

CONFERENCE NEWS

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SEVENTH INTERNATIONAL METROPOLIS CONFERENCE

“We are all vulnerable”

“For me, the lesson of last September’s terrorist attacks was that everyone is vulnerable, even those who live inside the fortifications of overdevelopment. To recognize that essential vulnerability and to try to make it useful, is also to admit that we cannot, in good conscience, live indifferent lives behind the walls of privilege,” says professor Paul Gilroy.

TEXT: BJØRG DYSTVOLD NILSSON

He also thinks there is a lesson to be learnt from the reactions to what happened September 11. “Our reactions have geopolitical dimensions that we can’t ignore. The response that puts vengeful war before law is consistent with the imperial program that is being developed by some people inside the US government. It leads us to a further question: whether we are willing to commit ourselves to develop a legal order for the planet which is not the legal order of the national state. We do need a planetary legal order and a more effective, trans-local judicial system than the UN currently provides.”

“I really think the time of the national state is passing. I don’t believe its borders can protect us. We need to look both above and below the level of the national state, to trans-national institutions and movements. The national state hasn’t been re-thought since the 18th century. The worn-out Kantian paradigm is still very powerful. It places the idea of the nation close to the development of national markets, but these structures are decomposing in front of our eyes,” Gilroy says.

He sees this moment as an opportunity to be creative and to think anew. “There is not enough imagina-

tion. The north is largely content to quietly go on insulating itself against the demands made by the south. In practice, there is a war against the south going on inside the north. This is not the war against terror, but it has become connected to it. It’s a battle against refugees and asylum seekers; a war against the intrusion of other people. The dominance of the language of war in this area is a symptom of the failure of imagination,” Gilroy says.

“The main framework employed to understand the presence of immigrants is the idea of an invasion. Their demands for recognition and hospitality always seem to involve losses”, says Gilroy, according to him this common response says much about how afraid Europeans have become at the prospect of losing their distinctiveness. “The sources of that anxiety do not lie with the immigrants” he continues, “but immigrants provide a safe opportunity to discharge that anxiety in the forms of violence, anger and resentment”.

He asks for less timidity, especially from politicians. “Politicians are supposed to lead people. Now they are likely to be watching the polls, trying to find out what people want so that they can offer it to them. The consumer mentality has corroded the older principles of politics. This is why nationalism and racism come into focus, they deliver the instant magic of an authentic populist appeal,” Gilroy says.

He has no respect for pseudopoliticians lead by market research. “This is the end of democracy. It was destroyed by the mentality of marketing. Look at the steady decline in participation at elections and other formal political processes. We need politicians who can give that ailing democracy renewed vigour, who can think beyond the national state and build cosmopolitan institutions adequate to the urgent dangers of this moment.”



Facts:

Attitudes towards immigrants and immigration policy

- Norwegians became more positive towards immigrants and immigration during the 1990s.
- Especially from 1995 to 1996 the positive attitude increased. In the years 1993 to 1995 the attitudes showed little change.
- People were most sceptical when it came to the question if immigrants had too easy an access to social assistance. More than 90 per cent believed immigrants should have the same job opportunities as Norwegians
- In 2000 there was a reduction in the number of people that believed that Norway should offer residence to immigrants «to the same extent as today». SSB

Today’s Youth:

Utrop is an online newspaper run by youth with an ethnic minority background in Norway. The main activities are to publish news related to ethnic minorities, highlight youth who achieve a position and to take an active part in issues concerning the different communities living in Norway, with a main focus on South Asia. Current issues such as arranged marriages, racism and Islam are examples of issues we have focused on. We publish articles written by professional journalists, researchers, and community leaders. Utrop is an interactive site; youth can participate in discussions, and they are also given the opportunity to publish their own work (short stories, novels, poetry etc). We also provide: humour, news about upcoming movies, CD releases, dating, SMS, logos, ringtones, etc. In other words the fun stuff. www.utrop.no

I AM HERE!



Norwegian immigration history from 1945 up to the present.

