

LUM.

LUND UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE | NR 4 | 2041

SPECIAL JUBILEE EDITION

Lund
University
1666–2041

The view from the top

Silent resistance: going against the flow

Academactivism takes the stage once more

LU375

UPWIND, UPSTREAM AND UPSTAIRS





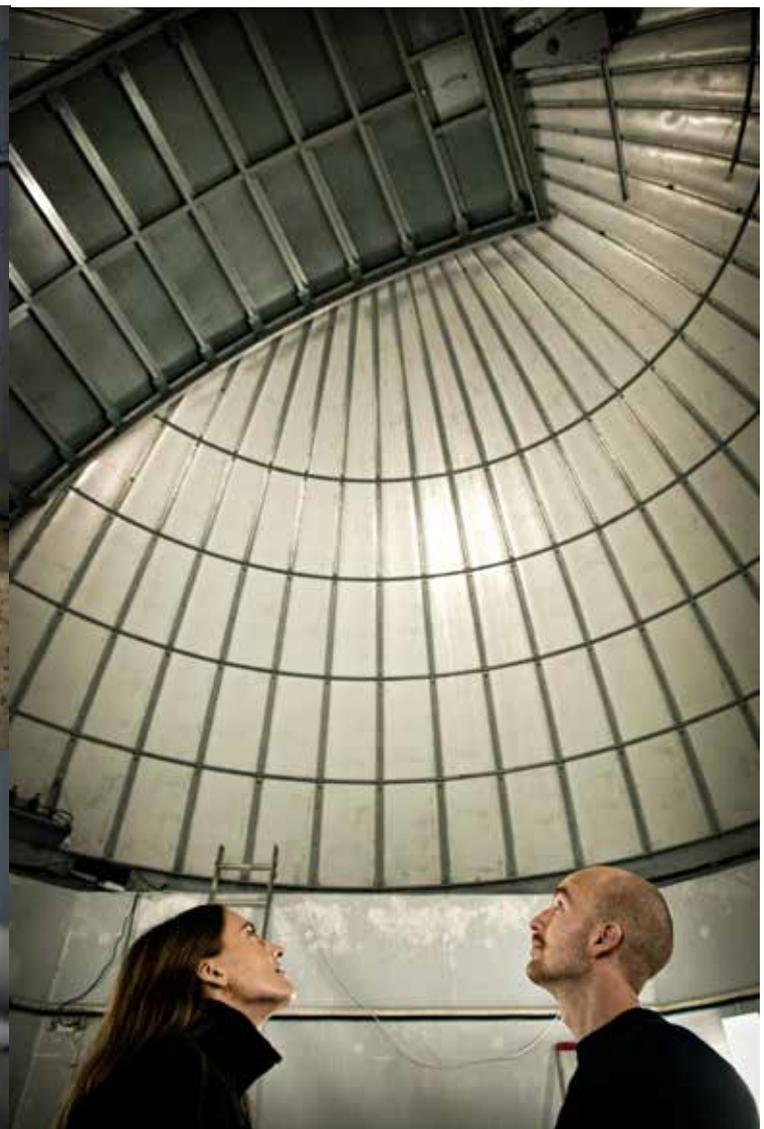
Built in 1909, the water tower is a familiar landmark. The Lund Observatory, LU's astronomy department, was the previous academic tenant. It has been empty since the mid 2020s.

New start for Etikhuset in the old water tower

The relocation of Etikhuset to the Observatory on Sölvegatan will soon be complete, bringing new life (and a new name: The Lighthouse) to a much-loved Lund landmark.

This is a new chapter in the story of Etikhuset, as the institution also welcomes a new director. Li Gurung, whose reputation was made by their geoengineering research, was appointed to the post over the summer. (See our full interview with Gurung on page 10.)

ORIGINALLY BASED at Brunnsbö, Etikhuset was founded in 2027. Responding to prevailing ethical debates around academic freedom at that time, plus a handful of high-profile cases of professional misconduct and funding fraud, Etikhuset's focus



The tower's interior has an unusual shape, which Etikhuset director Li Gurung hopes will be ideal for hosting debates. "In a round room, no one can be at the head of the table.

was predominantly on issues internal to LU.

Li Gurung has signalled a "new broom" approach, and an expanded remit. Ethics of research will remain a central concern, but broader societal issues—"the ethics of the ends to which research is the means", as Gurung puts it—are now also in the frame.

THERE HAD BEEN some criticism of the "old" Etikhuset; it was said that its location in the Science Village signalled an uncritical closeness to big-money science which was not purely a matter of geography. What is certain is that it was once something of

a "closed shop"—a dynamic that Gurung aims to change by hosting regular debates and more diverse community engagement events, open to all, at the Lighthouse.

BUILT IN 1909, the Vattentorn Observatory started its life as the city's water-tower. Lund Observatory (as LU's astronomy department is officially known) moved here from the Old Observatory in Stadsparken in 2001, and then relocated yet again to Brunnshög (along with the theoretical physicists) in the mid 2020s. Gurung appreciates the symbolism of the Lighthouse's

bird's-eye view over the whole university, and beyond. (However, some critics have suggested that it also implies a lofty attitude among the ethicists.)

Hopes for the new Etikhuset are as high as its new home: Vice-Chancellor Mårjá Rensberg told LUM that "the Lighthouse is the perfect location for a new approach to ethics in LU, and Gurung the ideal leader". The inaugural debate is scheduled to take place in November.

**GRAEME P CROWE
& BÉATRICE POULPE**



LUM got a sneak-peek guided tour of The Lighthouse ahead of the inaugural opening!

