Kenya is arguably better prepared than most since it is an outstanding example as it is the only UN host country in the global south. The capital Nairobi is home to one of only four global UN offices and to the HQ of the UN Environment Program. The diplomatic experience and infrastructure should mean Kenya is relatively well set for future challenges - we will see in due time. It is definitely worth keeping up with Kenya and the countries in the Horn of Africa!



Sudan's Fragile Future

How Can a Civil War be Averted and Democratic Transition be Ensured?

SOPHIA ANGELOVA

Sudan has been engulfed by yet another violent conflict amid the power struggle between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Tensions between the two most dominant factions in Sudan had been building up for months when on April 15th, 2023, fighting erupted in the capital city of Khartoum. Meanwhile, cease-fire agreements have continuously been violated, the conflict has spread to other parts of Sudan and hundreds of civilians have been killed. This has dire consequences on Sudan's path to democratisation and creates the potential for a protracted civil war, which also has many foreign entanglements and could alter the geopolitical dynamic in the region.

In 2019 the SAF, led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the parliamentary group RSF led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo better known as Hemedti collectively led a coup which successfully overthrew long-standing dictator Omar al-Bashir who had been in power since 1989. What followed was the implementation of a military-civilian provisional government creating the prospect for democratic transition in a country, which since its creation in 1956 has historically been under military rule. However, as military and civilian leaders struggled to reconcile differences and respond to international pressures for the formation of a stable and democratically elected government in 2021 the military seized full control of the country preying on its already fragile state.

In the passing months the relationship between Hemedti and Burhan has deteriorated, and the two leaders have grown increasingly hostile towards each other as Burhan has demanded that the RSF be dissolved and integrated into the regular army. Sudan's road to democracy has been stren-

uous and largely unfruitful, however the most recent conflict has further derailed the process. The fighting that broke out in April claimed the lives of hundreds of people and has already resulted in the displacement of 400,000 people to bordering countries such as Egypt, Chad, Ethiopia and South Sudan. The longer the conflict drags on without peaceful resolution and a cease-fire agreement, the greater the risk of a protracted civil war whose ripple effect will be felt in neighbouring countries that could potentially lead to an escalation into a regional conflict.

The prospect for the intensification of the conflict is largely dependent on how foreign powers position themselves and how they respond to the current crisis facing Sudan.

Both sides have already formulated important alliances. On one hand Hemedti has cultivated partnerships with Russia and the United Arab Emirates and Libya, as well as the European Union. Burhan on the other hand has drawn closer ties most notably to Egypt and Saudi Arabia. This is very significant because external powers can exert a great level of influence over the outcome of fighting in Sudan and transform the conflict from a domestic to a regional one. Both Egypt and Libya have already supplied weapons to the SAF and RSF respectively. Wagner – a Russian mercenary group has also contributed with artillery to the RSF thereby bringing unprecedented changes to the regional equilibrium.

Foreign involvement in the conflict is both inevitable and desirable, however the way that external powers proceed is of utmost importance. In order to scale back on hostilities, diffuse the situation and continue Sudan's democratic transition peripheral powers must present a united front in order to prevent Sudan's slide into a civil war by coming up with a lasting ceasefire agreement. Abstaining from picking sides in this conflict is paramount. Moreover, foreign powers must work closely with the Sudanese civil society in drafting a comprehensive and effective accord for the creation of a civilian-led government and thus continue Sudan's journey towards democracy.





Religion into the Future

A Dialogue on Contemporary Effects and Future Prospects of Religion

ERIN MURDIADI & KOEN MOERMAN

Religion has undeniably played a major role in society, and it still does today. With thousands of religions, faith groups, and denominations worldwide, it is as omnipresent as the supposed God(s) its followers worship. Continuously evolving throughout history and in the present day, from polytheist tribes to monotheist global religions, it begs the question; how will religion's role in human society evolve in the time to come?

Erin

To understand how religion may impact us moving into the future, we need to understand what religion is at its core. In essence, religion, to most, is a structure of faith that one follows. It is a wholly complex interconnected system that consists of certain practices, morals, referential texts, sanctified places, and prophecies related to the spiritual and transcendental.

Koen

Indeed, understanding religion is paramount to this conversation. In addition, understanding its practitioners is of utmost importance, because the interconnected complex nature of religion can only be sustained by those who live it. Therefore, it helps to understand the role religion plays in their lives. How does it resonate with them? On the surface, it seems that religion, for many, is a place to find fulfilment, and deepen their beliefs with aligned minds. On a deeper, perhaps subconscious level, I'd argue that religion answers an intrinsic fear, programmed in us humans in our very cores. Our survival instinct dictates the need for belongingness, belongingness to a similar-to-us group. It is this, what has feeded, and continues to feed religion's existence.

Erin

I wouldn't necessarily say that people follow a religion to answer the intrinsic fear of belonging. If that was the case, then everybody would be religious. There are thousands of other methods people use and outlets people have to combat our very human intrinsic fears, not to say religion is not one of them, but it is not the main reason people become religious.

I think that the argument could be relevant only for those who are truly following a religion on the basis of community. Those who are born into a religious family have grown up in that environment and hence would

be shunned if they do not follow tradition. The argument does not apply to those who find it later in life nor those who do not ever delve into the sphere. Those who find it later in life may find comfort in the fact that they are living correctly and will end up in heaven if they follow God's word. However, many don't even think to dive into it, despite their awareness of these comforting thoughts. The way one connects or does not connect with religion is entirely up to oneself. Would you not think so?

Koen

I'd argue that everyone answers their fear of not belonging differently, with some joining other group(s), or finding sufficient comfort in their groups assigned by birth; like gender, family or culture. It doesn't inevitably lead one to religion, but it may to some.

The way one experiences and chooses to think about their connection to religion is entirely up to oneself, indeed. However, this does not rule out the possibility of underlying reasons, for example, unconscious fears, which affect one's needs and actions in regards to religion.

Because religion has been in mankind's life for a long time now, it is deeply entwined in our society. It has not been a static force over the past decades, its importance has been fluctuating, but overall it has been structurally declining. Yet, it is still relevant to think about its influence on contemporary society. What is your take on the present-day influence of religion on a field like politics?

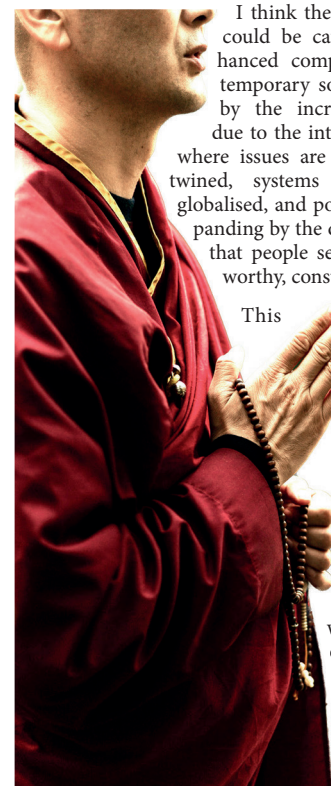
Erin

In my opinion, religion previously had a significant role in politics but recent times has shown it diminishing. This concept of moving away from religion is called secularisation. Pre-secularisation, society saw political leaders, or monarchs, bound to religion. They were seen as 'gifts from God' and were ruling under religious authority. However, religious authority in a majority of European societies and their colonial offshoots started to decline in the middle of the nineteenth century. The people became progressively cognisant of their own place in the world and began resenting the power that one could achieve through religious hierarchies. This shows that secularisation was not against religious practices specifically, but rather the power structures that it had built between the Church and the ruling monarchs.

Understanding that religious structures have crumbled from secularisation but religious practices and tradition continue on shows that religion still has a hold on us. There are many instances where politics is still very closely tied to religion. For example, when a US President is sworn into office, they, by convention, have to raise their right hand and place the left on a Bible. The British Sovereign, when in power, holds the title 'Defender of the Faith and Supreme Governor of the Church of England'. All these are examples of the continued practices in the realm of politics. But what about now?

Koen

Nowadays, it seems like we are taking a step backwards on the declining influence of religion. The West, which is the prime example of secularisation and diminishing religious influences, has seen a rise in right-wing, conservative parties in national parliaments. These parties often proudly associate themselves with the religious norms and values of the 'old days'. Italy recently welcomed their new prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, who actively campaigned about taking pride in religious values.



I think the religious relapse could be caused by the enhanced complexities in contemporary society, intensified by the increased awareness due to the internet. In a world where issues are extremely intertwined, systems are extensively globalised, and possibilities are expanding by the day, it is plausible that people search for a trustworthy, constant factor in life.