Throughout history people have immigrated to Norway, and immigration has played an important role for the formation of the Norwegian society. It is therefore an honour

for IKM - International Cultural Centre and Museum - to open the first major exhibition that presents central parts of Norwegian immigration history.

The background for this exhibition is a cooperation between the Institute of History at the University of Oslo and their research programme “Norwegian immigration history”, which is led by Professor Knut Kjeldstadli. The exhibition presents immigration history from 1945 up until present day.

IKM’s ambition is to promote respect and understanding for cultural diversity. We collect, document and communicate knowledge focusing on immigration history and cultural changes in Norwegian society. IKM aims to present a wide variety of visual and performance art as well as changing cultural traditions. We offer an arena for artists and performers, and a meeting place for professionals and citizens concerned with cultural diversity. Many of our exhibitions can be booked as touring exhibitions. Children and youth are our most important audience.

IKM is only 5 minutes walk away from the conference hotel. The address is Tøyenbekken 5, and the opening hours are: working days 10 – 16, Thursdays 10 – 18 and Saturdays and Sundays 12 – 16. Mondays closed.



Changes in the program

Panel: September 11, One Year Later
State Secretary Jørn Holme, Ministry of Justice, Norway – participates in the panel instead of Rita Sletner

Lunch

- Vegetarian quiche
- Ryebread with marinated salmon
- Baguette with turkey
- Finger fruit
- Brownies

There is also a vegetarian lunch alternative. This is marked with a special sign.

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DESIGN:



TOGETHERNESS IN DIFFERENCE

September 11 – one year after. What are your reflections?

HEARD AT THE CONFERENCE



■ It has changed the world; it's an example of freedom and security colliding. The local authorities of New York have to deal with global terrorism. It gives us more responsibility – even if we are working locally, we all have a part to play in these global issues.

Tito Correa
Minister of the Adventist Church in Oslo, Norway



■ September 11 was a mighty reminder of the great injustice in the world, creating so much hatred that it can lead to such terrible actions. It must lead to reflection, not at least inside the USA. We must fight injustice and attitudes that create terrorism like this.

Ahmed Bozgil
Director, Hero Refugee Centre, Norway



■ The attacks were terrible, and it is terrible that the US uses them to justify attacks on people with different background around the world. It's sad that European countries use this to talk about gender issues from the wrong angle, speaking about how different cultures treat women.

Vera Eckhardt
Director, Evas Ark, Intercultural Women's Forum, Denmark



■ September 11 has made me feel more insecure and unsafe in my daily life. I find it very important that we strengthen the fight against terrorism.

Victoria K. Rweikiza
KIM – Contact Committee for Immigrants and the Authorities, Norway



■ It's a great tragedy; both the terrorist attacks and the way the American government has responded to them. These reactions have really compounded the tragedy. The US should have cooperated with other nations in finding non-violent ways to react.

Kate Chapman
Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, Norway/USA

“The diversity is our strength”

“We come from different places with different faces, but we are all Canadians,” says Jean Augustine, Secretary of State in Canada with responsibility for multiculturalism and status of women.

TEXT: BJØRG DYSTVOLD NILSSON

Canada is world famous for being the first country to introduce a multiculturalism policy in 1971. This policy ensures that all citizens can take pride in their ancestry, be secure of their acceptance and belongings as Canadians and look forward to a future open to diverse cultures and ethnic, racial, religious and linguistic backgrounds.

Augustine, who herself immigrated from the Caribbean 42 years ago, claims to be a living proof of that the Canadian multiculturalism is actually working.

“I took all the opportunities that Canada offered, I educated myself to becoming a school teacher, and a headmaster. Later I presented myself to the Canadian people who voted for me and made me Member of Parliament.”

She underlines the importance of having a smaller community in which she belonged. “Some of my strength came from community groups. When I came to Canada I joined a Carib-

bean organisation. There I got the opportunity to give speeches, and to strengthen myself to enter the bigger society,” she says.

