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eurovisie

*Where will
you go
When the
wind
blows*

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Editorial

Yael Pless

Dear reader,

Isn't it astonishing that no matter what happens here on this Earth, she keeps spinning? She dances her story around the sun in a somewhat peaceful, lyrical frolic we call a year. A month ago, the clock chimed midnight and celebratory kisses were had over the clinking of glasses and chime of laughter, to the backdrop of gentle music twirling through the air. An invitation for a new year, 2024. In with the old, out with the new. But one night of putting life on pause does not actually bring the world to a screeching halt, because the glass that was tinted for so long has become glaringly clear, too transparent to ignore. For many reasons, the excitement for a new year was greeted with a certain apprehension. The world teeters on a ledge, at a crossroads so momentous you can almost hear eight billion souls holding their breath in anticipation.

For this edition of Eurovisie, our brilliant writers have come together to bring you a series of articles discussing a range of unique topics. Each and every one is bound to spark a new perspective or debate in your mind with their different approaches to our theme: crossroads.

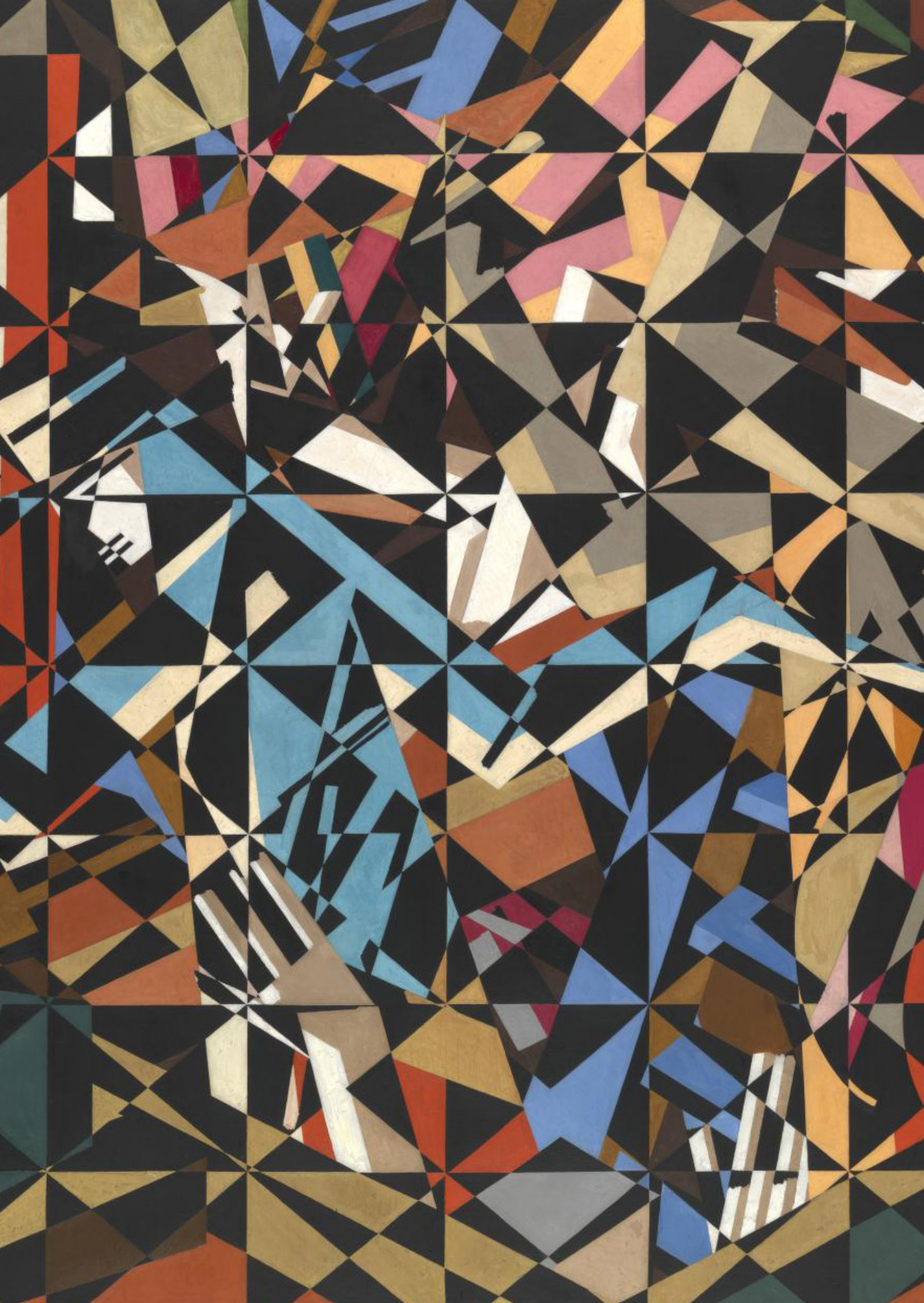
Davide's article will take you back to one of the original crossroads in history: the Renaissance. He not only delves into this infamous era, but also opens your eyes to the contrasting measures of value of the past and present. Meanwhile, Twan takes us on a journey to the Deep South of the US and will introduce you to hoodoo – a spiritual practice originating from African cultural traditions. His article will leave you more knowledgeable and perhaps in reflection about your own personal journey. Andrew articulately explores the impact of the media on discursively framing migration as a crisis, emphasising the transformation of public perception through recent decades. Francesco guides us through the maze of upcoming (supposed) democratic elections in 2024 all across the globe. He deliberates the road leading to this culmination and addresses possible future avenues. In an interview-style piece, Viktorija shares insights into the lives of three loved ones, exploring how taking time off before studying has given them the opportunity to chase their dreams — a decision which many of us have faced in the past or will be approaching in the future.

Muska determinedly scrutinises Western moral and ethical preachings in light of their involvement in several conflicts, most notably the current one in the Middle East. Addressing the pressing matter of climate change, Christina writes about this year's World Economic Forum and lays out the truth that many wish to ignore but must at all costs hear: the time to act is now. Miranda poetically reminds us of the magnificence of boredom and how its role in our lives has irrevocably changed following the technological revolution. I dare to challenge the modern-day cult of social media, addressing the implications for our personal development in young adulthood and the loss of individuality we fall prey to in the infinite black hole of online content creation. Last but not least, in this edition we had the pleasure of welcoming a guest editor, Raihana, who discusses the implications of internationalisation on the housing crisis in the Netherlands, evaluating the parliamentary decision to reduce the number of English-taught courses at Dutch universities. In a nuanced appraisal, she opens your eyes to the pros and cons of globalisation in the educational sphere.

Dear reader, I have faith that this month's edition of Eurovisie will inspire you, delight you, confuse you, or perhaps even perturb you! That is what skilful writing is all about – artistry is to paint words so well that they make others feel. Rest assured, the voices of our generation will move mountains, one crossroads after the next.

Ambitiously,

Yael Pless, editor-in-chief.



Ode to Boredom

Miranda Selimovic

The art of doing nothing is disappearing in our modern societies. My grandmother used to tell me how she remembered being a child as passing endless hours in ennui. Today, we are rarely bored, neither as children nor adults. Even the aspects of life that have the potential of being boring, like travelling by train, are now romanticised and posted in a feed. Occasionally we might enjoy a realism film and feel trendy about it. We have become addicted to distractions and they have seeped into every aspect of our lives; our wardrobe, our summer plans, our education. Constantly we are told to keep moving, changing, buying. The average international student has chosen to leave their home country and study elsewhere solely because of the thrill. Everything is fast and everyone is trying to keep up. There is always another trend, another choice, another crossroad. So what is a life where you just calmly keep going down the same road?

As humans, time surrounds us and holds us in a firm grip. For a long time we lived at the mercy of seasonal change - completely controlled by temporary conditions. Summer meant endless working days to stack up on food in order to survive the harsh winters - spent inside in boredom. Today Japanese, American or Moroccan food can be delivered to us at all times by a couple of clicks; we fight to break free from the grip of time. We try to bend and push space and time in order to make more money or enhance our experience of something.

"We work several hours after the sun sets, we escape our local winters for beaches in Thailand and we scroll through 10-second clips to make time pass by quicker when travelling."

We have successfully managed to escape the boredom my grandmother told me about.