This recurrence could be temporary; a small step backwards, whereafter the previous trend of decreasing religious influence will continue. However, it could be structural, where the level of religiousness in society will remain relatively constant, or even start increasing after a

period of religious downfall. What is your thought on religion's prospects?

Erin

Religion is relentless, religion is perpetual. It will have a hold on people because the people need something to hold onto, in a faithful, spiritual sense. Despite the increasingly secular world, religion remains intrinsic in our lives and it's shown in statistics; 84% of the world's population identify with a religious group.

In politics, specifically, I'd like to quote Mahatma Gandhi, in saying that

"Those who say religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion is."

Gandhi was a firm believer in religion and politics as one; the two are not mutually exclusive. He did not accept politics without religion, and if it were absent, politics would not achieve its aim, hence the inevitability for each other into the future.

Even in the 'secular' West, in the US, it's almost impossible to win the presidency without some show of serious religious commitment. It is not essential, but as exemplified by various presidential candidates, it is a tool used to connect people. Hence moving forward, religion will undoubtedly be integral to our civilisation, as Gandhi says above.

Koen

Indeed, religion is used as a tool to connect people. However, compatible with the longer-term trend, I expect that people will increasingly move on to other ways of connection, fora for cooperation, and modes of identification.

Subsequently, religion's significance in politics will further decline, not ignoring its importance for a notable amount of time to come, but recognizing a further deterioration of religious interaction with politics in the long-term.

It is hard to make predictions about the future, especially about a topic as complex, deeply rooted and historically rich as religion. We will keep monitoring religious trends and its effect on society, and we hope the reader finds this dialogue helpful, in broadening the perspective of religious prospects.

“Children of the World”

The Changing Perception of Nationality in the Age of Globalisation

ELENA MIHAYLOVA

When people first meet, one of the main things they discover about one another is where they come from. Since feelings of attachment to one's home develop at an early age, they occupy a significant part of their mind and soul. In regard to this, national identity is the degree to which a person attempts to accept the norms and values of a country or a state, such as embracing a nation's tradition. Every country has a unique history and path, its own language, symbols and practices, all of which form its respective distinctiveness.

At first sight, nationality seems like a simple concept, ascribing one to a sense of belonging to a particular country. Nonetheless, it raises questions of multiple sorts: Does it come from where we are born? What if our parents are immigrants – should our nationality necessarily be the same as theirs? Or maybe the place where we have grown up? Understanding today's emphasis on nationality, it would be enlightening to see how this might develop.

Especially with the increasing impact of globalisation, individuals have started to gain a deeper understanding of the rest of the world, driving national borders closer to the point in time when they will become nothing other than just a formality. Due to the fact that a lot of people are not tied to only one nation, some parts of the world have become highly mixed. Other times, people make the decision to identify with a location and way of life other than the ones they were born into.

In particular, in territories with considerable immigrant populations, people start combining elements of both local and global cultures to produce a cultural hybridity. This may result in a more flexible and inclusive concept of national identity that reflects the various cultural influences on people's lives. In time, individuals blend their own cultural traditions with those of their new home, thus creating a more nuanced and dynamic understanding of what it means to be a member of a particular nation.

Considering how linked individuals are to one another through technology, commerce, and travel, people encounter many global cultural influences like Hollywood productions, mainstream music, and social media on a more frequent basis. Since individuals tend to accept those globally oriented cultural norms and values, this may erode their own national identity. Young

people throughout the world grow to be more likely to speak English and consume American pop culture than to participate in their own national traditions. As individuals absorb such a vast number of cultural traditions, values and ways of thinking and living, national identity turns into its more inclusive and relatively cosmopolitan version.

Here, a distinction between the two sides of the world could be made, more precisely between the West and the East. Whereas in Western societies, identity and self-worth are tendentially more closely related to personal qualities, goals and achievements and less so to one's shared national identity, in many Eastern cultures, collectivism still plays a significant role. In some places, even now, there is pressure to conform to the status quo and to preserve the traditional norms and expectations of society, which were once, possibly a long time ago, established within a certain national community. Additionally, nationality helps bring about one's identity in ways, sometimes not even related to the traditional idea of nationality as a formation of values but as the provided opportunities for education and employment in one's country.

That does not necessarily mean Western societies are not at all in touch with their national identity. Actually, according to a Global Attitudes Survey from 2020, in France, the U.S. and the U.K., more than half of those asked state that their country's customs and traditions are a part of them. Nevertheless, it is also apparent that they either do not find it one of the foremost characteristics of who they are, or other national traits are not nearly as critical to them. Moreover, the rest of the world is now also following this pattern.

Even within a globalised community such as the European Union, national identity is more complex and multifaceted than it seems at first sight. While many argue that the EU has diminished national identity, others believe that the EU has, in fact, strengthened national identity by providing a platform for member states to collaborate and promote their unique cultural heritage on a global scale.

Therefore, it is possible to interpret the EU's emphasis on diversity and multiculturalism as accepting and celebrating national identities.

On the other side, many also suggest that as individuals try to establish their identities in opposition to others and to defend their cultural and political traditions, the need for a shared sense of national identity can sometimes lead to defining that identity as increasingly restrictive and contentious. For instance, local associations, dialects, and ethnic relationships, which occasionally cross national boundaries, threaten the traditional concept of national identity. Nationalism, which stresses a constrictive and restrictive idea of national identity that is defined by race, ethnicity, or religion, gets more prevalent in some nations. This can result in societal division and conflict as well as the marginalisation and exclusion of minority groups.

An example can be observed in Eastern Europe, over two thousand kilometres from the Netherlands. More concretely, the relevant separatist territory called Transnistria is according to international law still part of the small country of Moldova, where a large ethnic Russian and Ukrainian population lives. They speak Russian and identify more closely with Russia than with Moldova.

Transnistria became an autonomous region following the fall of the Soviet Union because the state of Moldova started being considered a danger to its ethnic and linguistic identity. Parallely, the separatist movement in Transnistria was viewed as a danger to national unity and sovereignty by the government of Moldova. Therefore, the conflict between the two brotherly peoples can

be a stark example of how regional affiliations, dialects, and ethnic connections can contradict the conventional notion of national identity, which is frequently based on geographic borders and shared languages or cultures.

In this instance, the people of Transnistria have a common identity that transcends the political limits of Moldova, fostering a sense of connection and belonging that is not constrained by conventional ideas of national identity. However, the case could illustrate how challenging it can be to reconcile the conflicting interests of many factions within a state.

The combination of factors highlights the fact that the clash of nationality and globalisation impacts our understanding of the world and ourselves increasingly, and will most likely continue to do so. The prospect of national identity is difficult to predict. It may develop in either a cosmopolitan or a restrictive direction. As it will be influenced by a range of social, political, and economic circumstances that are constantly changing. Indeed, nationality will evolve ever more contested and politicised as different groups have distinctive relationships to their national identity.





Whale We Survive Climate Change?

Whales' Role in Trophic Chains Highlights Anthropological Environmental Damage

ANNA ARAGONCILLO BARCELÓ

Whales are fascinating creatures. They are one of the highest animals on the trophic chain but, contrary to popular belief, they are not just mindless predators. Rather they exhibit the elegant behaviour of a marine engineer. The term "marine engineer" is used to refer to all the living beings that influence the ecosystem in which they live in a positive manner. This concept is usually applied to primary producers in the environment, such as phytoplankton, as they are usually the ones to balance the carbon dioxide levels and provide the needed organic matter for apex predators.

Whales usually only die because of natural causes or as a result of human activity. When they die by natural causes, usually of old age, their carcass sinks to the bottom of the ocean while accumulating tonnes of carbon dioxide in their tissues. Once the carbon pressure becomes too much, they (quite performatively) burst open, inherently stimulating the rise of all the beneficial and nutrient-rich krill which provide the base of the trophic pyramid. The existence of these nutrient-rich beings is crucial to the functioning of the biosphere, as the trophic chains are interconnected between them and, inevitably, affect us.

Anthropological reasons for whale death are quite different and stem from economic motivations behind the material resources from whales. Increases in whale hunting arose from the human need for resources such as whalebone and oil from whale blubber, leading to an escalation in the hunt and eventual overexploitation of these species. New technological advances were developed to increase efficiency, and whaling emerged as the practice of whale hunting for the purpose of obtaining profits further from self-sustaining local and ethnic communities. By the mid-20th century, whale populations like the Blue Whale had been reduced by 98.5% and were considered an endangered species.

