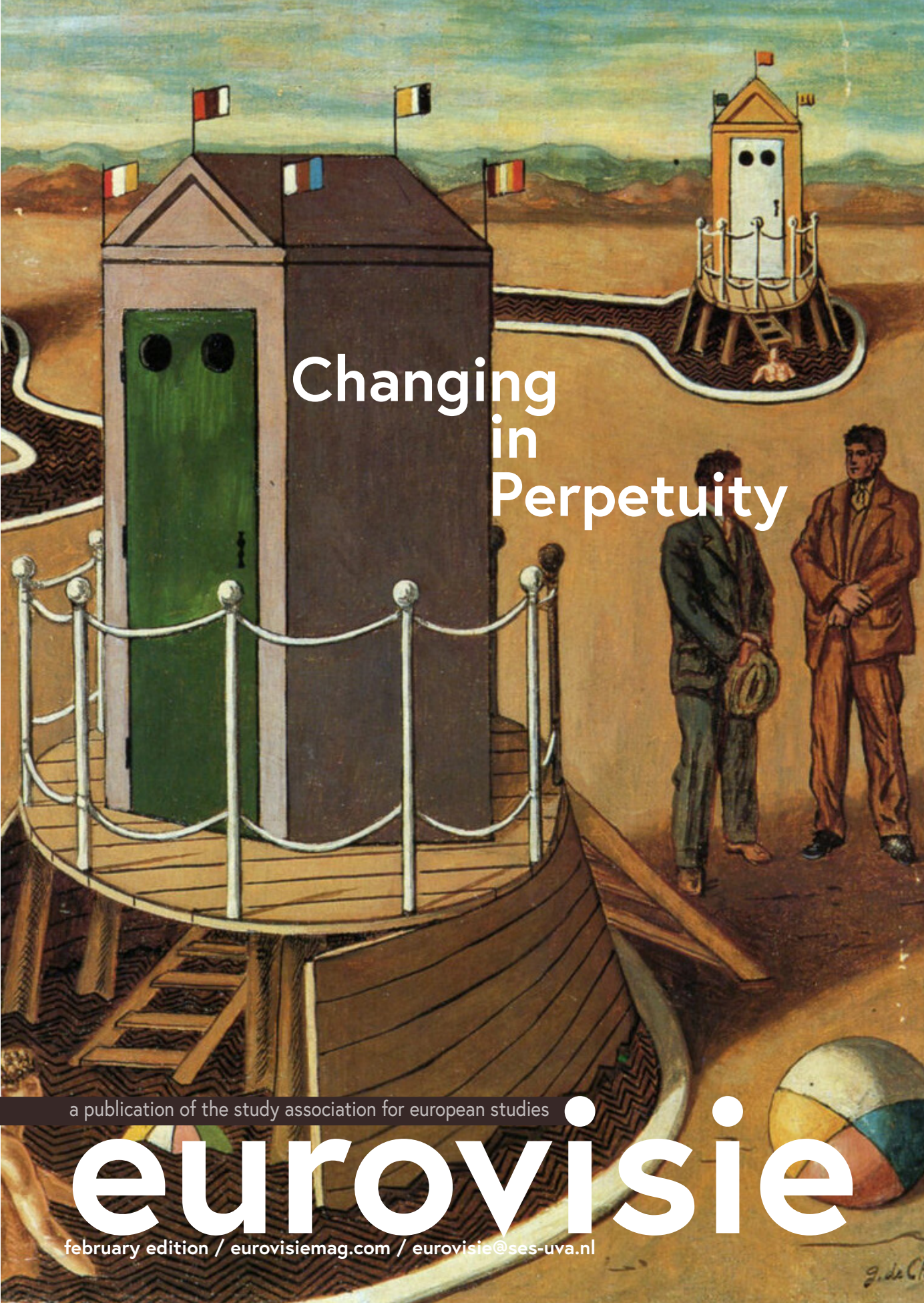

Changing in Perpetuity

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IN THIS EDITION...

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Editorial office: Kloveniersburgwal 48, room E2.04/2.05, 1012 CX Amsterdam
Editor-in-chief: Francesco Bernabeu Fornara
Editors: Sophie van Tiggelen, Emma Bates, Angele Boleis, Davide Distaso, Benedetta di Martino, Twan Hover.
Design: Agnette Dobloug.

Editorial

Francesco Bernabeu Fornara

Change subsumes life. It is a perpetual yet paradoxical force, feared or longed for, resisted or embraced, slow or sudden—but always present. It forms one of the foundations of life, for it is what shapes the latter. While admittedly ubiquitous, though, the extent to which 'change' as a phenomenon affects our life is—I think—rarely acknowledged. After all, living is almost always about the next thing to do, practically always guided by a target for what will satisfy us; and once the target is achieved, we soon forget and go on to seek the next.

We enjoy eating our favourite food, but soon feel stuffed once we've had enough, for which we then reach for a glass of water to wash out our throat. We work hard for a week to get a good grade, and once achieved, we praise ourselves for a bit and are soon off to our next task. We lay on the stretcher on a warm summer day and soon feel the sun is just a bit too hot, so we seek shade, for which it then gets just a bit too chilly and we put on another layer of clothing. We lay down to scroll through Reels and soon feel bad for being too unproductive and force ourselves back up.

Viewed introspectively like this, virtually every minute of our life seems like an unconscious cycle of reevaluating our present to then change what we find non-optimal—while never really arriving at that stably 'optimal' state we seem to perpetually seek. It's always a matter of solving the next problem or chasing the next desire.

At the core of this phenomenon's paradox lies our incessant thinking. Indeed, we are all in a perpetual state of thinking of what we want or don't want, seldom arriving at a state where we're convinced 'this is enough'.

Rarely—if ever—do we simply drop everything and just appreciate the present no matter what its context may be, setting aside for just a moment all the problems we may need solved or to-do tasks we need done. After all, the present is all we have—we don't live in the future, nor the past—so why not appreciate it once in a while?

Inside this magazine edition, in uncovering the broader facets of 'change', our editors have delved wide. For those more politically active, Angèle dives into the shift to a post-truth era, exploring how newfound political rhetoric, corporate influence, and media manipulation has eroded trust in facts, urging readers to resist disinformation through critical thinking and informed debate. Applying similar conclusions to the future of our own continent, Sophie scrutinises Europe's growing vulnerability to Trump's influence, raising concerns about its independence and values amid rising economic and political tensions.