Humans have however profited from these advancements in society - we definitely live a better life than the presumably very bored hunters-gatherers. Perhaps only when boredom is a choice can we enjoy it. Victor Hugo's poem *Melancholia* does not speak in favour of boredom, describing children of 19th century France forced to work endless hours repeating the same tasks.

Where do these children go for
whom nobody laughs?

These sweet, pensive beings
wasted away by fever?

These eight-year-old girls you see
walking alone?

They go to work — fifteen hours
in the mill;

They go from dawn to dusk, eternally repeating

The same motions in the same
prison.

Today we have the choice of not being bored so we choose not to. We choose to continue to stimulate ourselves with another tiktok. But the problem with the loss of boredom does not lie in the fact that we no longer live in Victor Hugo's grim reality. Rather, the

problem is that we are no longer left alone with only our thoughts. We are never stripped of all distractions and face the naked reality of our being. As we keep on hurrying to the next stimulation, our attention span shrinks and we no longer register the important details of our day. Only when there is nothing to do, when there is silence, can we attempt to formulate our answers to the questions a life of free will asks us. It is this unmixed presence that is the essence of boredom that we need to fight to protect from disappearing in the swift tempo of our lives.

Combatting the Climate Change Crisis and Trying to Save the Planet – Again

Christina Govaerts

Our planet is heating up, as are conflicts in the Middle East. The world economy is declining and Ukraine's defense against the Russian invasion is just more fuel added to the fire. Artificial intelligence is advancing at a speed more difficult to keep up with every day. Whatever comes next could be the final log added to the flames to snuff us all out to nothing but ashes and dust. There has never been a more troublesome time to live in than now.

This year's World Economic Forum (WEF) meeting held in Davos, Switzerland has brought critical attention to the incredibly long list of global priorities. One in particular stood out: the climate change crisis, topping the list as the biggest threat to humanity over the coming decade. The most severe environmental threats to be expected include extreme weather events, critical changes to the Earth's ecosystems, loss of biodiversity, and a shortage in natural resources. Top climate scientists from the EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service have already reported this month that the average global temperatures of 2023 obliterated record highs.

All eyes and ears turned to the WEF of course, anxiously anticipating the results of this high-profile meeting. Ostensibly based on peace-making and cooperation to achieve realistic and sustainable solutions for real world problems, Davos has long been criticized for being synonymous with the issues of the "global elite". Many young Swiss Socialists see the meet-

ing as hypocritical, taking to the street to rally, branding the meeting's attendees as "the richest and the most powerful, who are responsible for today's wars and crises." Activists have long had little faith that today's politicians and higher class can properly tackle the crucial and delicate issue that is the climate crisis.

Of all the lofty hopes in Davos, the paramount one of late has been the search for creative and promising ways to fight climate change – again. This year is no different than all others before it. Once again, the freshness of a new year with new promises has been mistaken as substantial. These promises are very similar to those we make to ourselves every new year; the resolutions we set ourselves are clear and strong and seen through with plausible action in the first couple months of the year. However, eventually somewhere down the line we forget about the resolutions, we lose the motivation and we count down the days until the next new year to try again.

Next year I'll start going to the gym. Next year I'll apply for that job. Next year I'll move out. Next year I'll do better. Next year I'll plan better. Next year we will try to save the planet... again.

But how many more 'next years' can our planet take? The harsh truth which many of us seem to ignore is that we don't have many 'next years' at all. At least not for the countries which endure the harshest outcomes of climate

change. These countries, which are primarily poor agriculture-based economies, all around the world are no longer 'preparing' for the worst of climate change's effects but trying to support a waning lifestyle and coping with the consequences as best as possible. Specifically in Mozambique, the annual escalation in both intensity and frequency of tropical cyclones has become recurrent and record-breaking. Some of you may have heard of the recent devastating Cyclone Freddy some months back which placed millions into perilous life threatening conditions. Additionally, the periodic 'El Niño' climate phenomenon is now more extreme than it has ever been, causing oscillation periods of extreme drought and flooding. This is devastating for many sub-Saharan African countries, particularly those who rely on subsistence farming for their survival rather than monetary profit.

The repercussions of this however, extend beyond the immediate human toll. These cataclysmic environmental events decrease fertile soil coverage and the range of cultivable crops. This in turn affects the diversity of nutritional diets that subsistence farmers and their communities depend upon. The consequences of this domino effect on diet are mostly damaging to the child population, stunting child growth in many of these third world countries. The main culprit; the indirect effects of climate change.

With international antagonism on the rise in an increasingly uncer-

tain world, cooperation on global matters to address crises such as climate change isn't likely to get any easier. However, the WEF conference in Davos has the potential for real promises to enact effective climate change action as the meeting pairs heavy concern for the environment with many highly influential figures from the financial sphere. The takeaway from the conference recommended focusing on two key areas moving forward: minimizing the health implications from climate change and ensuring swift recovery from future damaging climate events. Achieving this requires collaborative efforts from governments, policymakers, the life sciences industry, and the healthcare sector. The report essentially emphasized the need for governments and industries to prioritize reducing their greenhouse gas emissions to prevent any further destructive climate consequences. The targets have been set, what remains to be seen are the results.

"We can't build a future for our grandchildren with a system built for our grandparents,"

wrote António Guterres as he took to twitter to comment upon the climate change crisis.

This is the crossroads we stand at this year, and indeed every year; When are those who have the power and resources going to actually take action instead of simply talking about it? Will they let the fire that has been set engulf all of those who have been forgotten in the flames or will these fires be finally put out?



Stuck in the Web: How social media our minds into tangles oblivion

Yael Pless

Every hour, day, week, and month brings new beginnings. Your twenty-somethings bring some of the biggest crossroads of all. Go here, or, go there. Do this, not that. Make sure you do this by then...but not before you do that. There's a perpetual influx of unsolicited advice that we willingly transform into welcome guidance. We feel so lost that any voice is a raft that saves us from drowning in the sea of endless opportunity. The escapist abyss of social media is a welcome relief as we try to run away from the go-go-go hustle culture of the twenty-first century that moves so fast that we cannot catch our breath with each new lap. But before you know it, TikTok and Instagram reveal themselves as imposters. While you turned to them to find an hour of stillness in the chaos, you were tricked into the absurdity of opening sixty new doors into people's lives in a mere sixty minutes. This is so much more than we were ever meant to see. While you are told to focus on yourself and your goals, suddenly you are hypnotised by the lives of so many others, the excessiveness of it incapacitating. When we are jaded, wishing for simplicity in order to escape from analysis paralysis, we end up forgetting; choice and complexity are a luxury.

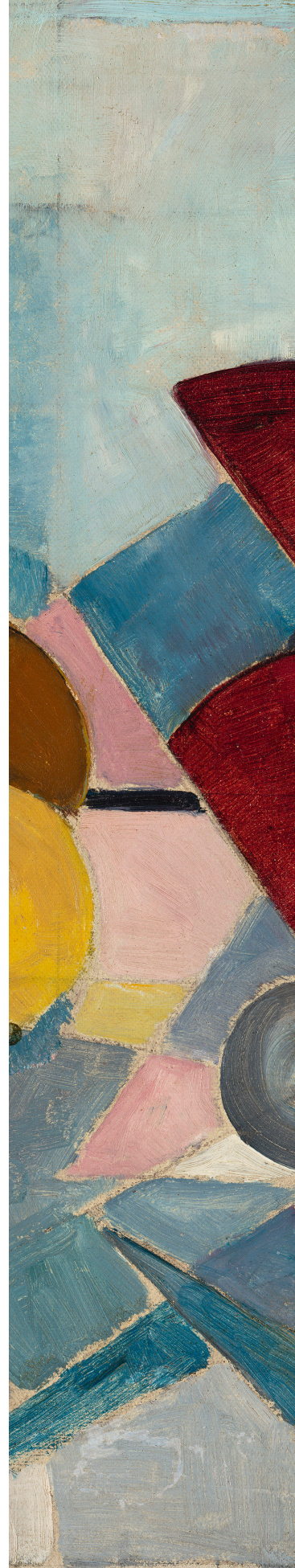
The increasing presence of social media became most noticeable to me through the COVID-19 pandemic. Young adults were confined indoors with nothing better to do than make TikToks to distract them from the boredom and unnatural shutdown of the world. It becomes even more apparent during cold winters when the darker months lead people to turn to the media for joy and inspiration. Unfortunately, as days

shorten, so do our attention spans. Mindless scrolling provides our brain with free-for-all dopamine hits, and we fail to realise that it is too good to be true.