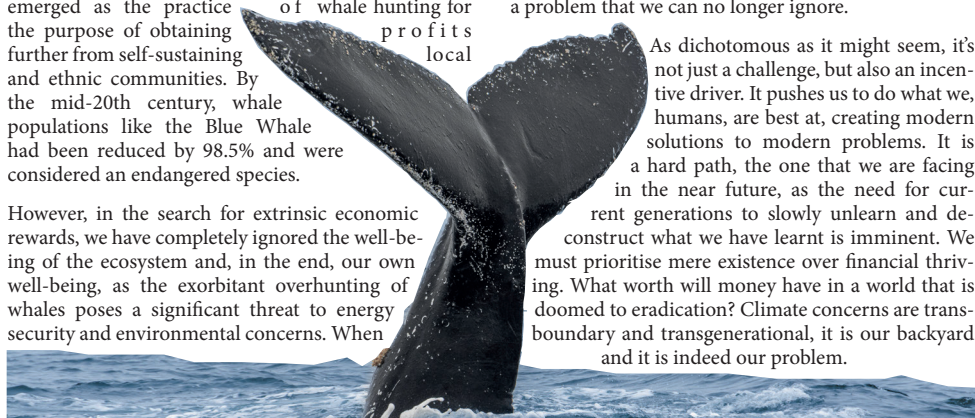
However, in the search for extrinsic economic rewards, we have completely ignored the well-being of the ecosystem and, in the end, our own well-being, as the exorbitant overhunting of whales poses a significant threat to energy security and environmental concerns. When

whales are killed on the surface, the carbon dioxide accumulated in their bodies goes directly to the atmosphere, which has two effects. On the one hand, the nutrient-rich cold water from the depth of the ocean does not rise to the surface waters, and, on the other hand, instead of sinking carbon reserves, all the carbon is expelled in the atmosphere, which increases global warming due to an increase in greenhouse gases.

Rising ocean temperatures, extreme climates and increasing weather whiplash have already radically shifted ecosystemic balance, thus highlighting the need for change. Altering our normative principles and practices is crucial to keep ourselves afloat. Climate change pushes us to diversify energy production, increase use of renewable sources and decrease dependence on fossil fuels. But this has its limitations, such as a lack of strong political will to implement the measures needed to fix our past mistakes while still meeting energy demands. Breaking the limit between affordability, sustainability and security is proving more challenging than ever.

But it would be hypocritical and incorrect to assume that this has been solely caused by whale overhunting. No. We have built an international order with a foundation that is inherently based on fossil fuels and all the negative implications of their use, up to a point where energy security is a worrisome topic on worldwide political agendas. Whaling is only the tip of the iceberg, and despite the glaring red light alarms of climate change throughout time, we have continuously adjourned to take care of it, and it has snowballed into a problem that we can no longer ignore.

As dichotomous as it might seem, it's not just a challenge, but also an incentive driver. It pushes us to do what we, humans, are best at, creating modern solutions to modern problems. It is a hard path, the one that we are facing in the near future, as the need for current generations to slowly unlearn and deconstruct what we have learnt is imminent. We must prioritise mere existence over financial thriving. What worth will money have in a world that is doomed to eradication? Climate concerns are transboundary and transgenerational, it is our backyard and it is indeed our problem.



One-Size-Fits-All Does Not Fit All

Tailoring Environmental Policies to Fit the Unique Needs of Each Country

ELENA MIHAYLOVA

With the worsening ecological problems our age is witnessing, it becomes more difficult than ever to deny that climate change should be regarded as not just a global issue, but also as a problem "without borders" since it requires cooperation on an international level to be effective. Thus, at the heart of environmental policies is the regulation of interaction between people and the environment to benefit both parties. It has traditionally been discussed regarding relevant issues certain regulations should solve, such as regulating waste and pollutant flows. However, despite the great need for all countries to do something, implementing specific measures is unfortunately not so simple.

According to different statistics, which follow different methodologies and criteria, the perceptions of the most and least advanced places differ in their environmental policies. Nonetheless, the countries most frequently mentioned, if not every time, as the most sustainable worldwide are Finland, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, and Denmark. Moreover, those with more robust environmental policies apparently share a higher level of environmental awareness among the population and higher living standards. Only wealthy nations can afford to care about the environment when they cover their basic needs.

On the contrary, the 15 worst countries environmentally are unsurprisingly also the poorest worldwide. Yemen, Chad, Sudan, Syria, Haiti, and Afghanistan are often mentioned as some of the least environmentally friendly places in the world. In fact, the least sustainable states are now experiencing humanitarian crises at the moment; soil erosion, deforestation, ongoing conflict and political instability. Significant political and social challenges can prevent them from tackling climate change and rather reinforce their ecological problems. Therefore, implementing specific policies can be incredibly unrealistic as it depends on many factors and societies' individual challenges.

The decision to improve the environment

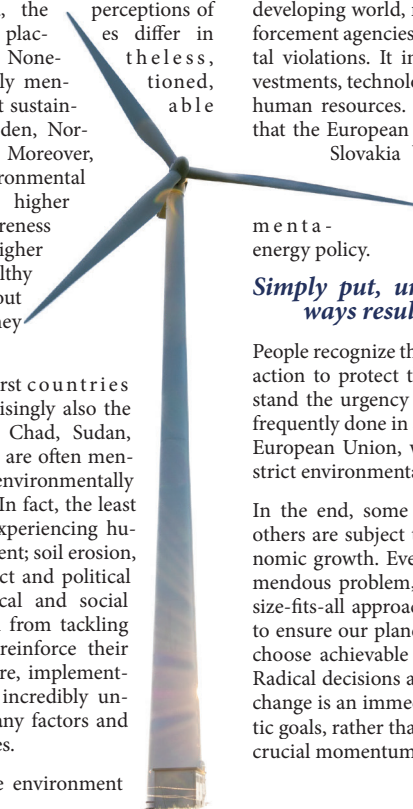
depends on the political will in the specific region, particularly the willingness of those in charge to commit to a certain policy, or the presence of competing, more prevalent priorities, like economic development and national security. Consequently, the decision to implement a particular policy could be because such environmental policies do not align with the interest of those in power. Furthermore, sometimes it involves not just the leaders but also the societal mindset as a whole. Older individuals frequently adhere to what they know, so they would not understand a young activist's desire to stop, say, the usage of plastic.

Above all, limited resources are a major factor in the failure of such policies. Some states, particularly in the developing world, may simply lack the facilities or enforcement agencies to monitor and tackle environmental violations. It involves financial resources and investments, technological advances and equipment, and human resources. For instance, recently, it came out that the European Commission is suing Bulgaria and Slovakia because of a non-implementation of the common renewable energy policy.

Simply put, universal policies do not always result in the same outcomes.

People recognize that it will soon be too late to take any action to protect the environment, thus, they understand the urgency of prompt action. However, this is frequently done in a hurried manner. Even states in the European Union, who are supposedly following EU's strict environmental policies, can run into issues.

In the end, some nations experience conflict, while others are subject to a shortage of resources and economic growth. Even with climate change being a tremendous problem, it is still so complex that no one-size-fits-all approach can fully deal with it. Therefore, to ensure our planet's successful future, it is crucial to choose achievable and not overly ambitious policies. Radical decisions are not helpful, even though climate change is an immediate problem, hence, setting realistic goals, rather than short-term thinking, will define a crucial momentum for prospective progress.



Cities Need to Step Up

The Growing Role of Metropolises in the Global Sustainability Challenge

KOEN MOERMAN

In 2050, nearly two out of three people will live in cities, according to the UN. All these people need housing, food, utilities, mobility and entertainment. In a world where the current population already lives above sustainable standards, it begs the question; how will society accommodate its newcomers, without leaving a destructive mark on our home planet?

In a relatively short time over the past two centuries, cities have seen their significance grow. In 1800, three percent of the world's population lived in cities. Fast-forward to 2008, and the share of urban population made up half of the world's total, with a still-continuing trend. A recent McKinsey report supports this claim, stating that we are in the middle of an enormous population shift, in favour of the city. This trend is underpinned by economies of scale, which make urban centres more productive. As a result, countries such as China were able to facilitate substantial economic growth and achieve radical poverty reduction, followed by many emerging economies. However, despite the more efficient nature of urban areas, compared to rural areas, the improvement of living standards in the cities of developing countries only magnifies the detrimental effect humans have on the environment. Professor Herbert Girardet, publisher at The Ecologist Online, argues that this fossil-fuel-powered way of wealth creation, labelled as 'carboniferous capitalism' is unsustainable, and calls for a better understanding and redesign of the city's complex 'metabolism'.

In the same article, the concept of a petropolis, and the need for moving to an ecopolis is described. A Petropolis resembles the mega cities of today, characterised by the dependence on carbon-intensive energy, and far-reaching imports of resources, resulting in an unsustainable ecological footprint. It is clear that the petropolis is not future-proof, urging the need for a paradigm shift; a shift to the ecopolis. The ecopolis seeks to redefine the city's relationship with the world's ecosystems, together with a focus on pleasant human interaction within its boundaries. It needs to be recognised that this is an extraordinary challenge, where the necessities of actions need to be mapped out first, before the political will can be put to the test.