Taking 'change' into a more personal and relatable perspective, Davide interviews his friend Iaia, bringing us on her journey of moving abroad at 18, exploring how embracing uncertainty, loneliness, and self-discovery leads not to answers, but to the courage to keep asking questions. Crossing over to the Mediterranean, we find ourselves in Malta, where the unique blend of historical continuity and steady prosperity challenges the conventional notion that progress requires relentless change, offering a vision of the future where preservation, sustainability, and careful governance take precedence over perpetual growth. In a similar vein and moving over to the Middle East, Benedetta brings us to a the capital of Yemen, a city long defined by its resistance to change, which now stands at a crossroads where the forces of modernity challenge its deep-rooted traditions, raising the timeless question of whether transformation is always synonymous with progress.

Whether in personal reflection or global shifts, change is inevitable and everywhere, and little can be done to alter this fact. Yet, as suggested in all of these articles lies the central thesis: that it is up to us to channel this paradox for the better.

Tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis.

Per mutationem,

Francesco Bernabeu Fornara, editor-in-chief.

Is Europe suffering from a Trumpian plague?

Sophie van Tiggelen

Is Europe in danger? Europe is seeing volatile change through the electoral win of Donald Trump, but why does the American President's actions have so much influence over Europe?

American influence is intertwined throughout Europe.

Pop sensation, Disney, Hollywood: it's hard to avoid.

However, American impact on Europe goes much deeper. The US is the richest country in the world, and Europe's largest export market. The amount of impact that America has on Europe is hard to fathom.

Throughout much of the 20th and 21st century Europe and America have been intertwined closely, however we are now entering a period of discrepancies from across the pond. The election win of Trump has increased tensions, with fears of extreme tariffs. European news outlets are writing, Trump this, or Trump that, like they are obsessed with his every move. All the attention is on America, but what will America's actions actually mean for Europe?

Trump claimed that high tariffs on the EU are only 'fair', due to his transactional approach to foreign affairs. He claims, "The European Union is very, very bad to us". This protectionist climate causes trouble with trade, leaving countries more separated than connected. Often these taxes will result in the consumer having to pay extra on necessary products, such as groceries, hence spiking inflation once again.

Many businesses across Europe will suffer, such as sectors related to wines, and machinery tools in automotives. While French, Italian and Spanish wines are already taxed, they could face even worse taxes soon. The 2019 tariff that was placed by the previous Trump term saw a 14% drop in US sales on EU wines. This caused European wine companies to go bankrupt and disrupted the export powers of many European countries. German car manufacturers, such as BMW, Volkswagen and Mercedes-Benz, received threats of 25% tariffs from Trump. The impact of this could be severe, being even more detrimental seeing the current state of the German economy. As much as these tariffs will affect the individual people of America, they also leave consequences for Europe's businesses, and thus jobs and livelihoods. This sudden change will be felt globally, as tariff wars never have led to prosperity.

Having a closer look at the Trump's inauguration shows the priority change for his second term. The first term can be described as erratic, reckless and unorganised, with the people being fired every couple of weeks. However, this time it looks like the same cannot be said. When looking at the inauguration, the intentions are seen clearly. It drew the attention of many to see the billionaires sitting in the row in front of Trump's own cabinet. This focus on the billionaire row shows a shift in Trump's priorities. The second term looks more organised, with more consensual support from Silicon Valley and major news outlets, who reserve criticism. Many world leaders are cosying up to the two term president. If this is out of fear or true support is still yet to be clear, however what is clear, is that this time round things are changing. To prove this point further, unusually world leaders were invited to the inauguration, however noticeably only Trump's ideological allies, such as Meloni and Milei.

The inauguration itself presented problems for Europe. First being the potential conflict presented by Trump's diplomacy games. Second, being the growing influence that tech-billionaires are receiving, which largely affects the platforms that millions use in the EU.

The current obsession with Trump doesn't just plague the media, but the minds of world leaders too. Each nation within the EU will have very different relations with America due to Trump's presidency. As seen through the inauguration invitation, we can clearly see Trump's diplomatic style. His invitation to Meloni, shows he's aligning himself with a certain ideology. His emotional style of diplomacy can lead to tensions within the EU. As seen earlier in this article, America's importance for European countries cannot be understated. A positive relationship with America would sup-

port trade and economic prosperity. We can see many European leaders already cosying up to Trump in order to secure this 'special relationship'. We can see this with Macron and Zelenskyy. Macron, inviting Trump to the prestigious opening ceremony of the Notre Dame, showcased the crucial need to get on Trump's side. Does this mean European leaders are undermining their own values in order to stay close to Trump? If so, discrepancies between European leaders and between leaders and their promises to citizens are likely to occur. The paradox between EU countries having close links in international relations due to the nature of the EU and individual European leaders having very different relationships with America can cause complexities not seen before. This change exposes many new challenges.

Social media platforms, which are mostly American owned, have for a couple of decades now allowed for the whole world to communicate, however does that ability now allow for social media CEOs in America to influence Europe too? The tech-billionaire class are receiving increasingly more power over America under Trump, making it seem more like an oligarchy than ever before. What does it mean for the world, much less America, when social media CEOs are letting go of moderation and allowing extremism onto their platforms. The increasing interconnectivity of politics and social media allows for, what can borderline be called, 'propaganda pages'. We have clearly seen the drama happening with 'X' and Elon Musk's new oligarchy status in America. The confidence and spotlight he has received in America allows him to dangle his tentacles across European matters too, which has already been seen in the UK, with the grooming gangs case, and anti-immigration riots seen in the summer of 2024. Musk was also present at a AfD campaign event, where he told the supporters to 'be proud of their German culture'. Where have we heard that before? This influence of the tech-billionaire class in spreading over to Europe, causing the erosion of our systems and values. Will the EU allow this American anti-moderation motion to spread to Europe too?

The influence of America is ever luring. However, in times of political tension, what can Europe really do to become independent of this superpower?