"Beneath the surface, the brain is becoming accustomed to an addictive cycle of releasing rewarding chemicals and turning us into dopamine junkies that only find our fix in being glued to a screen with rapidly changing content."

Picking up a book has been demoted from first place to tenth because our brains are no longer trained to focus on one subject for longer than mere minutes. Have you ever wondered why so many people effortlessly spend hours on an electronic device, but with most other past times, it is only a matter of moments before it is laid back down?

Inspiration has come to stem from ever-changing 'aesthetics' and trends, where every few months a new fashion sense, personality type, or image becomes generalised as being the new craze of the month. Clean girl, rockstar girlfriend, cottage girl, ballerina, femme fatale, independent boss girl...these titles of different archetypes ensnare women and constantly direct what we should strive to be, and pull the focus away from the real quest: who we want to be. On the other hand, men are exposed to a never-ending stream of content showcasing the aesthetics and lifestyles of street-style skaters, tattooed and mysterious bad boys, 9





to 5 corporate finance guys, or ambitious gym-goers. Many of the accounts that idealise and spread these trends are applauded for motivating people and encouraging them to follow these formulas. Nonetheless, there is an overwhelming majority who leave social media platforms feeling worse than when they opened them in the first place.

The logical answer would be to limit the time spent on these apps, or perhaps even delete them full stop. However, one runs into a little problem: everything is connected through it. Nowadays, it is odd if someone mentions that they are not active on any social media. It is normally met with confusion, admiration, or even praise for the person managing to stay offline. Even the desire to limit one's time spent online has several roadblocks. After some time on social media, it is quite the effort to disentangle oneself from the addictive web of perpetual insight into people's lives and endless ideas and entertainment found on social media.

I believe that the current relationship most young adults have with social media robs us of the ingenuity and individuality we all instinctively have.. As we worship our image and status, worship ourselves, the rituals of self-curation and repetition of prescribed liturgies of unattainable and capricious trends become irresistible. Mandatory even. However, the flip side of social media's influence is that through the almost amusing extent of over-sharing, many old taboos have seen an impressive destigmatisation. It is touching to see how so many people, no matter their age,

find relatability in the confessions of others.

Unfortunately, like so many other things in our generation, excess disrupts the nature of balance meant to sustain us. Akin to binary fission, the number of accounts promoting and influencing all things fashion, mental health, sport, nutrition and who knows what else, has multiplied innumerable. The paradox of this 'influencing', is that we usually end up exactly where we began, maybe a bit behind, but usually no inch further. One post tells us this, the other tells us that. We end up at a crossroads where we no longer know who or what to believe. Are we being taught to have no individual thinking? We were never meant to have so much external input, and it blurs the lines of intuition by pressing the mental override button so much it strains to a breaking point in most. We are hardwired to perceive and process. The question you must face yourself with is merely how much, and of what?

Growth always lies on the other side of adversity, and crossing the road is always a gamble. Do not be afraid to trust yourself. Listen to others and bear their advice in mind, but never follow blindly. Running the risk of doing exactly what I condemn, allow me to suggest: if you can take anything from the media's preachings, then let it be this - awareness is the first step.



A migration in cross - border movement discourse

Andrew T

For the past decade, the mainstream / alternative media gradient has increasingly painted the media canvas with tints of social media, open-source intelligence, subscription based political blogs, live streaming, critical theory, clickbait, and freelance journalism. The explosion of digital knowledge exchange, both in volume and contents, has been tumultuous. A seasoned diplomatic response would be that the popular media landscape has simply changed, for better and for worse. To those defined by bi-directional political factions, the others' rhetoric, assumptions, facts, and empirical evidence in respective media are to blame. But in this article I would like to expand on the discursive crossroad Europe is facing in relation to cross-border migration. Popular media and overall sentiment has progressively shifted more critical and inclusive of migration scepticism over the past decade. And even more recently, attention has been focussed on the complexity and multifaceted nature of migration. Drawing from crisis theorisation, this article will focus on the coming of age of this discursive crossroads, and the decisions that ought to be made. I would argue that popular discourse is situated in a newly liminal space on addressing the heavily politicised, complex, and theoretically insoluble topic of migration. Whilst this shift is necessary at large, some important points need to be addressed.

The early 2000s; the technological dot-com boom, msn emoticons, global internet, neoliberal democratic optimism, a PR stable Britney Spears, and an expanding political European community.

"Without going into rushed and faulty attempts to explaining the discursive ethos of this eurodance infused epoch, it could be argued that some perceived the semantic thicket as unquestioningly tolerant of cosmopolitan values, multiculturalism, economic liberalisation and border check removals."

Migration, and pluriform societies, were mainly viewed as matters of concern by outgroups. And when it was included, migration, as it is still holistically framed, could mostly be responded to with a binary token of solidarity - or its lack thereof. The simplistic framing of migration as a policy unit which can be reduced to a pro or anti camp based on morality embodies ignorance to a complex and multifaceted item.

Before the internet, news was distributed in a top-down manner, allowing traditional media to act as gatekeepers of public information. Then, with the historic access of large parts of the population to public universities after World War II, critical social theories became available to a new, young, white, and educated generation. In a way similar to the 1970s, we are also experiencing a time of significant social critique to the established neoliberal western power structures via movements such as #MeToo, Black Lives Matter, and Qanon. Nowadays however,

nondiscriminatory access to the internet has enabled many more people to access critical knowledge productions. Via these technological developments, a discrepancy between the abundance of information, and a scarcity of holistic yet meticulous narratives by mainstream broadcasters has led to a fractured and polemic discourse on migration. Across Europe, morally conservative voters were quickly stigmatised as unreasoned racists and low educated voters. While leftist elite urbanites are 'out of touch' with 'the real world'.

A dangerous cocktail of deficit inclusive media debate, social media, and immensely complex issues on national identity, colonialism, and migration history have now given ground to the most fraught ideologies and muddled simplifications throughout migration discourse. But by turning to theorisations of crises, our trajectory can be better understood.

Migration, as is, is widely viewed to be in a state of crisis. Whether as a postcolonial humanitarian crisis, or a morally unjust tax on European institutions and social cohesion. In their journal article, Boin and McConnell discuss that these two opposing narratives could be seen as part of a contest between frames and counter-frames. Moreover, Colin Hay argues that within the realm of discourse, these narratives are constantly being appropriated to construct a 'better' story. Hay also suggests that successful stories are those which can, apart from accurately grasp complex causations, provide easy and flexible explanations which can incorporate many symptoms of failure whilst directing it to one clear cause. Our current lack of one clear root cause to migration, and the lack of an easy yet flexible story explains why our discursive battle is still ongoing. Ultimately, he argues that in order for a crisis to be resolved, a successful crisis story is first needed.

Populists, and other supposed out-groups, have used this open discursive battleground to their own political benefit. In *The Populist Zeitgeist*, Cas Mudde explores the idea that established parties try to include populist rhetoric in order to exclude populist actors from political power. As a result, the popular discourse is currently at a crossroads. Mainstream media are incorporating more critical voices on migration, marking the end of binary tolerant ignorance.

American political scientist Dara Strolovitch makes a distinction between dominant groups and marginalised people based on elements of power, conceptions of normativity and privilege, and politics. She argues that only if hard times are perceived to be incurred by

those considered of a dominant group will a crisis be constructed. Mainly politicians and the media are able to construct a crisis. Departing from this theory, an explanation could be given to this recent shift of critical rhetoric in popular discourse on migration. If we take the majority of the established European electorate as the dominant group, the rise of populism, and rising undemocratic sentiment across Europe now truly threaten the interest of this dominant group, forcing migration to be inclusively incorporated into crisis narratives. With democratic institutions under attack by - migration crisis fed - populism, the inclusion of critical voices on migration, and its multifaceted complexity has only recently been addressed by mainstream broadcasters.

The political axioms hold many false presumptions to the root cause of the perceived migration crisis. The data is impartial however. As much as leftist-progressives believe in the humanitarian solution of aiding poor regions into financial stability as a remedy to destitute border crossings, increased economic development in poor regions increases migratory streams to Europe, according to Hein De Haas. As a result, the majority of migrants in Europe nowadays are not refugees, but those in search of better economic futures. Conversely, Europe is not met with historically overwhelming numbers of refugees in recent years. In fact, De Haas reminds us that the total percentage of refugees globally is now lower than it was during the eurodance 1990s. Rather, global migration ebbs and flows along oscillations in economic expansion and its demand for labour, regardless of migration policies.