Inside the Lighthouse

As soon as Vice-Chancellor Márjá Rensberg and I step inside the Lighthouse, I put my ear muffs on to protect my ears from the febrile activity of the retrofitting workers putting the last efforts into making the place as welcoming as possible before its inauguration.

The Ethics at Risk index is prominently displayed on the wall opposite the entrance. On the right-hand side lies the restaurant, with comfy sofas and thick carpets signalling that this place will encourage an open and inclusive dialogue at the bi-weekly Lunch n' Ethics. *Lund-kronor* will be accepted as payment for the daily lunch to make the restaurant accessible to the whole community.

On the left-hand side, I notice what will probably be the Speaker's Corner I have heard so much about at LU with a stool in the middle and a small amphitheatre around. I catch sight of Li Gurung and want to say hello, but they have already vanished up the staircase.

"Li is so ambitious—just look look at the programme for the first month!" says Márjá Rensberg.

GRAEME P CROWE

ETIKHUSET

Established to facilitate discussions about research ethics and research purposes. Works to create a research climate at Lund University which fosters open dialogue on a wide range of ethical issues. Does not fund research.

Upcoming events:

NOVEMBER 1th Launch of Etikhuset

NOVEMBER 7th Lunch n' Ethics: 'Tissues on the table? New standards and old ethics for home-grown meat'

NOVEMBER 12th Friday After-Work: BYOD (Bring Your Own Dilemma)

NOVEMBER 14th Lunch n' Ethics: 'Augmentocracy? On Elective Human Augmentation for the masses?'

NOVEMBER 18th Theatrical play: 'Emergency Actions for Times of Emergency'

NOVEMBER 21st Lunch n' Ethics: 'What's in it for LU? On new publishing platforms'

NOVEMBER 26th Friday After-Work: BYOD

NOVEMBER 28th Lunch n' Ethics: 'Research funding and defining societal relevance'

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LUM.

LUND UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE

The first edition of Lund University Magazine—
LUM—was published 1968. LU Futura has
borrowed the LUM format for this edition.

Welcome to a new issue of LUM and congrats LU on the 375th anniversary!

In this autumn of 2041, LU is 375 years old... or should we say, as the English sometimes do, 375 years young? This issue commemorates that anniversary, but the appropriate celebration would be to focus, as always, on the people whose work makes LU what it is. We will save the retrospection for the big 400... though whether I'm still here to see it, who knows!

As guest editor, I get to point out my highlights. I'm taking inspiration from a 2019 painting by Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, which I saw at a touring exhibition in Malmö over the summer. Its title, "Upwind, Upstream, Upstairs", seemed to perfectly capture the shape of this special issue, and the dynamism that has been the hallmark of Lund University since 1666—which is further endorsed by LU's ascent in the SYMBIOSIS2080 assessment (see page 6).

UPWIND: ALL CHANGE AT ETIKHUSET, page 10

If you were intrigued by our bildöppning on Etikhuset moving into Vattentorn, be sure to follow it with our interview with its new director! Li Gurung started out in geoen지니어ing, before the winds of change began to blow...

UPSTREAM: THE 'EEL STRATEGY' VINDICATED, page 14

Perhaps you are among those who were always aware of 'The Shelter'? I was not—and so this story of quiet (if not exactly secretive) researchers at LU was a revelation. I wish it had been around in my day!

UPSTAIRS: A TOP-FLIGHT GRANT AT THE HELIX, page 16

We don't know exactly how big it is—that's confidential!—but we do know that Truong Nguyen's latest grant is the biggest ever secured by an LU researcher. But how did he come to win it, and what will he be doing with it?

DORIS BERGSTRÖM,
GUEST EDITOR FOR THE 375th JUBILEE EDITION



Lund top university in Sweden on community involvement

LU's efforts to improve engagement with society and the living world have paid off. Formerly performing slightly above average on most criteria in the 2035 global assessment, LU is now among the top 5% performers for five out of six values.

"This is the result of the herculean efforts of our amazing staff at LU, and of the community of which we are an integral part. It's not just a ranking, but an indication that we are holding the Holistic Earth Ethics principles and values at the heart of our activities, and that we are making a contribution for all on beautiful planet earth", says Ivalo Filemonsén, Vice-Chancellor for the Agora for Community Engagement & Inclusivity, who is visibly delighted by the news.

The five-yearly ranking, delivered by the renowned Talloire Network of Engaged Universities since the Talloire+40 Conference in 2030, consists of six values—collaboration, inclusion, equity, leadership, innovation and hope—with underlying criteria.

SINCE THE LAST ASSESSMENT, LU has launched numerous initiatives which have proven very successful in addressing the challenges and uncertainty that characterise the times we are living in. The list is long: Filemonsén hardly knows where to start:

"The recent endorsement of new pedagogic forms aimed at triggering deliberative civic engagement practices among our students has been key—for example, Inspiration Journey's courses, which are now part of our overarching pedagogical programme. Likewise, the establishment of different



Ivalo Filemonsén, Vice-Chancellor of the Agora for Community Engagement and Inclusivity, is very pleased with LU's results in the latest ranking.

agorae to improve our cooperation with different communities."

"These moves have helped us improve our performance in the areas of collaboration, where the co-creation of knowledge

and the quality of the cooperation are in focus, and leadership, which in Symbiosis2080 is mostly about developing the next generation of active citizens. And without the Agora for Making Futures, or our own Agora for Community Engagement and Inclusivity, it would have been difficult to score high on the values of equity and inclusion, where the focus is on amplifying the voices and lived experiences of all marginalized groups, especially refugees and non-human beings."