Chasing Questions, Not Answers:

The story of Iaia, and her move abroad at 18

Davide Distaso

This article is neither meant to be a guide on how to change one's life at the age of 18, nor an idealised story. Rather, it is simply a sharing, or rather a spontaneous chat between two friends, who unknowingly, two years ago now, chose to change their course, pointing their compass towards an unknown horizon, without being able to know where they would end up. What I would like to caveat at the outset is merely that whoever reads this chat—because it seems too forced to call it an interview—may not only identify themselves in these words but equally, in a certain sense, comfort themselves, recognising the small but precious awareness that such a change is not easy—though undoubtedly full of surprises.

I have chosen to address precisely this with Chiara, who will henceforth conventionally be called Iaia (otherwise she gets annoyed), who two years ago made that courageous choice alluded to: she left home, family, and friends in Italy to board a flight bound for Holland to begin her university career, by moving abroad for the first time. I remember well when we met—those conversations full of doubts, fears and hopes, coming from such different backgrounds but at the same time finding solace in our newfound relative commonality.

Now that time has passed, I was curious to know what it really meant for her, two years on, to have made such a big decision. So, amidst a thousand memories, we chatted about that choice that changed her life.

Our chat began with a simple but fundamental question: 'why did you choose to leave at 18?'

'I don't know, and I didn't know, it was as if I wanted to set out in search of something but without knowing what it was.'

This was how Iaia replied to me, with an answer as singular as it was precise in describing the feelings that characterised this change. The search she spoke of, after all, needed to start somewhere, hence choosing to leave Chiavari, Italy, which although it was her home—and remains so—had run out of questions to give her. So, in search of new questions—rather than answers—Iaia left for Amsterdam with no idea of what would await her.

Moreover, in telling me the reason for her choice, Iaia reminded me of a fundamental thing that best characterises the forma mentis of our country: 'In Italy, during high school, they try to convince you that after any such a course, you must have understood it fully, when in my opinion an 18-year-old boy, after those five years, should not start asking himself everything. You should strive for a lot more questions than answers at 18, and that was kind of my mission: not to understand everything but learn to wonder.'

You have a lifetime to understand everything, but there is little time to wonder, where by then, questions will in time slip away and laziness will subsume the curiosity that moves every boy and girl at this age. This, Iaia knew well at 18, and in escaping from those toxic beliefs of a system that wants us convinced of everything we do, she questioned every-

thing—even herself.

'I thought that by moving I would be like a blank sheet of paper, believing that I could rewrite myself all over again with anyone I met, forgetting that I was already something, and I realised how difficult it was to have to tell myself every time. My life has changed so much, but I haven't changed so much.'

Anyone leaving the past behind to start a new life in another state would certainly think of themselves as a blank sheet of paper—as a completely new person, ready to be enriched by everything they encounter. However, as Iaia told me, this awareness inevitably turns out to be false, and she, who believed she could rewrite herself, realised that she was already full of many colours, and that many of them did not need to be traced. The real challenge Iaia recognised was the mission to figure out, in this new life, to whom to give the markers, to add new, unique colours to her canvas.

This, however, is not an easy process, it is not easy to select who to let into your world, and it is in relation to this that Iaia recounts her experience with loneliness during this change. A new loneliness, different from what she had ever experienced.

As a matter of fact, everything she had faced before leaving had been faced in relation to someone, to something else, never having a concrete contact with loneliness. Instead, moving away meant coping with herself, facing herself in a newfound perspective, because there was no one else to cope with.

'I remember that on my first day, I felt like I was in an American comedy, impersonating that classic protagonist who arrives from some small town, takes a yellow taxi towards Manhattan, only instead of a yellow taxi there was a bike waiting for me, and instead of Manhattan I had Amsterdam in front of me. I felt so small, the buildings, the number of people, the number of bikes, the number of languages spoken, it completely overwhelmed me.'

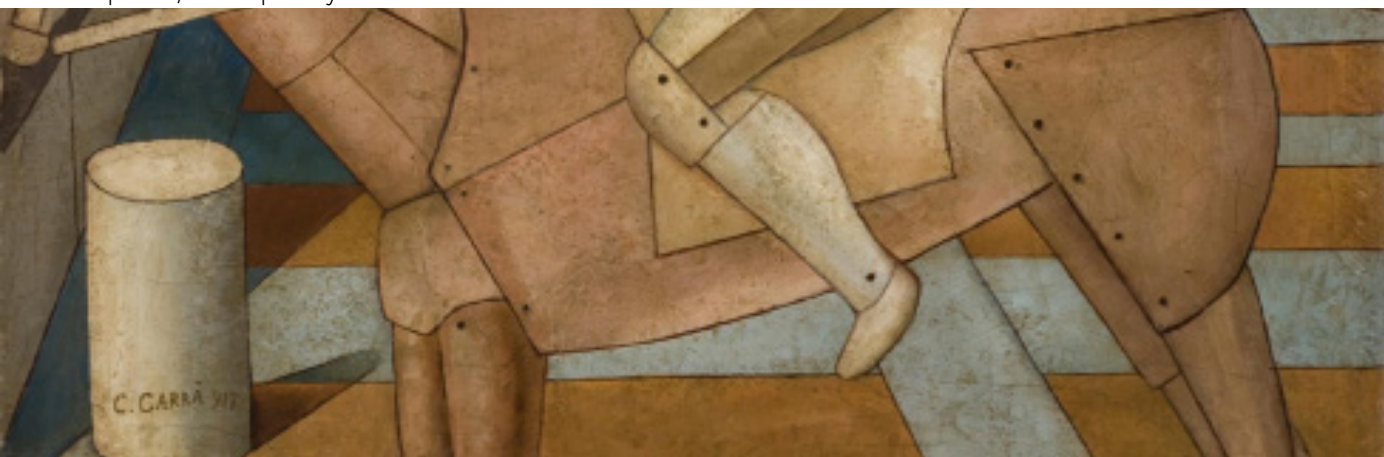
As tiny as it was immense, this is how Iaia described her first day, her first feelings as soon as she arrived in Holland. She recounts this feeling with much nostalgia, like a memory crystallised in her mind, jealously guarding that feeling of immensity, due to the new awareness of having become part of this huge world, without knocking or asking permission, but simply with the courage to have walked through the door.

For the last question, I asked Iaia to imagine someone like her, a boy or girl of eighteen, who has just finished the application to matriculate at university, full of fears and hopes, with no idea of the change that awaits him or her. If you had him or her in front of you, what would you tell?