To boot, the 'tough on migration' antidote provided by right wing politicians is failing to prove successful. Apart from its damningly problematic rhetoric, tougher border controls have proven ineffective. The Financial Times, reports that Brexit, while supposedly aimed at 'taking back control', has left the UK dealing with around twice the amount of migrants than first. Furthermore, Visa Guru reported that Giorgia Meloni has silently given out almost half a million residency permits to 'illegals' in 2023.

Our current discourse is currently at a crossroads. Mainstream media is coming to terms with the highly complex, and factually counterintuitive nature of cross border migration in Europe. Yet this liminal discursive landscape will be unable to reach a successful crisis formation as long as its core driver remains excluded. War and refugees are not the causes of mass migration, nor is Europe's welcoming attitude of migrants. Instead, liberated market economies, and subsequent labour demands drive global cross-border movements.

From Man to Money:

The advent of the Renaissance in European
Civilization and its heritage

Davide Distaso



Human history is delineated through constant crossroads.

The existence of these crossroads has allowed mankind to evolve through decades, culminating in the contemporary society in which we live.

In our past, among the many turning points that have taken place, there has been one that profoundly changed past conceptions, giving birth to the idea of MODERN MAN.

From the medieval conception of man, which for years conceived of himself as a mere background figure in society, controlled by the joint presence of Church and Empire, a new idea was making room within the hearts of European civilization: 'Homo faber fortunae suae'.

This Latin expression is precisely that guiding light that lit up inside man, who after years of spiritual death, was reborn, aware that he was the author of his own destiny: it was the beginning of the Renaissance.

This light not only initiated a period of history full of changes, but also illuminated all fields of knowledge and brought about great revolutions. Indeed, all the greatest innovations in science, art, politics and technique date back to the Renaissance period.

Figures such as Galileo Galilei, Leonardo Davinci, Michelangelo Buonarroti or Niccolò Machiavelli cannot be forgotten, as they are credited with taking the first steps along the path that led us to our contemporary reality.

However, let us take a step back and trace the history of this revolutionary era, starting with its name: why was it called the Renaissance?

Renaissance is a French word meaning "rebirth", it refers to the beginning of a new era of art, science and technique, rebirthing the classical models of Ancient Greek and Roman periods while using modern techniques, that is why the term Renaissance is commonly associated with the idea of modernity.

When and where did it begin? The chronology of the Renaissance period is not defined, but we can roughly refer to the period from about the mid-1300s to the end of the 1500s. The first nation to be illuminated by the dawn of this new era was Italy, becoming the first of the sons of modern Europe.

It is no coincidence that the homeland of pasta and pizza, became the cradle of Renaissance culture.

Indeed, Italian intellectuals of that period, such as those mentioned above, were the first to grasp the impulse to revive classical culture.

In addition, it was the governors themselves who made their courts, the greatest cultural centers of Europe, such as the court of Lorenzo de Medici nicknamed 'THE MAGNIFICENT', where the greatest painters and poets of the period gathered.

Now that the context is clear, let us move on to understand what the real crossroad brought by the Renaissance era was.

"If metaphorically, a crossroads means something that has reached a very important stage in its development where it could go one way or the other, the Renaissance revolution lies precisely in this."

Namely in the choice to change the way men looked at themselves by becoming spiritual individuals and recognizing themselves as such.

This change allowed man to escape from that darkness of ignorance and ineptitude that permeated human beings during the Middle Ages, who recognized themselves as such only as members of a race, a people, a party or a family.

As a result of this, a new intellectual movement called Humanism was born during this historical period, that emphasized the value of human beings, their achievements, and their potential.

But to understand even better what I am talking about, here is a practical example: have you ever looked at the back of a one-euro coin?

Well, if you have, one of the most common backs, especially in Italy is none other than THE VITRUVIAN MAN, by Leonardo Davinci.

This work, conceived by the artist in 1490, is a symbol of Renaissance art as well as Humanism, and shows an analysis of the proportions of the human body with the intention of representing man as the 'measure of all things'.

However, from my point of view it is no coincidence that an icon such as the Vitruvian man was chosen to be represented behind a coin.

Indeed, I firmly believe that the Renaissance choice to place man as the measure of all things has now been forgotten.

Our society no longer revolves around humanity, but around a new entity that has disruptively established itself as the ultimate unit of measurement of current reality: money.

"Whereas in Renaissance era, the value of a human being was recognized by his technical or artistic abilities, today your value is determined by how much money you have in your bank account."

We live under the illusion that the amount of money you possess is proportional to the power and value you have, not realizing that we are slaves to this system.

In conclusion, taking the literal meaning of the word crossroads, the modern society, in its evolution, has chosen not to continue in the direction taken by the Renaissance but, on the contrary, has chosen another path, resulting in a society in which nothing has value except pieces of paper and metal.





(De-)Internationalisation

Raihana Bouyazmaren

In late January, the Dutch parliament concluded through a majority vote that they would pursue a plan to 'firmly' reduce the amount of English-taught courses in Dutch higher education. Within eight weeks, Dutch universities would be required to present their plans, and how they aim to achieve this goal. This is a fairly short period to resolve a problem that has been around ever since Dutch universities tried to actively attract international students. As a student, it is hard to ignore: cramped study spaces, overworked teachers, and budget deficits. Retrospectively, it becomes clear that Dutch universities were not prepared for an enormous number of international students.

One of the main reasons why Parliament is urging universities to attract fewer international students is, unsurprisingly, the Dutch housing crisis. On both sides of the political spectrum, lawmakers have voiced concern for the major shortage of housing in the Netherlands. Student accommodation is far from being the only one affected by this issue — social and starter housing are also in great demand and have thus been impacted greatly. Taking this into consideration, it is unsurprising that as of 2023, most Dutch students still live at home with their parents. By contrast, roughly ten years ago most students lived on their own or in student housing.

The shortage is largely the result of government policy. After the financial crisis of 2008, the house prices went down, rendering many unable to pay off their mortgage. Because of the unstable market,

there was an increase in homes being sold. To stimulate people to purchase a house, the Dutch government incentivised the population by raising the rate of mortgage interest deduction. In short, this meant that your mortgage was tax-deductible, and therefore it became more financially attractive to buy a house.

Consequently, the demand for housing rose, while the supply did not. Because of the high housing prices, people were forced to keep renting. What occurred then, is something we see in many big European cities: investors buy houses to rent them out at extremely high prices. By the end of the last decade, Dutch housing prices had sky-rocketed to prices never seen before. After the pandemic and following rising inflation owing to the war in Ukraine, housing prices decreased again. In 2024, it is predicted by Rabobank that prices will go up again by an average of 2.4 percent, while the government is expecting the shortage to reach 317,000 houses. This crisis is a complex issue and undoubtedly requires long-term policy planning. Starting with what the government should have done a long time ago: building houses more rapidly and in larger quantities.