Augustine means that Canada can be a model society for other societies when it comes to multiculturalism. She thinks her country has been way ahead of the game when it comes to question of globalisation. But she is aware that their model needs to be debated.

“We must do critical analysis, we need to stop and say “Hey, who are we, how are we working together. The model has to renew itself. The Canadian multiculturalism is a work in progress.”

She says that the word respect is important in the Canadian public debate. “The Canadian people have great respect for differences. If some people want to wear the turban or the hijab, that's ok.”

She says this respect is very obvious also in the debate about languages and women's rights.

“It's a benefit to be able to speak one of Canada's two official languages. There are many first generation immigrants who don't master the language, but the second generation learn it very quickly. To become a Canadian citizen, you have to pass a citizenship-test. And to do that, you have to understand some of the language. We want immigrants to learn our languages, and have programs to help them with this, but at the same time there is a recognition of that if you are a grandmother of 80 years, it's not so easy to learn a new language. So, we offer assistance in this citizenship-test,” Augustine explains.

When it comes to women's rights, Augustine is clear. “The multiculturalism is not standing on it's own. We have laws that apply for everybody. Violation of women's rights is illegal for everyone. We don't say that this is legal for this segment of the society and not for another. If it's illegal, it's illegal”, says Augustine, who celebrates her birthday during the conference.



Performers Yesterday:

QUEENDOM:

Queendom is Norway's first all-black, all-female performing arts group. It consists of four young women of Trinidadian, Nigerian, Ugandan and Ethiopian origin. Through poetry, song, humor and music, they give a taste of their lives as black women in a white society.

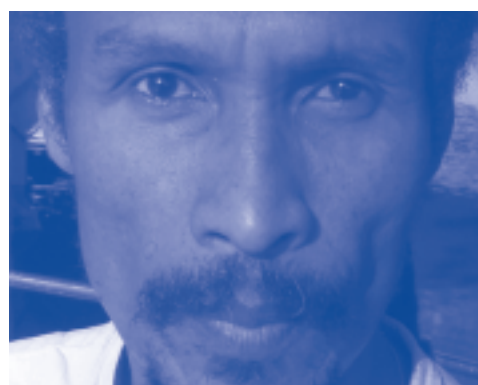


BRINGING FANTASY INTO THE CONFERENCE

“What you see is professional multicultural art. It goes to the soul of the conference itself. Multicultural artistic expressions must not become a curiosity,” says Cliff A. Moustache, coordinator of the artistic part of the conference.

TEXT: BJØRG DYSTVOLD NILSSON

He is the artistic director of Nordic Black Theatre that celebrates its 10th anniversary this year. The theatre also has a theatre school, both for adults and children. “We hope the school can generate transcultural actors who can make Norwegian theater and film more multicultural. I got the idea to this theatre and the theatre school when I was invited to teach at the Norwegian Theater Academy, where I saw that the multicultural part of Norway not at all was represented,” says Cliff A. Moustache who has his



professional education from both London, Poland and Russia.

The theatre is located right in the center of Oslo, in the harbor close to where Oslo within the next years is building a new opera house. “We came first, we bought a ship and are the floating theatre of Norway today,” he says. The MS Innvik, which is the name of the ship, contains a stage, a bed and breakfast and a café. Cliff Moustache heavily recommends all

parts of it – especially the bed and breakfast.

“It's cheaper than taking a taxi home at night, and it's probably the only bed and breakfast where you get breakfast served by the artistic director,” he says.

Cliff A. Moustache stayed in Norway after a summer holiday because he fell in love with the Norwegian nature on the west coast. He is surprised that the beauty of the nature not always reflects in the attitudes of the Norwegian people. “I was expecting a little more inclusion. This country has everything; beauty and wealth. This is a big contrast. I've been living in Norway for 20 years, and not once been invited to broaden the Norwegian picture of theatre or film. I cannot sit down and wait for others to decide when is the right time. So I started myself,” says Cliff A Moustache who feels Norway as his home.