"Going away will be the greatest school that life can give him or her, and that he or she will understand that even the things that seemed most useless are extraordinary when seen through different eyes, changed eyes.

'But the most beautiful thing that anyone going through such a change will learn is undoubtedly to discover that there is more.' "

When Iaia answered me like this, I immediately thought of the idea of a gift, as if someone were handing you a present, for you, without you having asked for it. Once opened, however, this gift seems seemingly empty, but once you take it with you on this change, it will magically fill up with so many stories and experiences to be jealously guarded, allowing you to receive the knowledge that what you have always experienced does not apply to everyone, but is only a small part of the immensity of perspectives and visions that this world contains.



The Eternal Flow of Change:

Evolution, Resistance, and the City of Sana'a

Benedetta Di Martino

Nothing in nature stays still. The caterpillar morphs into a butterfly, the snake sheds its skin, people change their home. Change is intrinsic to life itself; it is nature's very essence, its driving force, and arguably its reason for being. But change doesn't always equate to improvement, does it? We often talk about change in positive terms, but is it always a sign of progress? Is every transformation a step toward something better or more mature? Or could change sometimes be an expression of uncertainty or even regression?

As the world continues to evolve at a dizzying pace, our perceptions of it shift along with it. In a world that never remains the same, some embrace the relentless march of the "new," while others, overwhelmed and frightened by it, yearn for the old.

This tension—the pull of the past and the push of the future—has existed throughout history and is something we all grapple with in different ways. Some resist change out of a desire to protect what feels familiar and comforting, while others welcome it, believing that transformation is the key to progress. But in a world where not changing at all is impossible, is it even desirable to preserve the past? And if so, how do we navigate the space between what was and what is to come?

I think about the city of Sana'a. Sana'a is the capital of Yemen, a city perched high in the mountains, a place where time seems to stand still. Its historical center, with its unique architecture, feels almost otherworldly, like a living relic from a bygone era. For many, including the Italian filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini, Sana'a represents what he called the "purity of the primitive." In his short film "The Walls of Sana'a", he explores the city's sense of isolation, as if it were encapsulated within an invisible glass. The city is, in a sense, a perfect metaphor for resistance to the outside world.

The buildings of Sana'a are immediately recognizable: towering structures with intricate facades of warm-toned, ornately decorated mudbrick. The local technique of "al-mud", a sustainable method of construction using natural materials, has kept these homes standing for centuries. The architecture is not just aesthetically striking but also ecologically sustainable, a testament to the city's careful balance between tradition and the environment.

Sana'a's conservation has been a delicate dance between preservation and isolation. Factors like Yemen's economic challenges, political turmoil, and geographic seclusion in a rugged, mountainous region have all played a role in keeping the city largely untouched by modernity. While the world around it has rapidly industrialized, Sana'a has remained a sanctuary of cultural continuity, frozen in time—much like an ancient city that stands resolute in the face of change. But Sana'a's isolation is not merely a passive occurrence. It has become a symbol of resistance, an emblem of Yemen's steadfast refusal to succumb to external pressures, whether from the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century or the British protectorate in the 19th. The people of Sana'a have fiercely defended their identity and way of life, holding onto their traditions in the face of colonialism and global forces. The city's red brick facades, its bustling streets filled with the sounds of children playing and vendors calling out, all seem to exist in a kind of protective bubble —one untouched by the tumultuous history that has swept through the region.

There is, however, an irony in this. The very material that has kept Sana'a's buildings intact—mud—also speaks to the city's fragility. Mud is malleable, adaptable, and yet, somehow, the city has endured like marble. In a way, Sana'a's architectural resilience symbolizes a broader cultural resilience, one that has managed to keep modern influences at bay. But can this resistance to change last forever?

Recently, Sana'a has been confronted by a new kind of change, one that is impossible to ignore: the wave of modernity brought on by global capitalism. This time, the forces of industrialization aren't coming from colonial powers but from China and Saudi Arabia, two of the most powerful players in the region today. The influence of consumer goods, street systems, and the promise of technological progress is beginning to seep into the city. For many in Sana'a, these

goods are met with a curious, almost innocent excitement—new shoes, shiny electronics, sleek street designs. It is the spectacle of modernization, the allure of the "new," which promises a way of life that is faster, more convenient, and connected to the wider world.

But what does this mean for the city? Can Sana'a remain the "still city" when the winds of change are blowing stronger than ever? The introduction of industrial goods, new infrastructure, and the promises of neo-capitalism may signal a new chapter in Sana'a's history, but it also raises an important question: Is change always for the better?

Pasolini describes the citizens of Sana'a as naive, as they cannot realize the treasure they have kept for so long. I wonder if they are now embracing these changes with a firm consciousness or if this is more of a passive process.

Is the city's identity, built over centuries of resistance, set to be reshaped by the very forces it once resisted? And if so, what does this transformation mean for a culture that has long defined itself by its continuity?

"Sana'a's current predicament mirrors a larger, more universal dilemma: the tension between tradition and progress."

In the end, the question may not be whether change is good or bad, but whether we, as individuals and societies, can navigate the space between the two—between preserving the past and embracing the future. For Sana'a, this is not just a matter of architecture or consumer goods. It is a question of identity, of survival, and of what it means to truly evolve.

As the city stands at the crossroads of these two forces—resistance and transformation—it offers a poignant reminder that nothing in nature, or in human civilization, stays still for long. Whether for better or worse, change is the only constant. The only question left is how we will choose to meet it.

Amsterdam's Student Life in the 1960s

Twan Hover

The 1960s were a time of significant change, especially for students. In the past, students had little say in academic or social matters, and life offered fewer choices. However, by the late 1960s, many students had joined protests, particularly those at France's Sorbonne, advocating for more democracy in universities. The movement eventually spread to the Netherlands, where students at the Gemeentelijke Universiteit (GU, now the University of Amsterdam 'UvA') staged protests, culminating in the occupation of the Maagdenhuis on the Spui.