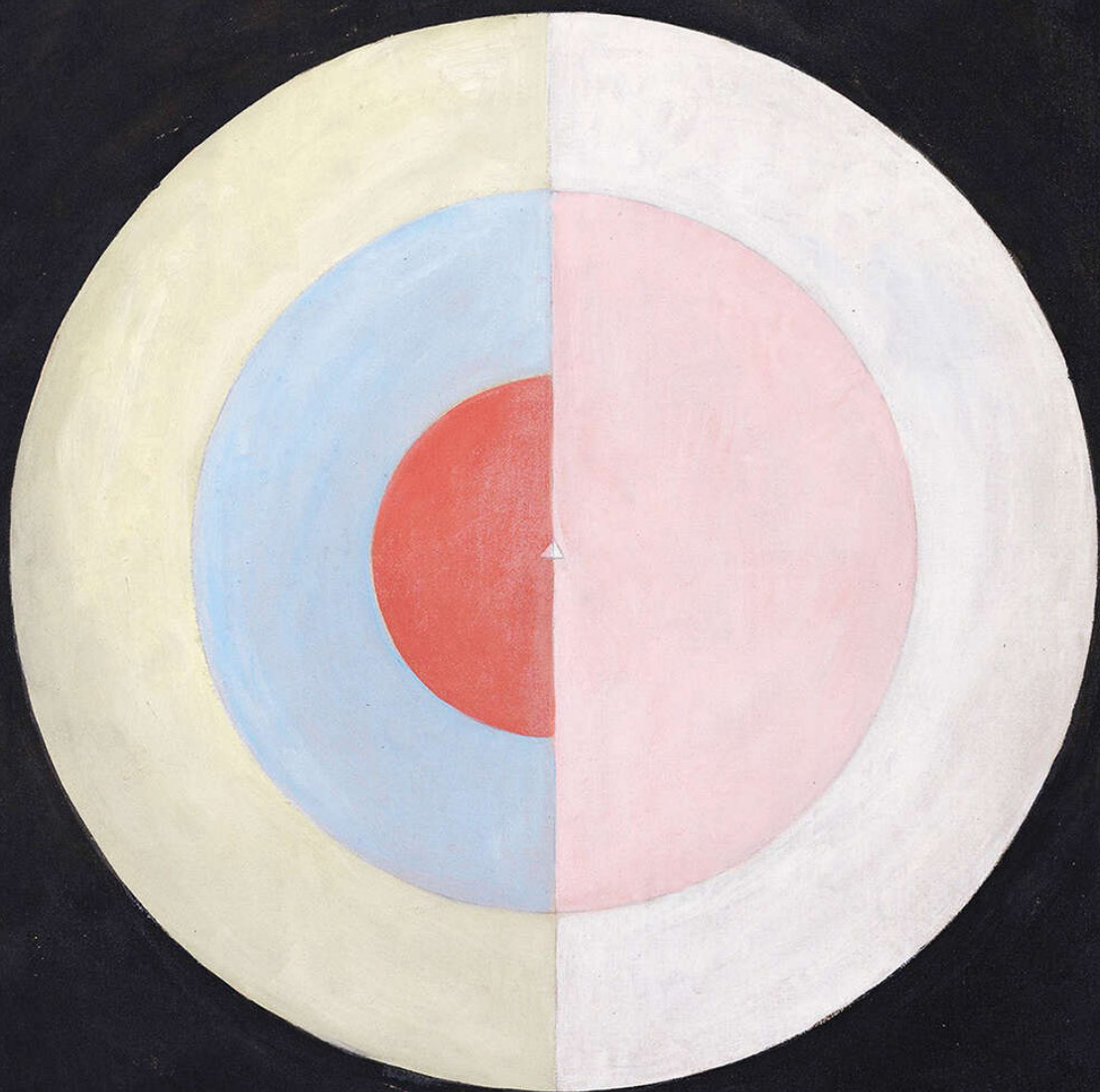
Another popular argument that is given against internationalisation is the feared decline in quality of education at Dutch universities. For most students and teachers, English is not their native language. Often, this leads to language barriers. Not to mention, when students end up in the Dutch labor market after they graduate, the working language is predomi-

nantly Dutch, not English. In June 2023, Dutch politician and frontman of political party NSC, Pieter Omtzigt, said in a committee debate about the English-taught bachelor Psychology: "What does the Netherlands as a society or the Netherlands as an economy gain from this?". This referred to the fact that most international students end up leaving the Netherlands after they finish their degree.

While it is true that more international students end up leaving than staying, the Dutch economy still profits from the internationalisation. A 2022 Nuffic (Dutch Organisation for Internationalisation in Education) study showed that the Netherlands makes a profit of 1.5 billion Euro every year from international students. Not only do these students contribute financially, they also bring new knowledge to the table. For example, the technology industry has benefited greatly from indispensable expertise brought forth by internationals.

"Foreign students have become the scapegoats for all sorts of issues: the housing crisis, the decline in quality of education at universities, gentrification, the lack of Dutch-speaking employees in restaurants, and so forth."

In reality, many of these issues can be traced back to policy failure. It seems that when voicing





their opinion about internationalisation, politicians and Dutch citizens tend to mostly consider the disadvantages.

In regard to Omtzigt's question of what the Netherlands stands to gain, I would respond: an international community. Now, more than ever, students are surrounded by peers from all parts of the world. The value of this international community is not to be underestimated. Particularly at the Faculty of Humanities, where different cultures, languages and national histories are taught. Not only do students add to its value, but lecturers and teachers with different backgrounds are necessary for a well-rounded understanding of the world. This would partly be lost if universities decided to let these courses only be taught in Dutch.

However, I cannot make this point

without mentioning the questionable usage of the term 'diversity'. Dutch universities such as the University of Amsterdam pride themselves on having a diverse student body. Yet, most (international) students have a white European background. Is that not, if anything, a confirmation of the university's elitist image as opposed to being the moral example for diversity? It seems that for Dutch universities, internationalisation came as an 'easy' solution to the lack of diversity in Dutch universities, particularly within Master's programmes.

Similarly to the debate on diversity, the debate of internationalisation will probably remain an ongoing one. On the 329th birthday of the University of Amsterdam, the university's Rector Magnificus, Peter Paul Verbeek, held a speech celebrating the occasion. His comment about the UvA, 'a

good university is locally rooted and internationally oriented', represents the biggest university this tiny country has. The University of Amsterdam would not be what it is today without internationalisation. Without these students, teachers and researchers, academic life at the UvA would not be as lively and multidimensional as it is today.

Upon looking at the capacity of Dutch universities, it is not difficult to see that the influx of international students is becoming excessive. However, if the Netherlands wants to keep what it has built in these last ten years, it needs to invest more effort into the international students that are already here. Invest in their education, make them feel at least a little bit welcome, and Dutch society will, without doubt, benefit from it.



Democracy and Geopolitics are on the Ballot in 2024

Francesco Bernabeu Fornara

If you're reading this, chances are you live in a democracy. What's more, you've probably taken it for granted, along with all its benefits, especially if you're under 30. Yet, democracy is not the status quo, not by any metric. For most, de facto authoritarian or illiberal disenfranchisement is the norm, with voting being at best an option with an effect not worthy of its name. Indeed, liberal democracy is not a given, nor is it everlasting for the lucky few who have it.

Infantile when compared to history, democracy coexists amidst towering autocratic-like alternatives whose heads look down on the former with antipathy. If not actively nurtured, protected, and legitimised, democracy's flame will go out, representing yet another passing ideology in history, ending not by a sudden implosion like communism or blast like fascism, but with a gradual, inexplicit whimper, as is the case for many states right now. But this is no fear-mongering (if only it was).

No matter what index you use, more countries are slipping towards or deeper into authoritarianism than at any point since the end of the Cold War, according to the European Consortium for Political Research. As argued by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, at the current rate, by 2026, less than 5% of the global population will live under liberal democracies.

Be it for better or worse, 2024 will be the marker whereby the fate

of this trend of democratic recession will be sealed or abated - a true test to the vitality of liberal democracy. For the next 350 days or so, 4 billion people will have the option to cast a vote in elections covering at least 60 countries. How will the state of freedom look like in 2025 and beyond will be largely determined by the outcome of these elections, and more importantly, by those who choose to participate in them.

The UK, India, Russia, Iran, Venezuela, Pakistan, Taiwan, South Africa, and, of course, the EU and US, represent less than a sixth of the countries on this year's elections list. In this list rests 60% of the world's economic output, over half of the earth's population, and seven of the ten most populous countries.

But what will these elections have in common? Is there an overarching trend that connects them? Indeed there may be.

Global politics is as relevant as ever in 2024, with international events being increasingly part of national headlines, most recently exemplified by the media coverage of the Israel-Gaza and Ukraine-Russia conflicts. A globalisation trend of international affairs is arguably seeping global politics further into national political discourse.

Unconvinced? Middle Eastern streets, of which many will soon be hosting elections (regardless of their varying fairness), have been reawakened as hundreds

of thousands flock to them to show their solidarity with Palestine. Many more from every corner of the world have likewise taken to their own streets in recent months in assemblies destined to express views not (only) on national contentions or against domestic politicians but regarding events superficially tangential to most — only near, digitally speaking.