Because, unfortunately, according to a Politico article, sustainable city planning initiatives are often met with

popular backlash. While the long-term need for sustainable city planning is clear, and there is no doubt that it will favour society as a whole, the short-term often prevails in voter's minds, preventing politicians who focus on re-election to step up and take risks to redesign urban spaces. For example, attempts to mitigate private car use have been met with outrage in Paris and Brussels. According to Masha Smirnova, campaign manager for the European Green Deal at Eurocities, many people are emotionally blind to long-term problems. She urges policy makers to convince residents of the critical and urgent nature of the problem, and advises to promote common purposes, such as clean air and recreational spaces.

One of the challenges of the future city is food security, especially challenged by increasing temperature and climate variability.

In the ecopolis, urban and suburban agriculture will get a more prominent role in urban food supply. The possibility for urban agriculture is exemplified by the capital of Cuba, in the post-soviet era. The Cubans had become dependent on the Soviets for their food supply, and faced a crisis at the end of the Cold War, strengthened by US sanctions. As a result, thousands of small-scale city gardens emerged, partly replacing the Soviet food supply of the other side of the world, with local-grown food. In modern cities, vertical farming will be introduced, which is kicking off with the industry securing vast amounts of funding globally.

An article from the World Economic Forum lists a number of sustainable initiatives, launched in a variety of cities all over the world. The Chinese so-called 'Sponge City' programme, and Singapore's 'ABC' programme, aim to implement green spaces in concrete neighbourhoods, to form a natural reserve and filter for water. This is done to prevent floodings, and create interactive meeting locations for residents. In addition, the Dutch, known for their water solutions, have built a water square in the city of Rotterdam, which normally functions as a meeting point, but during heavy rainfall it is able to hold a substantial amount of rainwater.

In Milan, a vertical forest was constructed, consisting of a building covered in plants; absorbing CO2 and

producing oxygen. Similar projects are underway in Switzerland, The Netherlands and China. With the latter being the most ambitious, China is planning to build the city of Liuzhou; a forest city housing 30.000 people and absorbing 10.000 tons of CO2 by its 40.000 trees and a million plants.

In addition, there is the concept of the 15- or 20-minute city, which means that a city is designed so that its residents are within 15 or 20 minutes away from their daily necessities, focusing on walking, cycling and public transport. This not only increases the wellbeing of residents, it greatly reduces traffic as well, and therefore pollution. Melbourne has already taken steps to realise this, and Paris is planning to undertake similar action.

To address the issue of unsustainability in the city, besides creativity on the local level, urban resilience should also be a priority for domestic policy makers, as well as a topic for international agreements. Fortunately, city planners are increasingly engaging in lively exchange, advising each other on policy making on topics such as mobility, pollution reduction, tree planting and urban agriculture. Cities are increasingly taking matters into their own hands, with national governments often unable to create effective city policy due to political gridlock and a lack of connection to local needs. International city networks are popping up, working as fora for information sharing and city interest promotion. For example, C40, a network of 70 major cities worldwide has made agreements on greenhouse gas emission reduction beyond the nations' level. A number of other city network initiatives exist, focusing on mobility, or more general, on solutions for common metropolitan problems. These initiatives should be seen as a helpful addition to national and international policy, rather than an obstruction of it.

So, how will urban society accommodate two thirds of the global population in 2050, in a sustainable manner? Is this a hard, but doable challenge, or rather an impossible task for humanity to undertake? It is clear that discourse around sustainable urban living is actively developing, and the awareness of its urgency is rising. Agreements like C40 greatly contribute to this. It has so far resulted in the implementation of several urban resilience projects in a variety of cities. In addition, the growing trend is clear, the majority of the global population is going to live in urban areas, which should add pressure to policy makers to actively pursue a future proof plan. However, will it be enough? Only time will tell...





Awaiting a Dutch Pablo Escobar

Is the Netherlands on the Verge of Becoming a Narco State?

THOMAS HUISMAN

Amsterdam is well-known all around the world for its liberal outlook on sex, alcohol and drugs. The Dutch capital attracts 22 million tourists annually, some of whom come merely to enjoy these particular assets, or perhaps liabilities, the rather wild and extravagant nightlife the city has to offer. Although tourism might be very much appreciated by local businesses, there is a downside to all this. The situation obviously presents a problem for local inhabitants and the government in the form of irritation and inconvenience.

Although the cliché of Amsterdam being a heaven for drug users and the almost mythical stories that come with that reputation might be a bit exaggerated, one cannot deny that the use of drugs has been normalised in the city. Anyone who wants to buy cannabis can easily do so and those who do not will be able to smell it on nearly every corner in the city centre. In itself this is not a big issue as it involves a relatively harmless drug like cannabis. Nevertheless, a similar normalisation is arising for more serious drugs like ecstasy, amphetamine and cocaine. And not only people in Amsterdam have been subject to this, drug use is a fairly normal and accepted practice amongst large numbers of students all around the Netherlands. Emblematic of this normalisation is a quote from Dutch left-wing politician Jesse Klaver, where he claims to be seen as a “loser” in his parliamentary faction for never having used drugs, implying that all other members had done so, presumably in their youth.

The drug culture in the Netherlands is symptomatic of an immense threat to society. A threat that has been lurking below the surface for a long time, but is coming above ground more and more in recent years. In the past five years, three innocent people have been killed, supposedly by members of drug cartels. In 2018, the brother of a key witness in the case against one of the leaders of organised crime in the Netherlands, Ridouan Taghi, was killed, while in 2019 the lawyer of the same key witness was murdered. Two years later followed the assassination of crime journalist Peter R. de Vries, news about which spread around the world. Whereas before, mostly people from within the criminal underworld were targeted, now law-abiding citizens fell victim to these assassinations. The shock about these murders raised questions about the state of the rule of law. Does the Dutch government still have the situation under control? A rise in crimes like murder and gun

violence can be seen in countries that have become ridden by drug syndicates, so is the Netherlands too on its way of becoming a dangerous narco-state?

There is of course no definitive answer to this question. But with intimidation, assassinations, shootings, and other violent crimes making the news frequently, it surely seems like it. Some experts have therefore suggested that the Netherlands is already a narco-state, while others warn that it is surely on the path to becoming one. The Dutch Police Union suggests, for example, that the Dutch police, faced with shortages in staff and funding, is currently not able to combat many crimes that are linked to criminal organisations. The international obligation to combat these crimes effectively, as these affect other countries as well, are thus not met.

The Netherlands, with its excellent infrastructure and open borders, serves as a perfect hub for trade, not only for goods that are legal, but also for illegal drug trafficking. The port of Rotterdam, together with the nearby port of Antwerp in Belgium, acts as the main gateway for narcotics to be shipped into Europe from Latin America. Together, the two ports account for 162,4 tonnes of cocaine intercepted in 2022. The close-by province of Brabant is infamous for the presence of labs for the production of synthetic drugs, but such labs are also on the rise in other parts of the country. In the north of

the Netherlands, eleven drug labs where drugs like amphetamine, ecstasy and meth are made were dismantled in the past year: a clear growth in comparison to the years before. But with huge revenues that go into billions of dollars every year, syndicates have the capability to innovate in order to overcome the efforts of law enforcement.

Granting all this does not paint a pretty picture of the status quo, there are more optimistic voices out there that suggest that it is not too late to act. However, the important question is what should be done to turn these worrying developments around. It is apparent that the current approach of the Dutch government is not adequate in combating drug related violence. Being praised for being liberal, the policy is based on the principle of ‘tolerance’, where the use of soft drugs such as cannabis is decriminalised, but officially not legal; coffee shops are allowed to sell small quantities of can-

nabis for personal use while the production, sale, and possession of cannabis by coffee shops is technically illegal. Hard drugs remain illegal in its entirety, and drug trafficking is prosecuted as a criminal offence.