The 1960s witnessed rapid social change on an unprecedented scale. In the United States, the Vietnam War escalated under President Lyndon B. Johnson, leading to widespread opposition, particularly among students. Across the world, young protesters took to the streets, condemning U.S. involvement in Vietnam, often chanting slogans and holding signs that read "Johnson Murderer." While The Netherlands officially prohibited insulting a friendly head of state, such demonstrations still occurred.
However, not everyone supported these protests. The demonstrators were primarily young and left leaning, while Dutch society remained largely Calvinistic. Participating was risky, and many students were arrested. Once detained, the police would often drive students to remote locations outside the city and just leave them there—this was before mobile phones and public transportation passes existed. In some cases, students were temporarily imprisoned. The war dominated the news, both in newspapers and on television, with coverage emphasising the mounting death toll.

The omnipresence of war in the media and public discourse suggests a politically aware student population, something which has remained unchanged to the current day.

What Was It Like to Be a Student in Amsterdam?

In order to answer this question, I have decided to interview my own grandparents as they have experienced this firsthand. The manner by which I designed this interview was by making comparisons to the current day.

"Being a student in Amsterdam in the 1960s was a unique and great experience. The university atmosphere was vastly different from today."

There were fewer students, the majority of whom were male. Social life revolved around student associations and debating societies, making the experience feel more structured and formal.

Upon arriving in Amsterdam, the first thing students did was buy a city map—Google Maps, of course, did not exist after all. Buying a bicycle was cheap, and additional locks were unnecessary. There were no public transport passes or bank cards, so students had to buy tram tickets with cash directly from the tram driver. Since public transport was expensive, however, hitchhiking was common.

Academic life was demanding. Students had far more lectures than today, with full-day schedules six days a week. Saturday lectures ended around noon, after which students hitchhiked home, only to return to Amsterdam by Sunday evening for Monday morning classes. Public transport operated differently; for example, one could take a direct bus from Surinameplein to Oegstgeest—something impossible today without a transfer.

Communication was entirely different. If you wanted to talk to someone, you had to cycle to their house—calling or texting was not an option. Meetings occurred at debating society gatherings or during lectures.

Exams and coursework were also different. Students rarely had to write assignments, and multiple-choice exams did not exist. Exams consisted of written responses, and results were mailed or given orally in small classes. Oral exams were common. Writing a thesis required physical research—students used their personal book collections or visited libraries, but resources were limited. Without computers or the internet, students relied on mail-order catalogues to find academic sources.

If a male student quit university, he risked being drafted for mandatory military service. However, students could schedule exams at their convenience and retake them unlimited times.

Lectures were often dull, with professors reading directly from notebooks, repeating the same content annually. Examples were written on chalkboards. Attendance lists circulated in some classes, but students often signed in for absent friends. Lecture halls lacked desks, so students balanced notebooks on their laps. Copy machines were off-limits to students.

Unlike today, course selection

was nonexistent—students followed a fixed curriculum. Student associations were numerous, but study associations were rare. Socialising was difficult without phones; students used whistles to signal their friends from the street. Drinking alcohol was uncommon due to financial constraints.

Shops closed at 18:00. A few expensive night shops existed, but everything—including night shops—was closed on Sundays.

These aspects highlight a lifestyle that, while less convenient by today's standards, may have fostered stronger interpersonal interactions and a greater sense of self-sufficiency.

What was the atmosphere like in Amsterdam?

Amsterdam in the 1960s felt much more like a small village compared to today. Each neighbourhood functioned as a close-knit community, and the city was far less international. Tourism was minimal—air travel was prohibitively expensive, and the city remained predominantly Dutch-speaking.

For example, whenever we returned home late at night, the milkman had already put crates of milk and yoghurt in front of every doorstep, this was always being done at night as there was way less traffic. So whenever we went back home late at night we just took one bottle of milk from one of these crates. In principle, these crates would remain of course, but once a while two or three bottles would be missing, but that's the risk the milkmen would take. It was such a large quantity anyway, if only a few would be missing, that would be no big deal.

Furthermore, everything was a lot safer. A simple lock was enough for your bicycle or moped; there was no need to secure it to anything. To put into perspective, after living in Amsterdam, we went to live in Culemborg, for example, a much smaller town. But after living there for just a week, my brand new moped and my bicycle were stolen. Such a thing would never have happened in Amsterdam. We always put our vehicles on just one lock in Amsterdam and nothing ever happened to them, a big contrast to elsewhere. Furthermore, as Amsterdam was much more like a village, there were way less stores and restaurants. It was really a city meant for people to live, it mainly consisted of living spaces and of course there were way less foreigners. Now and then you encountered a tourist, but it was far less common as nowadays. You only heard English being spoken once in a while, it was a rarity. This increase in tourism probably has to do with the fact that flying by plane has become normalised by now. No one ever flew back in the day. The city was much more like a Dutch city. It was way calmer, you could just quietly walk over the Kalverstraat, the Damplein, everywhere. Cycling through the city was a peaceful activity. In addition, there were barely any terraces, with the exception of one on the Damrak.

Over time, Amsterdam has transformed from a close-knit, resident-oriented city to an international and tourist-heavy destination, changing its overall atmosphere and social fabric.

What was the nightlife like in Amsterdam?

Nightlife was very limited compared to today. Most social activities revolved around student associations. Disputations (student debating societies) played a big role, and there were structured gatherings, often twice a week—once at a café and once at a student society venue. Occasionally, we would go to a disco near the Korte Leidse Dwarsstraat. Eating out was rare and usually meant a cheap meal at a Chinese restaurant near the Binnen Bantammerstraat or grabbing a kroket from a vending machine. It was uncommon to eat out, we simply could not afford it. In Amsterdam, there simply were way less restaurants and cafés, there was not a lot to do. The only thing that stayed the same was the café of my student association, Café Brandon along the Keizersgracht. Moreover, there was this one big café-restaurant, called "Keizer", on the Van Baarnestraaat, this is a place we commonly went to drink coffee. Keep in mind, we exclusively drank coffee, nothing more, not a sandwich or anything. If you ate anything, you just went to eat your own slice of bread. You never went to eat out. Also, no one had the money for it. No one had a job alongside being a student. Most of the money you earned was spent on study books. You always had to buy brand new books. There was no such thing as a student discount, you also could not get that through your study/student association, like you now can with SES. We didn't even have a student card. Perhaps, it said so on a paper but we had no evidence to show that we were students.

Amsterdam simply had way less restaurants, there were way less options for going out.

This suggests a student culture that was perhaps more intimate and home-based rather than reliant

on external venues like bars and clubs.