Seemingly peripheral to national affairs, such geopolitical events, especially if on citizens' media radar, have consequential effects on domestic politics. Take the United States for instance, where conflicts on the other side of the world — one in Eastern Europe and mainly one (but also others) in the Middle East — have taken centre stage in presidential hopefuls' discourse and debates. Likewise for many other countries. Russia's elections, while expected to lack freedom and fairness, will inevitably be smeared by the backdrop of Western economic sanctions and human loss in Ukraine. During Taiwan's January elections, it was Chinese influence over the island that plagued political deliberation. For Finland's presidential elections, discourse around NATO, following its recent accession, and Russian deterrence have taken a spotlight. South African media has been replete with its recent lawsuit against Israel and consequently the Gaza conflict, inevitably affecting their elections this summer. The UK's elections will be marred by decreasing enthusiasm for the Conservative party but also, albeit less influential, by its military-interventionist approach



in Yemen. South Korea's with its northern counterpart's revitalised military and nuclear muscle-flexing. And Ukraine's upcoming elections, unless postponed, speak for themselves.

"International affairs are becoming increasingly consequential to domestic politics."

Admittedly, this is not the case for many other elections, especially for those where foreign policy has historically taken a backseat and where their locations are geographically far from contentious geopolitics. Likewise, this is not to say that internal affairs have become less influential in national elections or even that international politics will tip the scale in many elections. Ordinary citizens still do see their immediate needs and wants as priority. Nevertheless, what this year does show is that international affairs and geopolitics have increasingly become word on the streets, not least because of our new pocketed devices blurring the line between social media and politics.

Simply look at the Hague, where the recent International Court of Justice's case between South Africa and Israel on the Gaza conflict has been one of, if not the most, politicised and aired international court cases in history, grabbing the attention not only of scholars but of ordinary people too.

Undoubtedly, the wave of elections in 2024 will be coated with geopolitical deliberation. The effect and level of influence this will have on the trend of the democratic recession is yet unknown, and could go either way - if at all. Maybe this vitalised popular interest in international affairs may offer extra scrutiny over elections destined to be unfair, hence placing autocrats on their back foot. Or maybe because of it, autocrats will reactively consolidate their powers ever more from fear of their publics' recent agitation and increased political awareness.

2024 is, in any case, the biggest election year in history, potentially mobilising half of the world's population, where citizens themselves will be at centre stage, grasping more than ever the keys to the world's democratic destiny.

Crossroad

Deities

Twan Hover

Close your eyes and immerse yourself in the imagery of a crossroads: a place where diverging paths stretch out like ribbons of possibilities into the vast unknown. Each path holds the promise of an adventure, of a journey that will take you somewhere new. The choice is yours. Take the road that calls to you, and see where it takes you. It's a moment that demands introspection and careful consideration, for the choices made here can profoundly shape the course of one's life. Yet, amidst this pivotal juncture, there's a palpable sense of anticipation, a whisper of adventure carried on the wind. As if a magical spell were cast upon the earth at the moment, the very air crackles with a promise of a new beginning.

Now, envision the train—a potent symbol of autonomy and freedom—poised at the crossroads, ready to transport you to uncharted destinations. Its rhythmic chug echoes the steady beating of your heart as you stand at the threshold of choice. Each carriage represents a different path, each destination a new chapter waiting to be written.

"The train becomes a metaphor for life's journey, offering the freedom to choose your own path and embark on a voyage of self-discovery."

But what lies beyond the physical manifestation of the crossroads? Delve deeper, and you'll discover a profound significance that transcends mere geography. Across cultures and civilizations, the crossroads have been revered as sacred spaces, liminal realms where the boundaries between the mundane and the supernatural blur. They are places of transition and transformation, where the veil between worlds grows thin, and the mysteries of existence are laid bare.

The significance of the crossroads extends beyond metaphor, finding profound resonance in ancient African cultural traditions. Across diverse ethnic groups, deities like Legba, Ellegua, Elegbara, Eshu, Exu, Nbumba Nzila, and Pomba Gira guard the crossroads, opening the way and imparting wisdom. These trickster gods, revered as the guardians of the threshold, serve as mediators between

the earthly realm and the divine. They hold the keys to hidden knowledge and secret wisdom, guiding travelers along the winding paths of fate. These beliefs, originating from Africa, accompanied the diaspora and merged with Native American and European influences, giving rise to a syncretic form of spirituality known as hoodoo. Historically practiced by African Americans, Creole individuals, and even white communities in the Deep South, embodies a tapestry of beliefs and magical practices. Rooted in folk traditions, hoodoo also known as voodoo serves as a testament to the enduring relevance of the crossroads narrative. These trickster gods, revered as the guardians of the threshold, serve as mediators between the earthly realm and the divine. They hold the keys to hidden knowledge and secret wisdom, guiding travelers along the winding paths of fate.

Voodoo is often depicted as a mystical and mysterious practice associated with magic, zombies, and curses. It's frequently portrayed in movies, television shows, and books as a sensationalized form of black magic, with practitioners wielding supernatural powers for nefarious purposes. This portrayal perpetuates stereotypes and misconceptions about Voodoo, often distorting or exaggerating its true beliefs and practices.

In the mystical swamps and bayous of the American South, voodoo practitioners sought to harness the power of the crossroads through ritual and magic. They believed that by invoking the spirits of the crossroads, they could gain access to supernatural forces and bend them to their will. From love spells to protection charms, hoodoo or voodoo offered a myriad of ways to tap into the hidden energies of the universe.

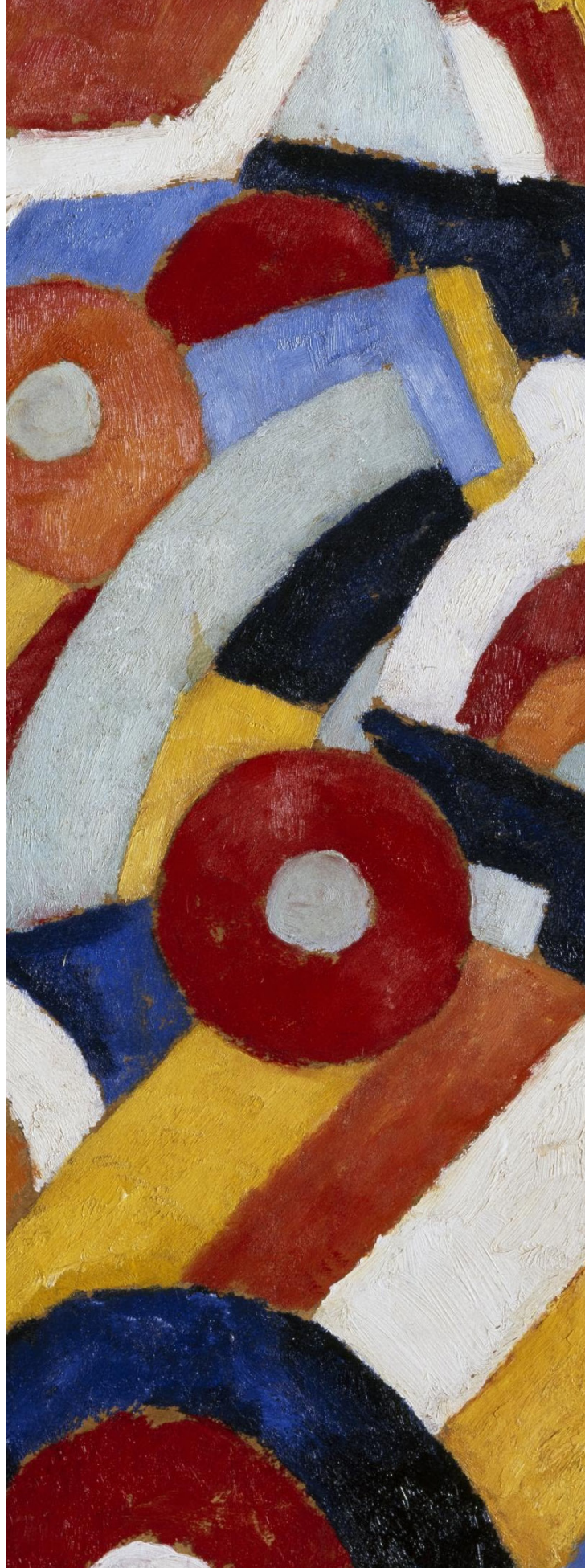
But perhaps the most enduring tale of the crossroads comes from the world of music. Legend has it that the blues guitarist Robert Johnson made a Faustian bargain at a crossroads, selling his soul to the devil in exchange for unparalleled musical talent. Whether true or not, the story of Johnson's pact has become deeply ingrained in the mythology of American music, serving as a testament to the enduring power of the crossroads archetype. This legend has been passed down through generations,

inspiring countless musicians, writers, and filmmakers to explore the idea of crossing paths with destiny. It has also become a metaphor for the struggles and sacrifices necessary for success. Robert Johnson's mythological pact at the crossroads has captured the imagination of artists across various mediums, symbolizing the pursuit of greatness and the sacrifices one must make to achieve it. This enduring legend continues to inspire and resonate with individuals seeking to carve their own path in the world of music and beyond.