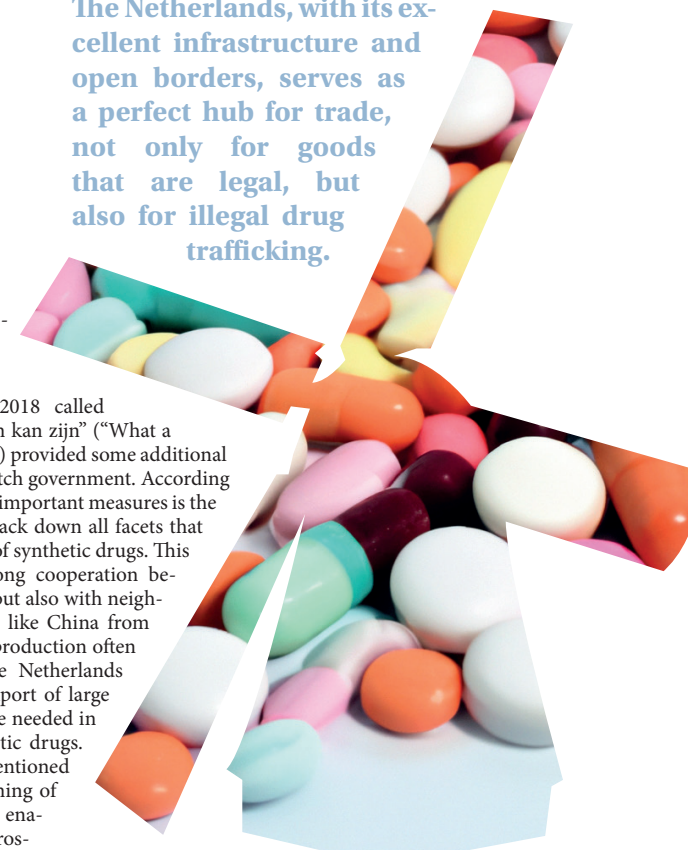
In autumn of this year, a new trial will take place when in two cities, Breda and Tilburg, cannabis will be ‘legally’ supplied to coffee shops by authorised cultivators. The goal of this measure is to see if it is possible to provide coffee shops with cannabis that is regulated and of a certain quality. There are several other countries that have preceded the Netherlands and have already legalised the production and sale of recreational cannabis, such as Canada. One of the issues that came to light about the Canadian approach was the competitiveness of legally produced cannabis. Since the legalisation in 2019, the market share of legal cannabis has risen every year, indicating that legal cannabis would be able to compete. If a similar law would be successfully implemented in the Netherlands, the potential to alleviate the strain that is felt by the police could open up resources to focus on battling crime related to hard drugs.

An extensive study from 2018 called “Waar een klein land groot in kan zijn” (“What a small country can be great at”) provided some additional recommendations for the Dutch government. According to the report, one of the most important measures is the intensification of efforts to track down all facets that are linked to the production of synthetic drugs. This would not only require strong cooperation between levels of government, but also with neighbouring states and countries like China from where the raw materials for production often originate. Production in the Netherlands is impossible without the import of large amounts of chemicals that are needed in the manufacturing of synthetic drugs. Another proposal that is mentioned in the study is the strengthening of the criminal justice system enabling it to more effectively pros-

ecute important figures of drug cartels. This would go hand in hand with increasing the punishment for members of such organisations.

Narco state or not, it is hard to say how the situation will evolve. Still, the chances of seeing scenes like those in countries such as Mexico or Colombia in the near future are very unlikely. However, the intimidations and killings, the intertwining of the underground and our society, that have prompted many warnings for the stability of our rule of law, are worrying signals that cannot be ignored and prompt action.

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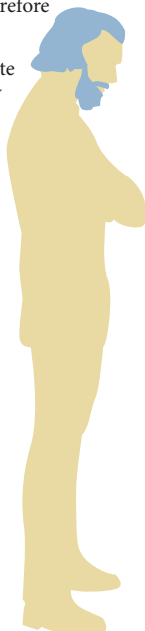
Cherry-Picking

Will AI Enable Us to Eliminate “Bullshit Jobs” - and Thereby Falsify One of Marx’s Oldest Analyses?

PAUL JOHANN LINDHORST

In “Das Kapital”, Karl Marx exhaustively describes and analyses the characteristics of the political economy of his day. Later, some of his arguments were dubbed fundamental criticisms of capitalism, and while others have been proved wrong, they still, after 150 years, have an effect today. But changes today could see these fundamentals fall in our lifetime. One of those is the disenfranchisement between worker and product. As one of Marx’s more philosophical arguments, it shows the industrial worker as fundamentally estranged from the product of his labour due to the modern work at the production line. The division of labour between companies and inside of them, with every worker repeating the same step of the assembly day by day, hour by hour, leads to a loss in meaning, fulfilment and pride. This is mirrored by the “pre-capitalistic” blacksmith, who spent hours and days on one individual piece of armour or tool and, in the end, could physically hold his days’ work in his hands and sell it to a pleased customer. The blacksmith could see the whole process and get the satisfactory feeling of “finishing/producing a thing”. With the industrial revolution, most workers lost the opportunity to feel this closure, therefore falling into greater misery.

Over the 150 years since Marx wrote ‘Das Kapital’ the degree of validity of this argument has somewhat diminished, with many repetitive processes in industrial production being automated. This development was limited by the programming of the robots and their algorithms that only enabled them to few, simple steps and left them inflexible to adapt to changes and thus vulnerable to any disruption along the production line. With AI getting more refined and industrial production more integrated, this adaptation, which thus far remained a thing down to humans, will also fall to automation. Furthermore, outside the realm of industrial production, activities like garbage collection or cleaning jobs, which remain a task of humans, could be automated.



Putting aside that these tasks do give some people great pride and are vital for and often underappreciated by society, these are jobs that people would not take on if they had the choice. The continuous automation of these, sometimes dubbed “bullshit-jobs”, enables humans to get out of said jobs and look for an occupation that gives them meaning and allows them to gain back the pleasure of creating a product of their own like in pre-capitalist times. In such a scenario, Marx’s argument of the estrangement of workers and their product is overcome.

But the realisation of this is bound to two very important politico-economic conditions. First, the guaranteed economic safety of citizens and, second, the safety of meaningful human occupations from ‘Big Tech’. As automation increases, more people, like the aforementioned garbage collectors or lorry drivers, are finding themselves out of a paying job. So, for them to explore what they want to do in (professional) life, the economic and social system needs to be adapted. One political measure here could be a universal basic income (or a universal inheritance).

Second of all, as modern AI can also be used for text or music production, which are domains of human meaning-creation, the owners of such AI technologies – mostly big tech companies and autocratic governments – can try and lure away the attention of people with mass-produced content thus destroying the markets for people’s original creations. Ergo, legislators must create the right legal frameworks to deter such actors from automating these sectors while securing social safety during times of structural, economic changes.

If these political adjustments are made, we could see the economic shifts lead to a world where we are free to “cherry-pick” our occupation and live a happier life. And after 150 years, another of Marx’s arguments could be disproved without a violent revolution. No doubt - he would be happy to see that.



Please, Respect My Youth

How Young People Claim Their Place in Politics Through Youth Activism

CARLA GOLTINGS

“Youth has no shame, shame comes with age.”

André Aciman, Call Me by Your Name

Apologies, admissions of guilt and responsibility as well as promises of change seem to be all that politicians can give when young people ask about how, in our current political system, their views and interests seem to be forgotten in their entirety. What is still missing is action. Consequently, the youth takes this on. They open the doors themselves since no one else does it for them. Why? Because their absence in areas of debate and policymaking is derogatory.

By now, it is not about politely asking for the prospect of participating in debates once ‘their time has come’, once they are ‘old enough to understand’. Young people claim their place in discussions and do not back down even until their supposed ‘time has come’. How can they wait if they are directly affected in the present and future? Children are most severely and disproportionately affected by crises and become the victims of domestic violence, hunger or child labour if political situations escalate. In essence, independent from the crisis at hand, children remain the most vulnerable. Furthermore, they are the most affected by present decisions that shape their future. Current economic, environmental, social and health-related developments are already considered to be limiting on the career, family and overall lifestyle choices that today’s youth are going to make in a couple of years to come. However, with being a minor comes the absence of a right to vote, at least until one comes to legal age.

Despite immediate impacts in times of crisis and limitation for participation, young people have mobilised to respond to global crises - at an unprecedented scale. One movement that received wide attention and grew globally is the Fridays For Future (FFF) movement. Since 2018, students have organised school protests to call for more climate justice and demand action from their global governments. Although this crisis is one that will be carried out by the younger generations, the perseverance and scientific argumentation channelled predominantly show the existent fundamental politi-

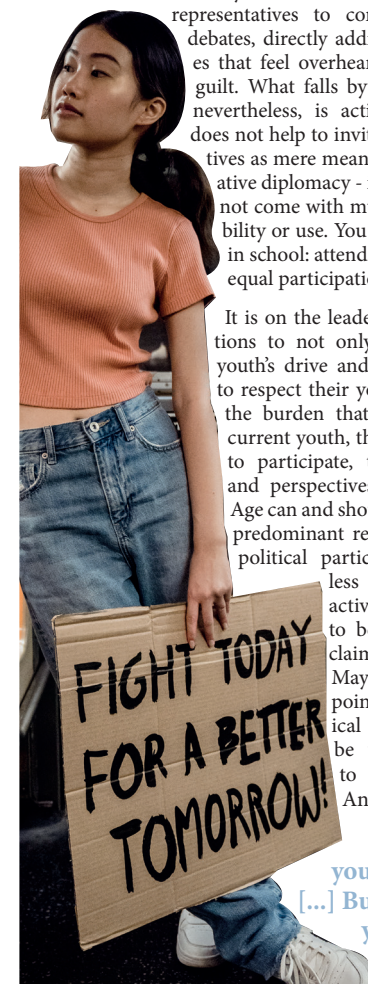
cal struggles of competing visions for a future society. The youth is not the first marginalised group that used activism in order to obtain acknowledgement and further achieve political integration, but the statelessness of being young and disregarded in political debates is a distinguishing factor for their courage.