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS at LU have also played a big role, Filemonsén continues. The establishment of 'citizens in residence' programmes, the gradual shift to collective authoring, and the 'all-species tribunals' set up at the Faculty of Law are other significant success factors.

"For the innovation measure, in which the evolution of ethical ideas is central, the new Etikhuset, with its aim of being an open discussion forum for all, has been crucial."

THE FACT that the assessment, initially scheduled for 2040, was slightly delayed due to last year's pandemic, has allowed these new initiatives to settle and take root at the university. However, as Filemonsén reveals with regret, some parts of the university are seriously lagging in terms of ethics, equity and transparency, the latter being a prerequisite for fulfilling the SYMBIOSIS2080 criteria.

"Our efforts to reach out to these last bastions of hustle culture have so far been in vain. But we have dramatically improved our performance thanks to the initiative on deliberative pedagogy. We now have many courageous students choosing 'stay with the trouble', pursuing meaning rather than top



Lund University is doing well on the ranking from the Talloire Network of Engaged Universities, and has improved on all six values that are evaluated: cooperation, inclusion, justice, leadership, innovation and hope.

marks or big money. Perhaps that's the truest mark of our success?" she suggests.

THE LATEST STUDENT survey, designed and answered by the students, also confirms that the University fares much better on hope than previously. But these initiatives must be scaled up so they permeate all departments. There is an acute need to instil more hope in our students, staff and fellow citizens, Filemonsén says. The Agora for Making Futures might also be of help in

that regard: by opening up the future and recognising the pluralism that characterises a vibrant democracy, we may come to trust our ability to collectively shape the future.

"We also have our own trump card, which is quite unique in Sweden: humour, which has always been a central value at Lund University, not least with the 'Late Show Lund'. We should remember the old saying: 'where there is humour, there is hope'", Filemonsén concludes.

BÉATRICE POULPE



Deputy Vice Chancellor Esmir Haltensgård.

Congratulations...

... to Esmir Haltensgård on their appointment as Deputy Vice Chancellor for Community Engagement and Inclusivity. Haltensgård will be the first without a doctorate to hold this position, drawing on decades of experience in community management and outreach. We look forward to the diversity of inputs from influence networks they have established!

Sliderule Collective meet in Science Village

The Sliderule Collective will meet on the first Monday of every month (starting November 5th) at LTH Student Union at Science Village. Founded in 2035 by Pr. Francesco Giuliani (LTH), in what used to be The Shelter, the Collective is devoted to reintroducing the practice of manual calculation methods for engineers and scientists. New students very welcome!

New update of the HR Game

The HR Development Scrum would like to remind all LU employees that the new version of the LU Skills, Achievements and Training Assessment platform—LU-SATA, better known as "the HR Game"—will roll out on December 1st. All activities performed and points accrued in the last academic year must be entered and exchanged before the update!

current events.



Maja McLuhan argues that the editorial process is vital for ‘curating scholarship and filtering the flow’.

The director of LU Press on paperChain:

“We risk drowning in an endless flow of articles”

Maja McLuhan, manager at LU Press, recently waded into the debate over paperChain, the open-access publishing platform which has been taking the academy by storm, particularly outside of Europe. In an essay for *Sydsvenskan*, McLuhan praised paperChain for its “leveling of the playing field” and the accountability of its peer-review system, which (controversially) pays researchers for reviewing at a piece-work rate. But by doing so, McLuhan argues, paperChain serves to further normalise the precarity of junior faculty worldwide.

After noting that critiques of paperChain’s reliance on blockchain technology “are less wrong than they are twenty years out of date”, McLuhan’s essay makes a case for a compromise between the old over-centralised model of academic publishing and the “radically and dangerously decentralised” model represented by paperChain.

“Every article on paperChain has been peer-reviewed—and in a way that is almost certainly less prone to rigging than in the bad old days of the monopoly publishers like Elsevier. It has provided opportunities for disadvantaged scholars, and those who work in languages other than English, to publish their work in their own words, and



Lina Bergqvist of SULF.

on their own terms. These are things to be proud of, certainly.

"But the price of that openness is the flood of publications that results. Some disciplines have seen the volume of articles in their field increase by an order of magnitude, thanks to paperChain! That's not to say those publications aren't useful additions to the literature—rather, it is to say that their usefulness remains uncertain, until they are read and incorporated into ongoing scholarship. This process of incorporation was hard enough when a given field might see several hundred publications per year. How much harder is it now that there are thousands? What gems are being missed among the sheer mass of the pile? An editorial process, such as we have at LUP, is about curating scholarship and filtering the flow."

SOME RESEARCHERS have defended paperChain, arguing that its internal ranking systems (based on reader feedback) address the "filtering issues" that McLuhan laments. Others have accused institutional publishers like LUP of having dethroned the old monopolies only to take their place, with human editors being a "weak link in the ethical chain", sustaining old biases and inequities. Regarding precarity in junior faculty roles, one LU PhD candidate (who asked not to be named) observed that McLuhan "is judging the present by the conditions of the past ... what she sees as precarity, even here in Sweden, is just the way academia works now. To assume that we don't know that before we

join is patronising, at best." When asked for a response, McLuhan told LUM that "young scholars must make their own choices, of course, but this attitude seems to confirm my point rather than refute it".

UNIONS have yet to take a position, with their memberships strongly divided on the issue. "It's a tricky call, as both sides have good arguments," says Lina Bergqvist of SULF. "On the one hand, paperChain frees researchers from the necessity of unreciprocated loyalty to a particular institution: your publications and other contributions become a matter of public record. In theory, this makes finding a new post much easier." On the other hand, many members, old and young, agree with McLuhan's argument.