How did you find housing?

We went to the StichtingStudentenHuisvesting office, where people posted handwritten ads for available rooms. You would copy down the addresses and cycle there to check them out. Many were tiny attic rooms, sometimes barely separated by thin plywood walls. Some were in boarding houses where the host (hospes/hospita) lived downstairs. Rent was around 60 to 65 guilders per month—around 43-46 euros today.

When you had copied the address, you'd cycle there. There, you'd ring the bell and check if you liked the room. A lot of times, the housing for students was made by a piece of triplex that would separate the spaces in the room. But as soon as you found a decent room, you'd truly have something. For example, you'd live in the attic of a host, the host would in that case live one floor underneath. You'd have to go to her floor in order to go to the toilet. You were not allowed to cook. Sometimes students had a small gas stove in their room with which they could do something. You did not have a fridge, no central heating. In order to eat dinner, students went to eat in a mensa. Many students were not allowed to cook anything in their room, they were only allowed to make tea and coffee, nothing more. You also did not have a laundry machine, for that you had to go to a laundrette.

Amenities were minimal—no private bathroom, no kitchen, and often no phone. Some places didn't even have a shower, meaning you would either go home to bathe or make do with a weekly bath at the host's house. It was cheap, but it came with many restrictions, such as curfews and visitor limitations. No student had their own telephone.
Most students went back home on the weekends to take a shower, they did this once a week. This was completely normal as everyone only bathed or showered once a week.

Later, when we moved in together in De Pijp, we rented an entire floor for just 49 guilders per month (35 euro). Even though it wasn't much, it was considered an upgrade. Some student flats already existed, such as Uilenstede, others went to sorority/fraternity houses. But the majority of students lived together with a host.

How did you find information about different study programmes before university?

There wasn't much guidance available. The school counselor had some brochures and would inform us about open evenings across the country. You could attend sessions in cities like The Hague, where multiple universities presented different programs in a single venue. However, we never actually visited a university before enrolling. But there was no open day like there is now. You had never seen the university before actually studying there.

Some students simply picked a subject they enjoyed in school. In my case, classical languages seemed like the logical choice, and the Free University (VU) in Amsterdam was an obvious option due to its religious affiliation. You did not go to a university because it was located close to your home town, instead you went to a university because of its religious affiliation. My parents preferred a reformed university, even though it meant higher costs since I couldn't live at home. They paid for everything—tuition, rent, and living expenses—because I did not receive a student grant.

Others, whose parents had lower incomes, could receive merit-based bursaries, meaning you had to maintain good grades to keep receiving financial support.

Admission was simple: you signed up, filled in your details, and that was it. There was no selection procedure or entrance exam. As long as you had graduated from high school, you were accepted.

Were there any international students?

No, not really. The student body was entirely Dutch and predominantly white. There was not a single person of colour among the students. Male students typically wore white shirts and blazers, while female students wore long skirts. It was a completely different world compared to today's diverse and international university environment. The amount of students was also way less. I had never seen a person of colour at university at the time of studying there. The majority of students were male, girls were in the minority. Nowadays, the tables have turned in most academic environments.

Were all courses taught in Dutch, or were other languages used as well?

Lectures were all in Dutch, but textbooks could be in multiple languages—French, German, or English. For subjects like Philosophy, you might read in Ger-

man, while English books were common in Psychology. This was considered completely normal, and students were expected to adapt.

Conclusion

Looking back, studying in Amsterdam was a mix of freedom and limitation, independence and inconvenience. Finding a room meant cycling around with a list of addresses, paying rent to a hospita who set the house rules. Studying meant sitting through dry, scripted lectures, scribbling notes on your lap, and hoping someone had a spare sheet of carbon paper (to copy notes). No laptops, no Google, no instant access to information—just library catalogues, professor recommendations, and an occasional lucky find in a secondhand bookshop.

But that was student life: practical, unpolished, and full of routines that now seem almost unthinkable. Want to see a friend? Walk over and ring the dispuutsfluitje (student association whistle). Need to get somewhere? Buy a cheap bike and hope no one steals it. Night-outs weren't about excess expenditure—who had the money for that?—but about the places and the people. And through all of it, Amsterdam was there: rigid in some ways, unpredictable in others, always shaping the student experience. Some things have changed, but the city's pull, its contradictions, and its role as a backdrop to student life? That much stays the same.

The 1960s were a transformative decade for students in Amsterdam. Academic life was demanding, resources were limited, and social structures were rigid. Yet, students formed strong communities, navigated the city with ingenuity, and laid the foundations for future activism. Despite its challenges, many look back on their student years in Amsterdam with nostalgia. Though there were many changes in Amsterdam's student life, yet many things have remained the same over such a long stretch of time.

In Lies We Trust: Why No One Seems To Care About The Truth Anymore

Angèle Boleis

In 2017, after White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer accused the media of underestimating the crowd at Trump's inaugural ceremony, stating that it had drawn the "largest audience to ever witness an inauguration–period–both in person and around the globe", Counselor to the President Kellyane Conway defended his colleague by asserting that he hadn't lied but was only producing "alternative facts". Since then, the borderline between truth and falsehood seems to be blurring itself a little more each time. Deprived from trust in the media and politics, we are condemned to rely solely on faith, without evidence or defiance. In the Post-truth era, lies spread swiftly both on the Internet and traditional media, especially when owned by a handful of billionaires without scruple nor ethics: Murdoch, Bezos, Drahi, Bolloré, Křetínský, Musk… The truth is not a right nor of any importance as long as the interests of moguls are guaranteed.

To ensure this established order doesn't die, the guard dogs declare war on censorship by putting an end to content moderation on social media: scrapping fact-checkers and moving to a less constraining community notes model. Indeed, soon after Donald Trump won the November elections, Meta's C.E.O, Mark Zuckerberg defended his decision to remove restrictions on topics like immigration or gender identity by saying: "It's not right that things can be said on TV or the floor of Congress, but not on our platforms." If the politicians can give hateful speeches, why can't the masses do it too? However, his new strategy shouldn't be seen as a philanthropic attempt to restore social debate and democracy, but a way for this converted masculinist to win the loyalty of Donald Trump, by getting closer to the power, alimenting far-right debates, and spreading misinformation. It seems that even if he has a big fat bank account of "fuck you money", Zuckerberg still behaves as a bootlicker of Washington. Liberal with Democrats. Conservative with Republicans. What matters is that the broligarchs remain above the law (and taxes).