This advocacy and political action in its most essential form received recognition and respect: Michelle Bachelet, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, acknowledged how youth activism has been pushing the world forward. “From the streets of every corner of the world to the online arena, we have seen powerful demonstrations of youth commitment to equality, climate action and human rights,” she said. Truly, politicians and authorities respect the commitment and motivation the youth shows. They now invite

representatives to congresses and debates, directly address the voices that feel overheard and admit guilt. What falls by the wayside, nevertheless, is action on it. It does not help to invite representatives as mere means of performative diplomacy - invitations do not come with much responsibility or use. You already learn in school: attendance does not equal participation.

It is on the leaders of our nations to not only respect the youth’s drive and stamina but to respect their youth. Respect the burden that comes with current youth, the willingness to participate, the solutions and perspectives they bring. Age can and should not be the predominant requirement of political participation. Unless that changes, activism seems to be the way to claim the space. Maybe at some point our political leaders will be wise enough to repeat after André Aciman:

“I respect your opinion. [...] But I respect your youth more.”



Moving Media

A Look at Media's Future on Cultural Sensitivity and Social Awareness

ERIN DEANDRA MURDIADI

'Oh my god dude, did you see that TikTok of...?'

I will admit, I am an avid user of TikTok. Short-form video content has largely taken over this generation's media, and I can plainly say, it has taken over my personal media consumption. Even writing this, I am continuously taking breaks to pick up my phone and briefly scroll on TikTok. When I first started watching videos on YouTube as a kid, it was filled with 10-15 minute long videos that needed your full attention, but now it also has a short-form section called YouTube Shorts. When I created my Instagram account, it was mainly a photo-oriented app, but now you can post videos and Instagram reels, which have become integral to the user experience. Our generation has undergone a major shift in our main media format, and there are several studies researching its long-term impacts; it shortens attention span and is highly addictive.

However, there is also a larger cultural shift due to the accessibility of these types of videos; much more information is easily consumed by society. In newfound short-form culture, media outlets and content creators have become smart in condensing information into these fifteen second to three minute videos. In the case of news outlets like Vice News, they post a TikTok video every week saying 'Here's what happened this week around the world' that outlines five news headlines in the short time of two minutes. Content creators also often have well -built ideas and materials to inform, and hence condense what could most likely be a video essay into just a little under three minutes.

Knowing that today's information is consumed much more rapidly than in the past, how have we, as a society, been affected? An issue that has seemingly been brought up in many of my conversations is cultural sensitivity and social awareness. A continual reference to a highly publicised cultural movement during our time is the Black Lives Matter movement in the US. Social media coverage of the protests and police violence in the country during that time was immense. Informative US content creators were doing their best to encapsulate the many happenings, and news outlets were also reporting with short-form videos.

Not only was this highly beneficial for the movement to spread within the US, but with the intent it had,

the message got out to the rest of the world and protests with the same cause started to gain traction. The movement ignited a flame against discrimination of black people in the US, but in relevance to the rest of the world, it sparked voices against discrimination of coloured peoples in general. It sparked protests on the discrimination of black people in the UK, it sparked judgement of inner societal racial prejudices in South Korea, and it sparked reflection on colourist discrimination in Indonesia.

The increasing cultural and social awareness due to social media is exhibited by younger generations in how they treat or react to foreign things. Ironically enough, I had watched a TikTok video by a white woman in her thirties from the US. She was filming herself going to a well known Chinese dimsum restaurant, called Din Tai Fung, for the first time. As she was filming, she spoke to the camera saying, 'I'm going with my family to have some Chinese food, we came to this Ding Feng Chung place' and the camera pans to her teenage son who, clear agitatedly, says, 'you managed to say all three words wrong, it's Din Tai Fung'.

An Asian-American content creator then had stitched (read: responded in video format) the first user's TikTok and said that instead of being angry at the mother, 'it was a beautiful moment because it was tangible evidence that the younger generations are not afraid to call out internalised generational racism'. This is something that is relevant in my own life, as my own mother struggles to acknowledge her prejudice against certain races, and I try my best to educate her on this. That is what's refreshing, the generational healing that comes from cultural awareness due to social media's informativeness.

Despite the positive element of social media allowing widespread collective awareness of cultural and social issues, it runs the risk of bias, as what usually comes with mass information and knowledge.

One would start to think in a way to the extent that they are informed by the content that is accessible to them, and this is particularly prevalent with the topic of social media because social media is personalised and catered to you, it is biased. The algorithm caters to your likes, your dislikes, and your demographic; sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, and religion. It collects data

and regurgitates videos based on how you interact with content on the respective platform.

It is a biased algorithm where, apart from "being catered to you", there's another rarely-spoken-about element of Americentrism in general media.

If we retrospectively think about what appears in our feed, we will come to the realisation that a great majority of us have a tendency to consume media that's centred around the United States. This bias becomes an issue when there's displaced US-centred cultural awareness and hypersensitivity in spheres where they are not applicable.

Understanding the intensity of racial discrimination in the US, it is understandable how relevant it is to speak up about it, but this is where the line between hypersensitivity and awareness comes in. With this, the 'woke' culture stigma is relevant to discuss. The term woke is an adjective derived from African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) meaning "alert to racial prejudice and discrimination". However, this same term has come to denote some negative connotations that twist its original meaning, and to largely refer to hypersensitive people under the guise of advocates of social inclusivity. When awareness crosses the line into hypersensitivity, that is when people have to tiptoe around certain sensitive topics in fear that they'll be judged by these 'woke' people.

Of course, there is relevance of these 'woke' people imposing in the day to day real world, but running on an example from TikTok, there was a white-presenting Māori woman who had posted a video of herself performing a Haka, a ceremonial dance in Māori culture. I had noticed the comments were filled with statements like 'You're stealing their culture', 'Coloniser' and 'This is cultural appropriation'. This comes with the ignorance and inability of separating one's societal problems from another. Again, it is the 'one-size-fits-all does not fit all' argument presented in an earlier article in this magazine. The historical context of one country may be applicable to another, but again it is a case by case basis, and in this one, it was not the case. You cannot contextualise issues in India with the history of Sweden, and in this case you cannot contextualise

alise the culture in New Zealand with the history of the US.

Again it comes back to us as humans ourselves and how we move forward with the shifts and trends of media, specifically social media. Despite it being a great place to share information, it comes with the limitation of the user. If the user is responsible and able to take the information received off of the platform for good use, then the future of society alongside social media is in good hands. It will come like in the Din Tai Fung example where the younger generations are not afraid to use their attained cultural awareness from online to educate their older generations and inherently break generational stigma and prejudices. However, if the user is unwilling to set aside their ignorance and approach cultural sensitivity and awareness with an open mind, then we will be stuck in circles. The future naturally depends on us and our ability to critically determine what is valuable for us as humanity and what needs to be left behind.





Diary of Dr. Flávio Eiró

Exploring the Future of la Bolsa Família, Clientelism and Economic Politics in Brazil

ANNA ARAGONCILLO BARCELÓ



Born and raised in Brazil, Dr. Flávio Eiró had not always been interested in social sciences, but after his first bachelor in Sociology he decided to pursue them. A Master in Sustainable Development Studies and a PhD in Sociology in France eventually led him to the Netherlands, where he now teaches at the RUG and is the director of studies of the Minor in Development studies. His research interests include minorities, development and poverty policies in Northeast Brazil.

The Editorial staff of Checks & Balances 22-23 had the pleasure of sitting down with Dr. Flávio Eiró over a cup of mint tea to talk about his research and area of expertise. Thank you once again for the interesting interview and newly won insights

How would you describe economic politics in Brazil?

I'd say they're based on two concepts, on the one hand, this conflict around either being an exporting-based economy where most of the country's wealth is built on exporting commodities, which doesn't allow for an industrialization process that would allow for a better quality of exporting.