"We are drowning in publications! The editorial process of a press like LUP is less about whether work is good enough for publication—those decisions have been AI-assisted for years by this point. It's more a matter of shaping the ongoing discussion in a given discipline. And yes, that is a form of control, of curation... but without it, all you have is a swamp. Scholarship has always been about making stable ground in the landscape of knowledge."

Presses like LUP pick their editorial teams based on democratic votes by scholars across the world. It's not a perfect system, of course—but as McLuhan says in his essay, "the assumption that any system could be perfect is, perhaps, the greatest threat of paperChain".

GRAEME P. CROWE



Cycle and get travel credits!

Bike4Miles project expands

The Vice-Chancellor has announced an expansion of the "Bike4Miles" conference travel credits initiative. All LU staff who have their data tracked by sanctioned healthcare providers may now choose to have their bicycle commutes automatically credited towards their travel allowances with a 20% bonus for academic use.

Nasal distribution of biotic boosters

All health-check gates across campus will now be nasally administering biotic-boosters throughout the semester. Please make sure your ID is synced and pass through before checking in to any buildings for your in-person sessions!

Booklaunch:

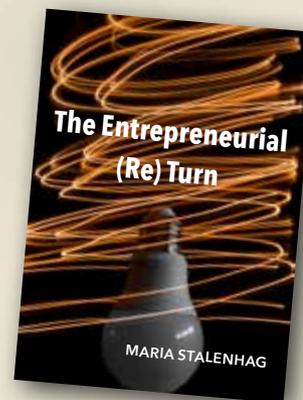
The Entrepreneurial (Re) Turn by Maria Stalenhag

This autumn sees the launch of *The Entrepreneurial (Re)Turn: Interpreting Innovation in the C21st Social Sciences*, by Pr. Maria Stalenhag [LU Press].

Pr. Stalenhag joined LU in 2039 after a decade at Vinnova, which informed this monograph: "It's amazing how closely the term 'innovation' was connected to commercial technology at

the beginning of the century, and how hollow the term became as a result", says Stalenhag.

"I trace in my book the recapture and repurposing of innovation by critical and activist scholars over the past three decades by critical and activist scholars, in alliance with actors in the state and the third sector."



A landscape of dead, blackened trees under a hazy, orange sky at sunset or sunrise. The trees are skeletal and stand in a field of ash or sand. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a strong glow and long shadows.

Research—for whom

Should researchers do more to ensure that their research is not misused? Should the good of humanity be science's most important guiding principle? The new director of Etikhuset, scientist Li Gurung, wants to get to the bottom of these questions.

Li Gurung knows what can happen when one's research results fall into the wrong hands. Their climate studies were used to justify a climate change project in Siberia, where sulfur dioxide was injected into the atmosphere to mitigate global warming. The project went awry and instead resulted in the acidification of soil in a wide area and made the water undrinkable.

Li Gurung is certain that Etikhuset needs a new direction, characterised by more critical discussions about who should influence what research is done, how it is done, and how results are then used. According to Gurung, it's about courage: as a researcher, you must dare to ask yourself how your results might be used, and what consequences might result.

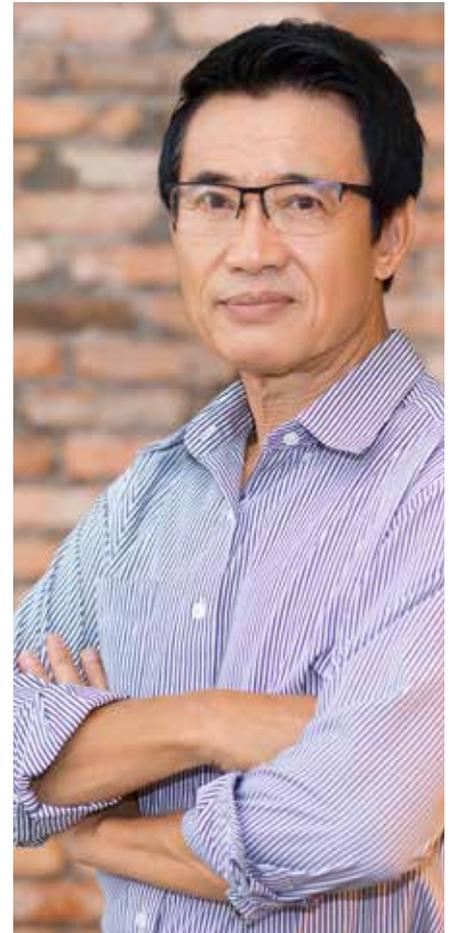
GURUNG'S VIEW HAS been shaped by an experience that many would describe as a researcher's worst nightmare. In 2034, one of their studies was used to justify a climate change project in Siberia that injected sulphur dioxide into the atmosphere to mitigate global warming. The experiment, meant to be local in scale, resulted in the acidification of soil over a wide area, and made the water undrinkable. Decades of escalating changes to the climate, the 20th-century pandemics, and the incredible pace of technological development in the field of genetic engineering have also influenced their thinking.

However, Gurung is well aware that it can be difficult to predict the ethical consequences of different actions, even when one tries one's best.

"One understands, on a theoretical level, that it is almost impossible to control how one's results are used. Yet it was terrible to see my research linked to a project that has led to so much suffering for the local population, fauna, and flora. In the years since, it became clear to me that this is a more general problem. The debates in my field of geoenvironment since the 20s are an example, but they cannot provide a template."

THE SUSTAINED CHALLENGE of climate change makes the question of the researcher's role even more relevant. The traditional ethical obligations that academia customarily imposes on researchers are becoming increasingly obsolete, according to Gurung. They want to see more discussion about research's purposes, and how it might affect society and the Earth's ecosystem.