In literature, too, the crossroads have long served as a potent symbol of choice and consequence. This symbolism is echoed in the classic novel *The Odyssey*, where the protagonist is faced with the difficult decision of whether to pursue everlasting life or to go back home, to his wife. The crossroads have become a metaphor for the difficult decisions we all face in life. Additionally, from the pages of Shakespeare's "Macbeth" to Dante's "Inferno," writers have utilized the motif of the crossroads to explore themes of morality, fate, and free will. It is a symbol that resonates across time and culture, reminding us that every decision we make has the power to shape our destiny.

This is especially true when it comes to a crossroads in life, where we must make a decision that can shape our future. It is a reminder of the power we have to make a difference in our lives and the lives of others.

So the next time you find yourself at a crossroads—whether literal or metaphorical—pause for a moment and consider the significance of the choice before you. For in that moment of decision lies the potential for transformation, renewal, healing, and the discovery of untold possibilities.



Interviews three

gap

with years

Viktorija Greidāne

I started getting ready for university in the 9th grade – researching universities, polishing my skills, and collecting experiences and diplomas to put on my CV. Back then, my dream career path was to become an architect, so going to an art studio to sketch was essential. After changing directions a few times, I was set and ready to apply to universities. The extensive getting-ready process, a safe academic environment that I was accustomed to for 12 years, and a clear plan led me to eliminate the gap year as an option. I decided not to trade the year of uncertainty for education, and I remain content with my choice. Now, one semester into university, I wondered - who chose a different path at these crossroads and what was it like? I asked my three friends Sanija, Vilora, and Patrīcija about their experiences, and they agreed to share their stories.

Sanija stepped into the modelling world. In the past, Sanija had been offered a few jobs and refused them. One day, however, her (then future) agent approached her in a thrift store, upon which she agreed to consider this new path. Sanija postpones her studies until next year, when she plans to dive into the world of acting and directing. *Even though it was a tough choice, Sanija says, University is every year, but modelling is only once.*

This career has been marked by lots of free time and then none, and always being ready. Any day the agency could call, and in the blink of an eye Sanija finds herself on a plane to work in beautiful cities like Paris, Milan, Rome, London, Riga, and more. The days before a show are filled with castings, fittings, and callbacks from multiple designers a day. Show day mornings are spent in a makeup chair getting ready for the evening debut. The models work long, exhausting days, while designers invest months, or even years into curating their collections. *The back-stage of modelling is not talked about enough, says Sanija, it is a prestigious job, but it takes a lot of energy and effort.*

The latest Maison Margiela ss24 Couture collection was challenging, but so amazing - a corset cinching the waist into a circumference of 10 cm, my face co-

vered with porcelain-like makeup, high heels clicking on the pavement, and working alongside John Galliano, Sanija recalls with amazement, The satisfaction is indescribable! She has also walked the runways of Prada, Dries van Noten, Loewe, and in the London Fashion Awards for Valentino. She has become the top newcomer on models.com only after her first season.

You never know what you will do or how you will look – but that's the beauty of it. It is like being an actress, Sanija thinks. At first, it is difficult to face rejection and challenges alone in another country, but even then, modelling is nothing personal, it is just business. If you do not fit their brand vision, you simply do not.

Modelling has advantages, including personal growth, Sanija says: *With time I learned how to present myself better and be more outgoing, as every time I meet so many people from various backgrounds. I feel more mature and grown up. A million girls would kill for this job, but at the end of the day, there is nothing like returning to her hometown: Riga. No country has as beautiful forests as Latvia does, adds Sanija.*

In the long run, what is meant for us, will come to us. Modelling is a gamble, but it is a treasure in my heart that I will forever be grateful for! With this, Sanija concludes her current experience in modelling. But keep a close eye, as Fashion Week is right around the corner!

Vilora became a stewardess to explore the world and become financially independent. Her parents supported her decision and last year she began her journey. At first, the job started with 2-month intensive training - water survival, fire emergencies, and airplane simulator. *Some say that stewards are like waiters in the air, but the reality is much different. They have undergone rigorous training, learning how to act in unexpected and dangerous situations. This knowledge also comes in handy at home, for example, when something burns, as now Vilora knows how to extinguish a fire properly. At the end of the*

training there is a theoretical part and a line check exam – a flight on board with your crew and line trainer. It is like taking your driving exam, explains Vilora.

In her line check exam, a woman started waving her hands to call for assistance because her husband was gasping for air and feeling unwell as the plane prepared for landing. *I had just learned about first aid, so my thoughts were running through the steps of what I should do next, says Vilora.* She called over her line trainer, and they gave the man an oxygen mask - fortunately, he got better. *This all happened on my first day of work, Vilora tells me.* Later, her trainer reassured her that in his six years of working as a flight attendant, he never witnessed a medical emergency let alone on a trainee's first day!

A great advantage that Vilora appreciates is a monthly layover– Tbilisi, Dubai, or Gran Canaria. The stewardess's office is moving through the clouds on its way to the next dream destination. *It is magical, Vilora marvels, stepping into a 5-star hotel and having the time and freedom to do whatever I like. One of my favourite memories is from Dubai when the crew and I went on a camel ride and later even saw the Burj Khalifa. That was amazing!* After the probation period, she gets to fly to any destination and pay only the airport taxes. For example, a flight to Dubai would cost Vilora as little as 20 euros! *I am waiting for that day at the start of February when I get to take my family and friends on unforgettable trips, Vilora declares with excitement.*

Overall, this job has taught me how to be flexible and open-minded, as the crew changes every time, passengers are always different, and so are the countries I am flying to, says Vilora. So far, one of the skills she has acquired is the ability to pack a suitcase in 5 minutes for a three-day trip. *I enjoy my job as a stewardess for AirBaltic, but since the beginning I have known that this is temporary and only for one year. I cannot get carried away and work as a stewardess my whole life!* Soon Vilora will apply to university in Riga to start her legal studies. Until then, if you ever fly with AirBaltic, you may find that Vilora greets you there!

Patrīcija lives in Inzell, Germany, where she is a part of speed skating team GSSP Chiemgau. Her trainer Haralds Silovs obtained a good result in the Winter Olympics as a speed skater and later received funding to find new athletes. *I was one of the three girls from Latvia who was offered the opportunity to join this team, even though I was relatively new to the sport. Previously, I had done inline speed skating*

and short track, Patrīcija says, I had great potential therefore, the trainers chose me.

After high school, Patrīcija prioritised speed skating full-time and chose to obtain her degree from a university that offers distance learning. *Now I study jurisprudence in Inzell from the University Turība, which is based in Riga.* To me, combining professional sport and a university degree sounds very challenging, but Patrīcija enjoys it: *I love skating in the ice rink, it is what I like to do the most.* At the end of the season in March, she will head home to her family in Riga. *I miss my family, my dog, and the beautiful summer house in Saulkrasti by the sea. Although there is a lake in Inzell, it is not the same, says Patrīcija.*

Now, she is getting ready for the Neo Senior World Cup final, which will take place in Hachinohe, Japan this upcoming February. *My greatest achievement in speed skating was the Junior World Cup Final, where I was awarded 6th place, Patrīcija proudly tells me.* Sport is always unpredictable. *Last season I injured my foot and had to work extensively to get back into shape, Patrīcija recalls, just recently having recovered from the trauma.* Despite the situation, Patrīcija offers these words of motivation: The only way is to keep going and not give up in the face of hardship. Even after breaking her foot, she won 6th place! Patrīcija highlights that *Respecting your trainers and their recommendations is the golden ticket to excelling and becoming a better athlete.* Now headed to Japan, Patrīcija is ready for her next competition!

A year-in-between is unpredictable, no matter the choice. Some opportunities have an expiry date, and so has the gap year. At these crossroads, it is crucial to contemplate the added value for either of the choices. These three successful examples illustrate how one can enjoy a gap year without sacrificing education. Naturally, this is not always the case, as there are many stories where young adults work minimum-wage jobs, lose their sense of direction, and never get a diploma.