On the other hand, social inequality causes conflict between redistributive and regressive politics. We're mainly talking about a very unequal and polarized country, where the rich are very wealthy, but very little part of the population, and will try to maintain their wealth. These conflicts with the recent success of redistributive policies such as conditional cash transfer, which kind of brings us to this kind of proto-state, which is only a first step.

What is your opinion on the Bolsa Família programme and its criticisms, such as being extremely uncertain, ambiguous, and bureaucratically complicated?

These are good but relative criticisms. Social policies can always be better and although the compromise needed to achieve these policies might dampen its effectiveness, its mere existence is already a win. Bolsa Família is a first step, it's flawed, but cannot be eliminated, because it gives access to basic rights to people. It can be improved and complimented but never erased, especially when it's taking care of so many basic necessities. Once we attain the basics, then we can come up

with ways to ameliorate the programme and make it less necessary.

Complications don't come from the Bolsa Família, but rather from a personalistic way of doing politics. Interactions between people and politicians are done in very particular and individual ways, the population relies on the politicians for protection, and that is something that will not abandon us in the future. What we need to pay attention to is protecting these programmes from interferences that cause the unfair distribution of resources.

Of course, there's also an element of cultural history on how people do politics -and it might seem strange, but instead of measuring them on a normative model of citizenship, we gain more by thinking about how these practices enable better accountability.

How do you think Lula's election win will affect the Bolsa Familia Programme?

We must understand that it's a problem, but the Bolsa Família programme is not a constitutional right in Brazil. There is a very big difference between state programmes and government programmes. In government programmes, the different elected governments can change them completely, which is what Bolsonaro did by changing the name, budget and conditionalities to access the Bolsa Família. When it's a state programme, it's considered a constitutional right, and the state ensures to provide for their citizens, no matter what government is, it is a mandatory state expense and nobody can take it away.

So, of course, when Lula became president one of the things he found was an incredibly low quality of the government in matters related to these programmes and in fact, Lula's cabinet is working towards fixing the situation.

Will clientelism continue to be an integral part of future elections? If so, will it be this kind of "hidden" brokerage?

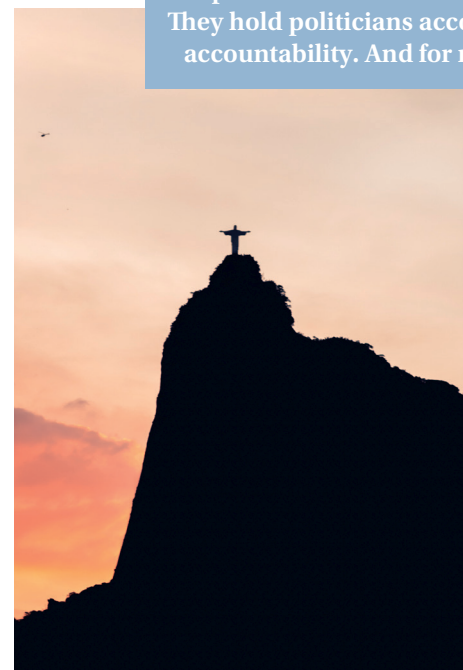
This is something that will not change in any electoral cycle, as clientelism is a part of Brazilian politics and, in a way, it's a very popular form of politics in Latin America. It mainly means that in the context of extreme poverty and inequality, in situations where people are struggling to make ends meet, it's an opportunity. The fact that people have votes makes them a valuable resource for politicians, who will invest resources in that. Compared to what they could normally get relating to resources available to them, wages, and opportunities for employment, it is certainly important for them because they can make use of those politicians.

We normally separate between the whole "vote-buying", which is more stigmatized and is an actual crime in Brazilian law. It's more raw and rare, but it's also a moment when voters can make use of the opportunist politicians that are trying to take profit from the voters.

So, there's that kind of very opportunistic way of those politicians who are trying to take advantage of them and the other thing which is what we can refer to more as clientelism, that is more like a long term kind of relationship that people develop with politicians, which can take a more instrumental dimension sometimes and appear ok like if you help us, and there's usually a collective dimension to it, we get a new park, we get a new ambulance here in the neighborhood, we get valuable resources, we will vote for you.

People hold the valuable resource that is their vote. They hold politicians accountable. It is a system of direct accountability. And for me, it also sounds pretty good.

People hold the valuable resource that is their vote. They hold politicians accountable. It is a system of direct accountability. And for me, it also sounds pretty good.



How do you think that the growing role of social media is/ will affect?

Ah I'm not so sure. What I do see is that there is a conflict there.

On the one hand this type of politics is not going to go away as long as there is extreme inequality and poverty. On the other hand, social media offers them another possibility. Whereas clientelism develops from proximity, social media puts in contact people that are not physically close and that's where identity politics come into play. Imagine having a politician, an elected official who is like us. This is the power of identity politics. It can be more powerful than the goods that are offered by the other person. At the end of the day it's a bet. How much are my interests going to be represented by a politician. Where the landscape might get a little more complex, especially with new generations doing politics differently than older generations, I think there will continue to be a kind of a game of push and pull. This ebb and flow of different types of ways of assessing politics and deciding your vote.



What Do You Meme?

A Selection of Clio-Memes

ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

The Academic Committee says Hi to the lovely readers of Checks & Balances!

Here are our favourite memes from this year, if you want to share yours with other members, don't hesitate to send them to info@clio.nl!



me: i study better at night

also me at 11pm:



when you've completed your readings for the week ahead of time for once



And here are some memes by the Checks&Balances Committee!

No one:
Checks&Balances as soon as they assemble:



how I expect my committee to proofread my article that I wrote at 3 am on 2 redbull



when you should write your article but your friends ask if you want to come over for a beer



Celebrate 35 Years of Clio Your Way

Which Lustrum Event Are You?

LUSTRUM COMMITTEE

35 years ago, in 1988, Clio was founded as the study association for International Relations and International Organization. In order to celebrate the birth of the association, once every five years Clio establishes the Lustrum Committee. The Lustrum Committee makes it possible to organise a variety of events combining social, active, and educational aspects. As the Association was founded in June 1988, its establishment will also be celebrated in June, after the exams of the final block of the academic year 2022/2023. This year, it is time for the 7th Lustrum which will have the theme "Chaos: Ruling the Void". So come celebrate Clio's anniversary with us from the 26th of June until the 1st of July and let's rule your own void! We hope to see you there!

What is your favorite snack?

- A** Just something at the Hoek
- B** I don't really like snacks
- C** Popcorn or Chips
- D** Anything BBQ

What is your ideal day?

- A** As long as I have a party
- B** Just a nice lazy day chilling
- C** Watching a movie
- D** Being outside with my friends

What is your favorite activity?

- A** Dancing
- B** Singing
- C** Chilling
- D** Swimming

Your favorite committee position?

- A** Secretary
- B** Event manager
- C** Treasurer
- D** PR

If you could choose ...

- A** Every day has an hour more
- B** Never being hungover
- C** Always remembering everything
- D** The sun is always shining

Would you rather ...

- A** Have a birthday party every evening
- B** Chug a beer every morning
- C** Watch every lecture twice
- D** Do a 5 km walk every morning



So which event are you most like?

- ◀ If you had most D's You are the Day Trip
- ◀ If you had most C's You are the Movie Night
- ◀ If you had most B's You are the Beercautus
- ◀ If you had most A's You are the Opening Party

Lustrum is from
26th of June
until 1st of July

Follow us on Instagram @cliolustrumvii

Buy Passe Partout at clio.nl



The Board Says Bye

A Little Heart to Heart With the Five That Led Us This Year

35TH BOARD OF STUDY ASSOCIATION CLIO

How was it being on the board?

CASPER: The board was litty as fuck. Lots of parties, lots of events, 104.

KIM: No, it was 115.

CASPER: 115. It was an interesting experience which you can only have once in your life, and you should also limit it to once in your life.

KIM: Definitely no more than once.

SOFIE: It's like you're super busy the entire year. Busy a lot of events, things you've never done before, meeting a lot of new people, but in a good way.

KIM: You learn a lot of things.

JULIA: It can be hectic and chaotic but most times you just need to learn how to manage it and how to cope with it and [in turn] you learn a lot about yourself.

EMMA: Yeah, sometimes because you're in the middle of it you don't really notice how much fun it actually is. But when you look back, you're like 'oh damn these are really good times'

SOFIE: I think in high school when you do a group project, you write down afterwards like 'yeah I learned a lot about teamwork' and that's the biggest cliché there is. But during a board year, what you learn about teamwork, that's another level.

KIM: Yeah like working with people, how to just work with different characters too

CASPER: And sometimes the chaos is also fun. I must say, it's cool to come up with a solution like when shit goes down

KIM: When shit hits the fan

SOFIE: You just call it an oopsie, and move on

CASPER: And sometimes it's a big oopsie

SOFIE: But you call it a little oopsie and then it's okay :)

What event was the most memorable?