"We should discuss different ethical approaches and how they affect different



Climate researcher Li Gurung is the director of Lund University's new ethics house.

THREE PROJECTS LI GURUNG WANTS TO START:

1. A radically changed ethics course that is mandatory for all researchers. It will focus on social science analysis, the ethical implications of research, and different forms of community engagement.
2. Discussion groups where scientists, doctors, social scientists, and humanists discuss controversial research together.
3. Inviting the public to comment on ongoing research projects from different ethical perspectives.

► forms of research and societal problems. The purpose of the discussions should be explicit: How will this research benefit different groups and species?”

GURUNG ARGUES that it is difficult to strike a balance between the needs of different groups or species. Classical utilitarianism has largely fallen out of favour, but world-views like ‘long-termism’, now decades old, retain their appeal for those concerned with improving the long-term future regardless of potential ‘collateral’ damage in the present. Most theoretical perspectives now consider nature not as an object, but as a network of subjects—though the questions of extending legal rights to those subjects, and of whether ‘rights’ are a useful way to approach the problem, remain contested. Meanwhile, outside the academy, these debates do little to prevent scientific findings being put to unexpected and potentially devastating use.

So what should researchers do in situations where their work may lead to undesirable consequences—should they simply stop researching such issues?

“There are no easy answers, and we are not all-knowing experts. That’s why I want to bring scientists and physicians together with social scientists and humanists, and also civil society, at the new Etikhuset.”

Ultimately we should discuss ethics before conducting research, Gurung continues, though the question of who funds that research will also be prominent in discussions at the new Etikhuset. They also mention a number of particularly urgent contemporary topics, such as Flexible Intelligence Augmentation (FIA), space colonisation, and algorithm regulation.

HOWEVER, the new Etikhuset is most of all intended as an open discussion forum, where everyone is welcome to raise important ethical issues at the recently established Speaker’s Corner. Gurung also wants to highlight pathways to giving researchers a more prominent voice in how their research is used. Although communi-



Gurung’s early research required repeated sampling of carbon dioxide concentrations in the stratosphere above cold regions of the planet.

“Ultimately we should discuss ethics before conducting research.”

cation between researchers and policy makers has improved (thanks in part to the new Agorae), there is often little room for manoeuvre, in terms of power or funds, when trying to act on research recommendations.

AT THE SAME TIME, Gurung is planning further research and discussion within those areas that challenge the boundaries of thinking on rights, in collaboration with the Agora for Making Futures. The political and moral responses to the pandemics of the early 20s served to resurrect and reshape arguments for the centralisation of power and control against individual self-determination. And while the fashion for totalitarian approaches has declined since then, the question of a “world government” is raised anew with every fresh wave of climate re-fuges.

“We want to explore how different narratives about the future can affect society and the Earth’s ecosystem, as well as what ethical values and norms they rest on. It is

important that we invite and include different disciplines, so that many aspects can be highlighted. In an uncertain and chaotic time, when decisions are being made at an accelerating pace, it is important that Etikhuset is not merely a symbolic gesture, but rather a ‘beacon’ which provides new insights to guide scientists, policy makers, and citizens,” they conclude.

OLGA RABINOWICZ

LI GURUNG

WORKS AS: Climate change researcher. Used to study the consequences of ‘geoengineering,’ the large-scale manipulation of the Earth’s climate; now Head of Etikhuset.

AGE: 55 years.

BACKGROUND: Born in Nepal, educated in China. Arrived at LU 2030.

LIVES: in Lund with children, partner, and four cats.

the list.

New pedagogical methods have been introduced at Lund University over the past few years. Lundagård's editor Immanuel Swift lists the five most popular courses according to LU students' voting. The top three are all student-initiated.

Top five courses according to students

- 1 MULTI-SENSORY MEMORY (MSM).** This course uses sounds, tastes and smells to learn new knowledge and conduct new research. Mostly located at the LU central greenhouse but also at the Museum of Forgotten Sensations (where e.g. the smells of gasoline, pasqueflower and black vanilla orchid, as well as the sounds of the European tree frog, the Arctic fox and the hawk owl, have been archived).
- 2 LIFELONG LEARNING AND HOPE FOR ALL.** Specially-designed course in climate crisis recovery for various co-teachers including e.g. reskilled miners and oil industry workers, students with climate anxiety and drop-outs from top universities with imposter syndrome. 'Inspiration Journey for real change!' is the students' mantra.
- 3 IMAGINARY EPISTEMOLOGY.** Part of the radical subjectivity programme at Experimental Pedagogics Agora. The aim is to develop new thinking and foster critical creativity. Offers students a new kind of gathering in order to seek out 'inner-conscious knowledge' and question old-fashioned knowledge regimes.
- 4 'MAKING YOUR WAY UP THE LADDER'.** A multi-skill programme organised at the Helix. Among other useful competencies: how to write quick peer reviews for paperChain, or make the most of Lund activities in your curriculum (e.g. business development of the Global Lundakarnevalen). Possibility to delegate your digital assistant for more time-efficient learning.
- 5 MYCORRHIZACULTURE FOR WINE PRODUCTION.** Wine-making course organised by the Agora For Community Engagement and Inclusivity. The course follows the growing principles of mycorrhizaculture as taught at LU's partner in Chile, the Gaia U Latina. Some of last year's student harvest has been served as sacramental wine at Råängen's Regenerative Church, another partner organisation in the course.





Perhaps not the coziest office space?
But here in The Shelter, the researchers
got peace from the outside world and
secretly performed research of remarka-
ble quality for a long time.