"Therefore, saying Yes to education is always a wise answer, even if it is postponed by a year."

Ultimately, the world needs educated people. I encourage everyone to go to university, become desired in the job market, and then enjoy the freedom to do whatever their heart desires!





The biggest lie told by the Human West: Rights

Muska Nür

The perception of the West is at a crossroads; you could say that the Western fantasy has slowly broken. Some people intensively cling to this fantasy, but for others, it never existed; they saw the unjust reality.

Despite their own infamous human rights records, the US and other Western nations frequently lecture developing countries on human rights and international law.

The West has long believed it is morally superior to other countries regarding human rights; they have the rhetorical power to interpret and define them. However, these countries are hypocritical when it comes to human rights matters. The human rights they discuss are not human rights for everyone. Countless times, the West has been accused of operating double standards, but the recent war crimes inflicted by Israel on Palestine have significantly emphasized this. Some might say the Palestinian cause, with massive demonstrations across the world, lifted the veil for other injustices inflicted by the West.

The world has changed since the attack of Hamas on Israel on October 7. The majority of the West agreed on the following after this attack. Firstly, Israel is the victim of an unprovoked terrorist attack. Secondly, Israel has the right to defend itself. And thirdly, the West completely supports Israel in its opposition to the Palestinians' 'savage' and 'barbaric' acts of violence. Finally, the West argues all civilian casualties on both sides can be attributed to Hamas, either totally or partially, as they started these hostilities and pressed Israel's hand while hiding among civilians. But why are we viewing this situation in a vacuum?

The date May 14 is a festive day for Israelis; it is

the day Israel declared independence in 1948. Every year on May 15, however, is the day that Palestinians around the world commemorate the Nakba, or catastrophe, referring to the ethnic cleansing of Palestine in 1948, which has never stopped since. The ethnic cleansing has been going on for 75 years. For over 56 years, Israel has subjected the Palestinian population in Gaza to harsh military control, and for over 16 years, an illegal siege has been in place. The UN determined that Israel had rendered Gaza "unlivable" even before its ongoing genocidal assault on the territory. In Gaza, two out of three Palestinians are refugees whose families were uprooted from their homes as a result of ethnic cleansing carried out during Israel's creation.

The 1948 ethnic cleansing of over 75% of the Palestinian population from their homeland and the deliberate destruction of Palestine served as the foundation for the state of Israel. Taking account of this information before making statements about October 7 and what has happened after is essential.

Since October 7 and even before, Israel's top leaders have repeatedly declared their aim publicly to commit genocide. The senior Israeli officials have referred to Palestinians as "human animals," claimed that there are no civilians in Gaza, and cited a biblical verse endorsing the murder of children, women, and men. Moreover, Israel has deliberately bombed children's schools, universities, hospitals, churches, and mosques.

"Killing at the time of writing, over 27.000 Palestinians, about half of whom were children."

Israel has entirely demolished villages and neighborhoods, displacing 85% of Gaza's residents from their

homes. Furthermore, Israel has relentlessly attacked Gaza's healthcare system while cutting off the 2.3 million Palestinians, who remain stuck in the largest open-air prison, from food, water, electricity, and medical supplies. Many experts have defined Israel's assault as "a textbook case of genocide."

We saw how the Western world quickly united when Russia invaded Ukraine. Moscow's illegal war, a violation of the UN charter, breached many human rights. The West's response to Russia's invasion is historically unprecedented, with severe sanctions for breaking international laws. Yet it often overlooks Israel's daily breaches under UN resolutions. Accusing the West of double standards and hypocrisy is justified, as Russia faces accusations for its actions in Ukraine, but Israel escapes accountability for its continuous crimes against Palestinians, with no Western sanctions or concrete actions to enforce UN resolutions on Israel's occupation. Many countries in the West are not only supporting Israel while they are committing genocide, they are also complicit in it. This has been done through the dehumanization of Palestinians in Western media and biased journalism, but primarily through sending an abundant amount of weapons and financial aid. Israel's genocidal and colonial campaign is especially receiving strong support from the Biden administration. Israel could not kill Palestinians like it is doing without US dollars, US weapons, and the US's blockings of ceasefire resolutions at the UN. While the US and Europe are firmly against the illegal invasion of Russia in Ukraine, they do not show the same reaction when Israel started to illegally occupy Palestinian land decades ago and is still doing so to this day.

The US led most of the illegal wars and unlawful invasions of sovereign governments. However, Washington received no consequences, including boycotts, sanctions, or indictments from the International Criminal Court, while they do expect non-Western countries to face these consequences. The crisis in Ukraine has brought to light the West's hypocrisy and application of double standards to the suffering of the Palestinian people and other oppressed countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya. Why does the West feel entitled to preach democracy and human rights to the world when it is the primary oppressor?

We are seeing a clear shift in the perception of the Global North and the perception of the Global South. While being the most prominent preachers of democracy and human rights, the countries of the

Global North are doing the least to realize a ceasefire in Palestine, while the Global South is taking the most actions.

With allegations of breaching the Genocide Convention, South Africa took Israel to the International Court of Justice with a strong legal team. Israel's practices are frequently compared by South Africans to the country's former apartheid, a system of racial segregation. The countries backing South Africa are all part of the Global South.

Moreover, Indonesia, another country that was formerly colonized by the Netherlands, is drafting legal arguments for an ICJ hearing to contest Israel's occupation of Palestine.

Mexico and Chile have also filed a joint request to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to investigate Israeli war crimes against the Palestinians.

The countries supporting Israel before the ICJ are the United States, Germany, and France—all nations involved in previous genocides. In addition, nine Western countries cut off funding to the Palestine support program of UNRWA, which is crucial for the lives of Palestinians. Did all these Western countries' past not teach them anything?

What was the point of apologizing for their atrocious history if they repeat the same mistakes? Hamid Dabashi, professor at Columbia University and author, wrote in his article in *Middle East Eye*, "Thanks to Gaza, European philosophy has been exposed as ethically bankrupt. The world has been awoken from the false slumber of European ethno-philosophy. Today, we owe this liberation to the global suffering of peoples such as the Palestinians, whose prolonged, historic heroism and sacrifices have finally dismantled the barefaced barbarity at the foundation of western civilisation."

The catastrophic war in Gaza in the last four months and the 75 years before that are, among other crises, proof of why the West does not have the right to lecture the world on how to protect human rights. The Global South's actions to safeguard the lives of Palestinians and the Global North's complacency in Palestinian suffering show that these two parts of the world have reached a crossroads.

SES Calendar

Think Tank - 13th of February 2024

The second Think Tank is coming up. On the 13th of February, we are meeting in the office to discuss the previous and upcoming period. Think Tanks provide an informal setting where members can give feedback on the previous period and suggest ideas for the future. This Think Tank will be extra important because members can give feedback on the newly drafted amendments to the Statutes of the Association that will be voted upon during the General Assembly on the 27th of February. We will start at 5pm so be sure to be there!

Valentines Borrel - 13th of February 2024

The Valentine's Day borrel is one of the Party Committees' themed borrels. In collaboration with local charity Students for Children, the party committee will once again be organising a rose drive in which members can buy roses for their friends and loved ones, either on their own or with a message attached. All proceeds will go to the charity which aims to make education accessible to children in developing regions.

Weekend Trip to Lille - 16th-18th of February 2024

From the 16th to the 18th of February SES will venture out to the French city of Lille. In the capital of French Flanders we will enjoy the rich French culture in museums, forts and the streets of Lille. But of course, on the crossroads of wine and beer, SES would not be SES if the nightlife of Lille wouldn't be put to the test too!

ALPHA Gala - 22nd of February 2024

The umbrella association of the faculty of Humanities is organising another Gala this year with the theme: A Sky Full of Stars. Dress to impress and bring your greatest dance moves to De Heeren van Aemstel where the Gala will be hosted. Tickets are on sale now, and are only 5 euros!

General Assembly II - 27th of February 2024

The second General Assembly (GA) will be hosted on the 27th of February from 5pm on in P.C. Hoofthuis. Here the Board will present the Semi-Annual Report and a Financial update. Furthermore, we will vote on the Board Selection Committee that will select the 40th Board. Lastly, during this GA, amendments to the Statutes will be voted upon. This is an important step for the Association so be sure to be present and voting on the 27th of February.

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