Not to be outdone, after Elon Musk took over X/Twitter in 2022, the platform has implemented a range of policy changes, especially regarding misinformation issues on elections outcomes, the COVID-19 crisis or international conflicts. Far from stopping at "freeing the bird" from so-called "woke-ism", Musk has been endorsing a fascist agenda in America by interfering with the November elections, attacking Kamala Harris with help from AI; but also in Europe where his meddling in the German federal elections has sparked controversy, exemplifying his proximity with far-right AfD leader Alice Weidel in a live talk where she affirmed that "Adolf Hitler (...) was a communist". On January 20, during Trump's inaugural ceremony, the same businessman and head of the newly-formed Department of Government Efficiency, made a nazi salute - or maybe it was a roman salute, or maybe he was just "giving [his] heart to [the crowd]". Soon enough, the debate grew heated on X, some describing him as a fascist, others denying his gesture, explaining it with ableist arguments, comparing it to out-of-context still pictures of other politicians with their arms out straight…Denial or cynicism? History will be the judge. Either way, the neo-nazis have decided: the dog whistle didn't fall on deaf ears.

Another champion at conveying messages likely to provoke controversy without compromising himself is French Prime minister François Bayrou. On January 27, he expressed the "sentiment of [migratory] submersion" that is, according to him, felt by the vast majority of the country's population, a rhetoric used by far-right politicians like Marine Le Pen and Eric Zemmour, and directly linked to the Great Replacement theory. The following day, he repeated the same inanities in the National Assembly, self-describing his language as "shocking realities", without using any sources to justify it, nor mitigating the moral panic surrounding immigration (France is far from being the EU member state with most immigration – with foreign citizens only accounting for 7,7% of the country's population – below EU's

average, Eurostat); playing into the hands of the Rassemblement National.

Countless lies are told every day on social media or on television without them duly being refuted by politicians or journalists. It seems that people don't really care about the truth anymore, and prefer to rely on sentiment instead of hard facts. After all, the fake news, false accusations, and democratic denial didn't stop Donald Trump from being elected President of the United States of America. Quite the contrary, according to American philosopher Judith Butler, people "actually know he's lying. They know he's exaggerating. They know that nothing grounds many of his claims, but they're thrilled with the idea that he's able to say whatever he wants and make it seem true even though there is no evidence to support it. (...) They want to be free to hate. They want to be free to be irrational."

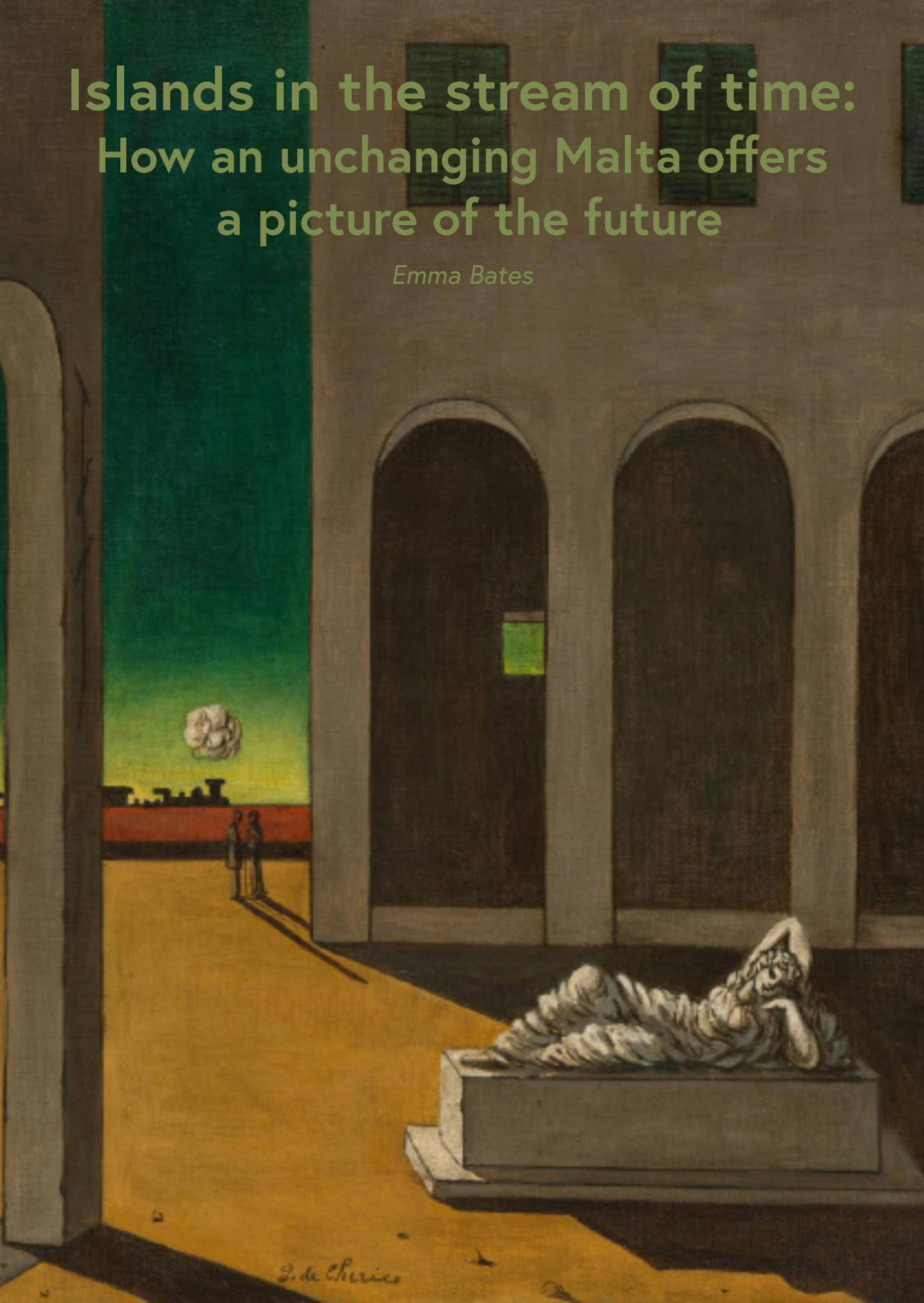
"In this changing world, hatred and social poverty defy reality. Roles are inverted. Nazis are communists. Environmentalists are terrorists. Liberals are fascists."