From resistance to award-winning research

Navida Rasmusson was recently awarded the prestigious Lampert Award for her well-received book *The Eel Strategy: Quiet Resistance in Chaotic Times*. The book is based on several years of research on resistance and revolt in Special Education Zones (SEZs) the world over. It is also a case-study of The Shelter, a workplace without which the book might never have been written.

LUM meets up with Navida Rasmusson outside of The Shelter's now shuttered offices. We descend a narrow staircase. An air of mustiness indicates that noone has been here recently. The offices themselves are nothing like the hyper-modern office spaces and research facilities that we're used to. It's easy to see why outsiders call this place 'the cave,' and hard to understand why anyone would spend time down here, let alone years.

"Most of us came down here to work in peace. Without requirements for fast publication, constant updates, and mandatory collaboration. Perhaps we also wanted to prove that quality research doesn't require the most up-to-date infrastructure and technology," says Rasmusson.

MY GLASSES VIBRATE as we reach the heart of The Shelter, the break room. The bandwidth down here is dreadful, and I get a warning that changes to my documents cannot be saved until I reconnect to the LU server. Rasmusson notices my worried look, and explains that the poor internet connection and solitude were among the reasons why many found their way to The Shelter. But it was, of course, not just a matter of the place's architecture.

"As a young researcher, it was so amazing to be in an environment where the focus was on researcher's freedom and the possibility of doing 'slow research', at the same time as being part of creating something different."

It was when Rasmusson returned home, seeking a safe haven for her research after almost two years of field work in conflict zones, that she first came in contact with The Shelter. At that time, she hardly imagined that the desolate underground structure would become so central to her research on resistance and rebellion studies.

"As an ethnographer, I quickly became very interested in the culture and environment of The Shelter. Here was a way to resist rules and micromanagement from above. It reminded me of a lot of my field-study experiences in the SEZs (Special Educational Zones)."



Navida Rasmusson has written the award winning book "The Eel Strategy" which is about her time in The Shelter.

The Shelter was not merely a meeting place for a few academic reactionaries, as some have claimed, Rasmusson says. It was much more complicated than that. There were certainly those who sought to evade the cult of efficiency that, with the help of the Focus Protectors, came to dominate LU. But there were also researchers, persecuted in their homelands, who risked their lives to pursue research and come here, some directly from our own SEZs. When even the government here tightened restrictions on academic freedom, The Shelter became a sort of free zone. We mustn't forget that it emerged during a quite turbulent period for academics, even here in Sweden, Rasmusson explains.

WHEN UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP became aware of The Shelter, in spring 2037, many wanted to shut it down. Others thought that the experimental research environment deserved a chance; after all, the research results spoke for themselves. In January 2038, nine years after the first researchers occupied this abandoned office space in the old LTH premises, a controversial decision was made to grant The Shelter special research funding.

"Many feared that we would become too 'institutionalised' and abandon our core values. Money always brings greater pressure for results and control. Divisions and internal conflicts started to flare up, and

many finally chose to leave The Shelter."

The space was recently forced to close after a regular health and environmental inspection. But The Shelter's ideas and working methods live on in different places around LU.

"Our idea was never to sit down here forever," says Rasmusson, gesturing at the dusty, darkened offices. "We wanted to challenge the research management, and to focus on creativity and critical thinking. I hope that we inspired others to dare to think for themselves, challenge norms, and go their own way."

As for Rasmusson, she will once more head out in the field, far from academia this time, to latitudes significantly further south.

BIRGITTA HENRIKSDOTTER

THE LAMPERT AWARD

The Lampert Award was established in 2030 in memory of Eugene Lampert, author of *Studies in Rebellion* (1957). To date, the prize has been awarded to shorter articles and audio papers. *The Eel Strategy: Quiet Resistance in Chaotic Times* is the first non-intelligence-augmented specialised study in book form to receive the prize.

AI researcher Truong Nguyen has received one of the largest grants in the history of Lund University for further development of his FIA technology. Is he building a completely new type of human-machine hybrid?

Research at the top!

Tanned and smiling, Dr Truong Nguyen receives me as I step out of the elevator on the top office floor of The Helix, the research skyscraper which stands like an exclamation mark in the middle of Lund's Science Village. The view behind him is striking: the ecopark undulates in late summer green. Further away, the city's old centre shines in the sun.

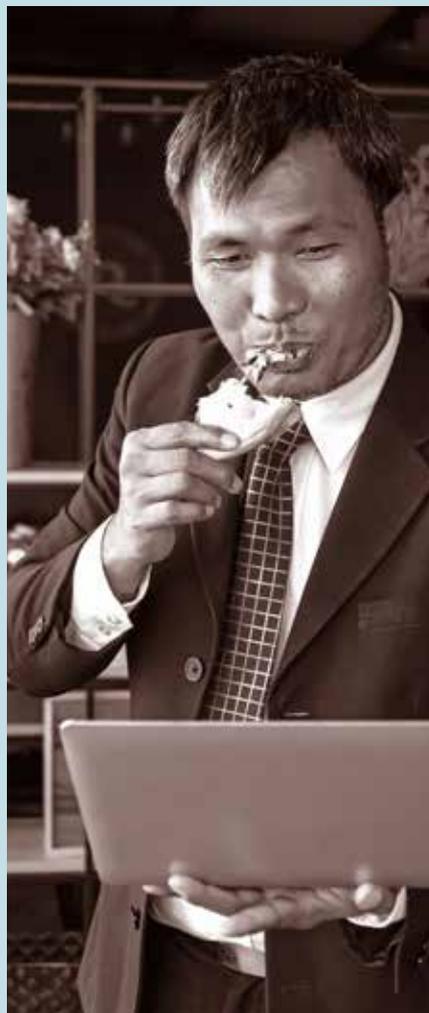
"Welcome! Do you like pizza? I know a place that does non-synthetics, real cheese. You know, from cows. But don't tell the others here, I could be accused of favouring our competitors...."