EMMA: Active members weekend I think.

KIM: Yeah, introduction camp and active members weekend were very memorable.

SOFIE: I think events with [a lot of] members

CASPER: One thing I will remember the most is cooking the food at intro camp, that was an experience.

KIM: Oh god the bread. Everyone had dry mouth and attempting not to choke on it

EMMA: The bread at AMW was better :) I think that was for me one of the busiest and craziest events. We had like [a total] six hours of sleep in the entire week-end but it was also so much fun and it was so nice to see everybody having fun

SOFIE: And afterwards you know everybody, all of the active members. I think as a board you get to know them during the introduction period and during the interviews as well but especially after AMW

JULIA: For me it was Brussels and The Hague. I have to say but I think it's also very depends on which committees you're handling, things will be a little bit more memorable and the travel trip.

CASPER: Travel was very fun though, shoutout to the travel committee!

SOFIE: I think it's really satisfaction as well, pulling something off with your own committees

JULIA: Also the committee trips!

CASPER: Yeah definitely, and for me it's also the Batavierenrace

KIM: Eating pizza for 2 days straight was really something

CASPER: Yeah but also the tents *laughs*

SOFIE: Somehow it was all worth it

KIM: Somehow we all survived

CASPER: And the band you know? The band was lit

KIM: *mocking Casper* The band was lit

CASPER: Band was lit bro

What did you come to value most this year?

CASPER: My free time

SOFIE: Sleep *everyone exclaims in agreement*

SOFIE: Showers

CASPER: In April and May we had like four weekends where we didn't have the weekend. That was actually insane, we just kept on going with Clio.

JULIA: Also irresponsibility, not being responsible for once because that was at no point this year

EMMA: We're always responsible. But like to not be held accountable for stuff? I'm excited :)

KIM: To not be blamed

SOFIE: I feel like this took a very negative turn *laughs* but like the fact we know the active members

KIM: ✨Friendship✨ but also a support system, having people that you can rely on and then know exactly what you're going through

CASPER: But with what Sofie said, you see people working so hard for your committees it's so inspiring

JULIA: God damn Daniel, I will never forget.

EMMA: Shoutout to Daniel!

CASPER: Shoutout to excursion! But also for example if I see the amount of work that Bibi and Maruna put in for the speakers coordinator at Conference, I think yeah that's really insane

KIM: Also seeing people actually enjoy doing what they do or like enjoy their events and be proud that's honestly so happy to see

CASPER: With the freshmen, for example, if they met in the introduction period, anything hosted by the Welcome committee, you see that they now have become very close friends and you feel happy for them

Are you proud of what you've achieved together?

CASPER: What have we achieved together?

EMMA: I think we had a great year and I think a lot of connections came out of it for ourselves but also connections to and for others as well

KIM: I think the whole thing with approachability was amazingly done this year, if anything, because so many more people know us and the whole point of a board is not 'untouchable' anymore. We're just like there to take care of you

SOFIE: We have first years coming into the attic taking naps on our couch

KIM: As they should

EMMA: Since they feel so comfortable

CASPER: Yeah that's something we can be proud of for sure but what was something in our year that went completely bad?

KIM: Sometimes whoopsies were made

CASPER: But what about event-wise?

SOFIE: The goodbye bags *collective ooooo*

EMMA: The flyers

KIM: All that needs to be known is that whoopsies were made

EMMA: Sometimes oopsies were made, but we always managed

SOFIE: And members never minded, which is also one of the beauties of this association because if anything ever went wrong, everyone was willing to help out and accept that you can't control

everything. I think that's also something I learned this year [as well] that when I make a mistake, it's not the end of the world and it usually most people won't even notice and other people won't mind

JULIA: But definitely even turnout, that is quite like a struggle I think in the end everybody would still have a good time who was there

CASPER: Also I think one of the biggest achievements is our next board. If you look at the experience that they already have within the association? They were also very motivated to join and it's very something to be proud of

KIM: They're very enthusiastic and competent I would say. Even more competent than us starting off but we got there eventually :)

If you had to do it all again, would you?

EMMA: I wouldn't do it again after this year but if I had to redo the year, I would

KIM: Yes, for sure.

SOFIE: I would do a lot of things differently but definitely would do it again.

EMMA: And we'd also know what to do differently.

KIM: Yeah, knowing what we know now, I would have done a lot of things differently and I think, like what you said [Sofie], mistakes are not the end of the world but there are no regrets

CASPER: But no do it again [after this year] hell no.

KIM: We want to retire, we wanna shake our ass on a yacht

CASPER: I'm curious though whether we'd have another period in our life where we're so busy because I do think we underestimate the amount of time we put into Clio. It's not a 9-5, it's rather more with the events, meetings, and weekends.

JULIA: I kind of feel like its subconsciously 24/7 because I'm always thinking of Clio

CASPER: But you know what kind of bothered me throughout the year? It's that board members basically have no labour rights.

laugher





About Us

Where Do We See Ourselves in a Year vs. in 30 Years?

With the publication of our last print edition, we think it's not necessary to tell you a general 'about us' for a third time. But as a short recap if you missed our past editions: we are a student-run magazine for the Study Association Clio of the International Relations program of University of Groningen!

We, instead, will let you in on a little secret... the cover image of this edition holds a secret meaning to us. Our dearest Johann, in a (very) rare moment of silence, decided to enlighten us by saying "we are all just boats on the river of life." That random phrase, which should be left up to personal interpretation, has carried us throughout our year together. We hope you have found as much joy and excitement in Checks as we have and we thank you all for supporting us along the way!

With love,

The Checks & Balances '22/23 Family



Erin Deandra Murdiadi
Editor in Chief

Hopefully I'll be graduating next year :) More literally, I'll be writing my thesis in the UB, pulling some all-nighters, then likely slacking off the next day in the park with friends, if May weather permits. But in 30 years? Bro idk, I'll be 50, hopefully comfortable with where I'm at work-wise, socially, mentally, physically, and living life as it comes.



Thomas Huisman
Treasurer & Acquisition

God knows where I will be in 30 years, but I hope that I will be either working abroad, be a history teacher or just be tending to my vegetable garden. I don't particularly care where, as long as I will be surrounded by loved-ones. I know that I will be next year, as I am living in Groningen close to friends and family when I hope to be finishing my bachelor's.

Elena Mihaylova
Secretary

One year from now, I see myself still in this city, hopefully, ready for a study abroad and one new adventure. However, 30 years is one crazy time jump. I look forward to living in a warm country, making people happy through what I do and finally having time for baking and reading. Most of all, both in 1 and 30 years, I hope to keep all my meaningful relationships.



Kimberly Volbeda
Board Representative

In a year from now I'll hopefully be graduating and will then go straight to my Master's (the grind does not stop). I have no idea what is in store for me in 30 years but if I could paint a perfect picture it would be me and my 5 dogs, successful as hell, happily married, in my vacation home somewhere in Greece. Amen.



Sophia Angelova
Layout Editor

In a year from now I will hopefully be receiving my bachelor's degree and will be on the pursuit of internships and employment possibilities. In 30 years from now I hope to work in the energy sector and be making meaningful strides towards diversification and sustainability and contributing to the field through my knowledge of energy geopolitics.



Paul Johann Lindhorst
Public Relations

One year from now, I will hopefully be thriving in this beautiful city, with good grades and all the friends I have come to love this first year. In thirty years, I see myself still surrounded by great people, travelling to different places in the world and hopefully being able to do my part in achieving livable circumstances for all mankind in this confusing, modern age.



Anna Aragoncillo Barceló
Reporter

In a year, I see myself continuing this wonderful degree and travelling with the friendships I've made along the way (hopefully finally interrailing). In thirty years, I hope to go back to my roots and live in a house close to the sea, where I can enjoy the little things in life with my three cats and nice books.

Carla Goltings
Layout Editor

While in 30 years I will most definitely have my life together, in a year I hope to be a little more unhinged. As a control-freak by nature, less by choice, I aspire to let go (a little) in order to enjoy student life as freely and mindlessly as one should. Carla in 30 years, however, will certainly refine her control and thrive on it.



Koen Moerman
Public Relations

In one year, I will be a little further on this road called life, I will still enjoy its wonderful and stressful moments, with its unexpected turns, as I do now. Thirty years from now, I'll be 51. I might have taken a few exits, but I will never lose the current road out of sight.



Isabella Taylor Earhart
Reporter

In a year from now I will be continuing this study with my wonderful friends still by my side. I foresee a lot of travel and, as always, spending too much money on food and beer. As for 30 years from now... I have no idea, but I hope to have made many wonderful memories along the way.



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