And rapidly, it feels like we are living in Orwell's 1984: "War is peace. Freedom is slavery. Ignorance is strength." In the general confusion, it becomes more and more difficult to differentiate opinion from fact, and people slowly move away from the mainstream media to consider alternatives that can be informative and useful, or a nest of conspiracy theories, constantly feeding the defiance towards information channels. As a result, social media has now become the leading choice of information tools for a good part of the population, unarmed to always think critically and verify the sources. In addition, this defiance goes hand in hand with people's trust in their government. It is no wonder there is a huge gap between Denmark, where 80% of the population trusts TV channels, while only 20% of Greece does (2022 Eurobarometer). This defiance also varies significantly according to a set of parameters, such as gender or class. Indeed, we aren't all equal towards information or disinformation.

Nonetheless, this shouldn't stop people from informing themselves. More than ever, learning is a resistance tool. A beacon in the night. Because there is such a thing as truth, I urge you to defend it. Because freedom of speech is useless if there is no informed debate. The only way for us to resist is to educate ourselves. Multiplicate the sources. Do research. Read. Watch. Listen. Talk. Debate. Let them know that you won't buy into their lies. That you will never surrender to disinformation. As writer Rebecca Solnit said to journalist Carole Cadwalladr, "If they try to normalize, let us try to denormalize. Let us hold on to facts, truths, values, norms, arrangements that are going to be under siege. Let us not forget what happened and why".

Islands in the stream of time: How an unchanging Malta offers a picture of the future

Emma Bates



Malta is an unusual place. With a population of around 542,000 on an archipelago that consists of little more than 316 km2, the rich history and unique location of this country is frequently overlooked in favour of its surrounding cultural giants of Italy, Greece, and North Africa. To the unfamiliar eye, the language looks like Romanised Arabic with hints of Latin and the addition of characters unfathomable to foreigners, betraying the many influences that have filtered down throughout ages and conquests. The few larger cities form enclaves in an otherwise green and taupe expanse that is dotted with villages hewn from the local limestone. While the familiar shapes of cranes and other construction equipment show the tell-tale signs of new developments, these are placed with antiphonal significance, complimenting each other, as do the twin cities of Valletta and Sliema.

Despite few indications of modernisation, and the tourism sector that contributes a nonchalant 15% to Maltese GDP, relatively little has changed in the past several hundred years. In fact, one of its other main industries is built upon the assumption of its unchanging face; the film industry. Capitalising upon Malta's rich variety of landscapes (astonishing for a country boasting of a typical size, let alone this small wink in the Mediterranean), recording studios from around the world have used the Maltese countryside as a film set for movies as diverse as Popeye and Ridley Scott thrillers. Aside from these industries, Malta has built an evergreen economy - one with a small deficit, low unemployment, and small yet steady economic growth - through technical industries that have done little to pollute the native land. Despite its seeming lack of material growth, Malta is prosperous, offering an internationally accredited university nestled in the capital, the center of a vast spidering network of low-cost public transport and hospitals which comprise only the latest jewel in a crown of free public healthcare.

An initial impression of Malta may give the casual viewer a mistaken sense of guilt, the like of which is felt by many vacationers in countries significantly less wealthy than their own; cash tips stealthily deposited on hotel sideboards and restaurant tables; sheepish repudiation of overt deference. This feeling quickly dissolves as the visitor notices the newest technology and signature 18k gold Maltese jewelry adorning the local population, casting impressions into a kaleidoscope of seeming contradictions; cars rust in the salt air, signs and house facades fade in the rainbow sun; prickly pear cacti grow wild in national parks and on private property while the economy blooms. Well-maintained yet unimproved, the tranquility of Malta holds up a green-tinted mirror to the endless pursuit of growth and modernisation that tops the agenda of most other European countries. The Maltese government is focused on increasing democratic participation, preservation of the island's environment, and an accelerated transition to a digital and circular economy. It shirks the goals of perpetual, unrealistic growth that is the yoke under which most other government labour.

We are taught, through writings that span from Heraclitus and Plato, to Aristotle, to Nietzsche, to modern economic thought, that change is inevitable, eternal, and essential, but rarely is the true meaning and degree questioned. In Malta, history is neither abandoned nor venerated: it simply exists alongside and inseparate from the present, as undivorced from everyday life as were humans and nature before the rift wrought by the Enlightenment.

"In crumbling sandstone, in splintering wood, in peeling paint, there is undeniable decay, but there is also majesty; there is an acceptance and familiarity with the passage of time, with being worn smooth instead of being washed away."

When we value change for its own sake, we lose its true value. Change has become synonymous with progress, but Malta has proven that betterment need not come with an attached price tag and with landfills overflowing with vestiges of the past, but with careful, thoughtful policy and the valuing conservation over renovation. The Maltese do not lack the capacity for paradigm change, to discard what came before and renew their homes and possessions; they simply do not base their lives on it, do not thrive on it, and at the moment, do not need it.

SES Calendar

General Assembly II - February 18th

Join the Association at their second General Assembly where the Semi-Annual Report will be presented and the Board Selection Committee will be elected.

Bowling Borrel - February 25th

The Activity Committee is happy to present this year's editon of the Bowling Borrel. Show off those bowling skills and come hang out with SES!

Career Dinner - February 27th

This Year's edition of the Career Dinner will be hosted at MADRE. With an unprecedented 14 speakers, you will be able to have conversations with professionals in politics, law, economics, culture, history, and Eastern Europe.

March of Music

During the month of March, SES' Activity Committee will organise multiple events focused on music - stay tuned for more updates on SES' Instagram.

SES MUN - March 15th

The Debate Committee is excited to announce it's second event, the yearly SES MUN. More details on this will be revealed soon.

LUSTRUM GALA - April 5th - 6th

No Lustrum Year would be complete without a grand celebration of SES's continuity. Therefore, the Lustrum Committee is excited to invite SES Members to the Landgoet Hotel Avergoor for a night they won't forget, with a three-course dinner, live music, a DJ, and more!.

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