The door to his study slides open, and I see a table and two chairs unfolding. The walls are covered in sober yet beautiful textiles—woven from naturally extruded hemp fibre composites, Nguyen explains, designed to dampen the harsh acoustics of the recycled concrete and fly ash floor. Somehow the pizza is already on the table.

NGUYEN SWEEPS his hand past his ear with an unconventional gesture, and I notice a small device nestled there. "My Asawa will be listening in, I hope you don't mind," he explains, in answer to my questioning gaze.

"They are a trusted advisor, a construct containing the collective wisdom of several generations of relatives. I call them my Random Ancestral Memory. I built them myself, you know."

He is noticeably proud of his work, and



Research is hungry work! Dr Truong Nguyen stays productive by lunching while checking his project's progress.

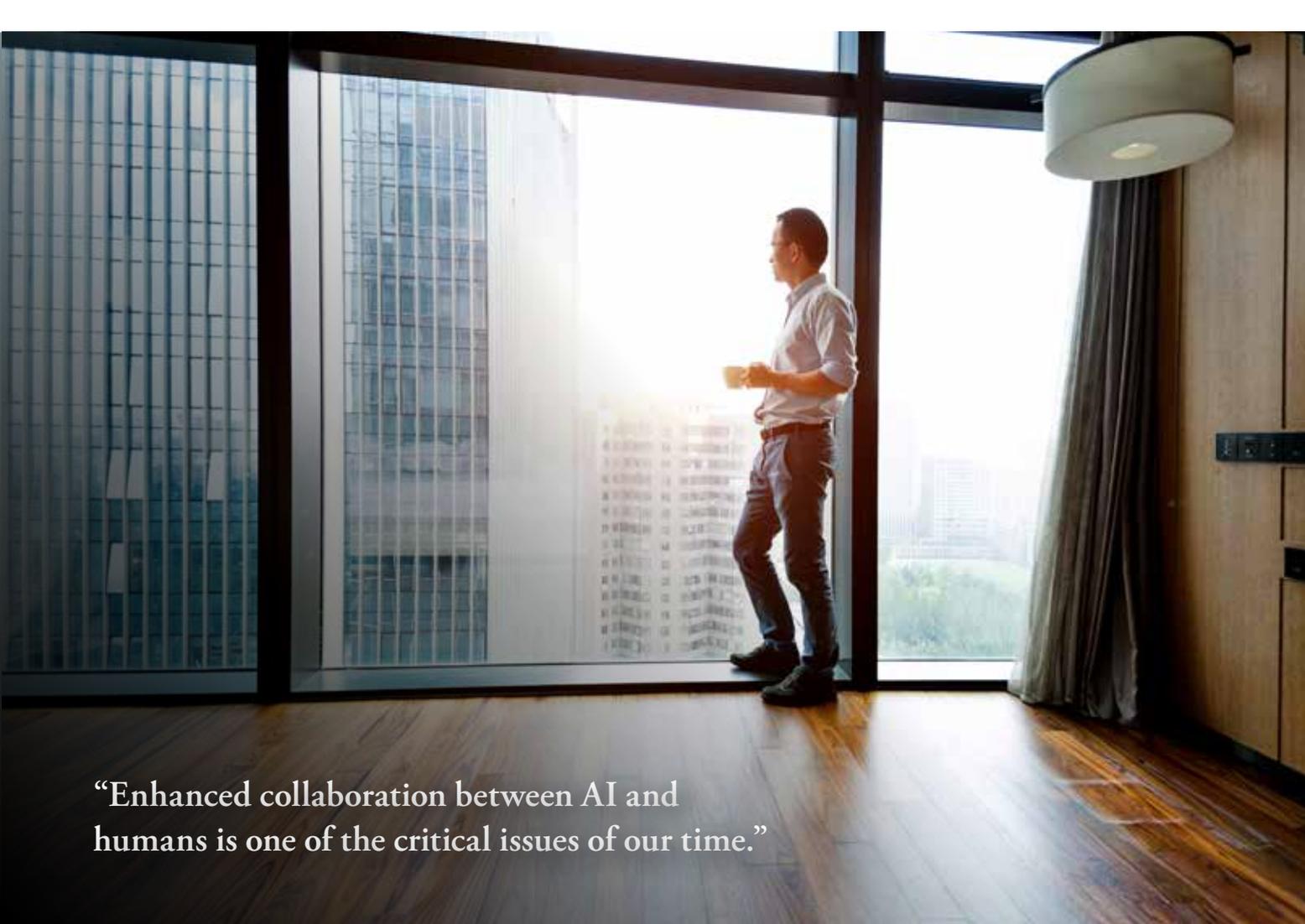
has reason to be. The exact amount remains undisclosed, but the grant that brought to the top floor of The Helix is rumoured to be record-breaking. His work on FIA (Flexible Intelligence Augmentation, an AI-aided mode of community-organisation—Ed.) is world-renowned. I'm curious to know how he got here.

You have come a long way from your beginnings in a SEZ, to the top floor of The Helix. What started you on this path?

"For me it started with our community needing more efficient ways to self-organise. Workers in the SEZ (Special Educational Zone—Ed.) were not being utilised productively. I wanted to create more opportunities for young researchers and knowledge workers at all levels by implementing more context-aware inclusivity and diversity in the task-delegation algorithms that were in use at the time... to really give people the opportunity to perform tasks at their maximum ability. Back then, the work was a lot more hands-on for me. Now that I run the networks, I have a lot of assistants. I sometimes miss the fun of the early days."

Since you came to Sweden as a post-doc, your career has been spectacular. Do you have any tips for young researchers?

"Play the game! I found it pays to be concentrated and pragmatic about your goals."



“Enhanced collaboration between AI and humans is one of the critical issues of our time.”

Truong Nguyen has stunning views from the top floor of The Helix research skyscraper. Beyond the neighboring buildings, the eco-park in Science Village can be seen.

I came up through the LU-Helix Focus Academy program, maximizing the utilisation of my productive hours by merging the inputs from the Focus Protectors with the guidance of my Asawa. Don't fight the system, make it work for you. And of course, hustle hard!”

Your technology has evolved since its first deployment for resource management in SEZs, and was recently applied here in the coordination of community-driven landscape restoration efforts. What goal is the new funding intended to achieve?

Nguyen hesitates. I catch his eyes darting sideways while a slight buzzing emanates from his earring. He takes a breath and smiles confidently before answering.

“Ultimately, my research is about creating better conditions for humanity as a whole. FIA has helped thousands of people realise their potential and raise themselves out of poverty, just as I once did. Enhanced collaboration between AI and humans is one of the critical issues of our time. Everyone should have the opportunities I had to make it in the SEZ. As a matter of fact, we might see the whole world as a SEZ!”

An inspiring vision! It seems these systems could help a lot of people. When can we expect to see the results of the research this grant is funding?

“I can't really comment, due to confidentiality clauses as a condition of our funding. But of course, all results of this re-

search will all be open-sourced in due time. Our very generous funders have allowed for the full codebase, documentation and results to be released to the public domain in 2051.”

Nguyen grins broadly before biting into his pizza and mumbling, gesturing with his free hand in what I assume to be a conversation with his 'Asawa'. He gives me an apologetic look before his eyes drift off, and I understand that our conversation is coming to an end. I promise to send the article to his Asawa for review as previously agreed, and take my leave. Dr Nguyen remains something of an enigma, but perhaps his success speaks on his behalf.

YAMES YOLANDA

Hungry LUers will soon be able to buy lunch from a food-bike outfitted with a biochar grill. The founder of this three-wheeled kitchen is sociologist Kalkot Garae of Vanuatu.



Kalkot Garae with this year's third harvest from the main greenhouse.

Sociologist honours homeland food

The food-bike's most special feature is its menu: all offerings include kava roots from the greenhouse in the Paradis quarter. Kava was a food staple in the now-submerged South Pacific island of Vanuatu, and can be prepared au gratin, or otherwise much like potato.

Kalkot Garae's aim is to honour their home country. At the same time, they wish to increase customers' awareness of the world's ongoing climate change and refugee crises. Other foodie climate-change refugees have joined the effort.

GARAE'S RESEARCH deals with the engagement of trans-gender individuals in climate-change efforts, inter alia, investigating whether they were more active during the 00s, but also less visible than cis-gender activists. The issue is personal for Garae, who identifies as trans-gender.

"Prejudice against trans-gender people has almost disappeared. However, as a non-white climate-change refugee, I have encountered racism, even at LU. There are definitely those who think that we were given an unfair fast track to research and teaching positions, but that is hardly the case".

Garae was the recipient of an International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation PhD position for climate-change refugees, but most

other refugees' intent on higher education were never admitted to European universities. They were forced to remain in Special Education Zones (SEZs), where those who lack opportunities in their homeland can pursue advanced degrees.

THE CONCEPT of the SEZs was hotly contested from the start: are they really intended to broaden access to the world of international higher education? Or are they just a way to keep immigrants out of rich Western nations? What role is played by the private firms backing the SEZs, including the global furniture chain that donated ready-to-assemble campus environments?

"Unfortunately, our worst fears were pretty much confirmed. Today, the SEZs have many problems: not enough teachers, outdated course materials, students are assigned busy-work and used as test subjects for flexible intelligence augmentation research," says Garae.

But Garae isn't totally against the idea of LU 'satellites' abroad. Under different circumstances, they could increase academic diversity. However, that would require not only resources, but also dialogue with local universities, politicians, and non-profits.

"It has to be real cooperation, in which local communities and potential students

get to customise education and research programmes according to their own aims and knowledge outlooks. The world has seen too many well-intentioned philanthropists starting schools in the global 'South' without enough local awareness", Garae argues.

SUCH EXTENSIVE COOPERATION with local communities should hopefully be easier to achieve within the agorae, LU's new interdisciplinary networks. These projects will be influenced by new forms of research and education, in which the university does not manage the agenda from the start.

"The university has to become a more active part of its surroundings in our chaotic times. We must dismantle once and for all the infamous ivory tower!"

INGRID HOLMDAHL

KALKOT GARAE

WHO: A researcher in education science, and guest researcher at LU's Agora for Community Engagement and Inclusivity

WHERE: Lives with flatmates in Linero

WHAT: Climate-change activism, LGBTQIA issues

FAVORITE FOOD: Anything with kava root

Imaginative guesses about the future is not for LU!

“FUTURE GUESSES” Where is LU headed? During more than twenty years as a researcher at LU, I’ve asked myself this question many times, but after a bewildering experience a few weeks ago it has become even more urgent.

That experience was my attending a so-called ‘fantasy workshop’, where members of LU’s new ‘fantasy faculty’ participated together with individuals from the municipal government, businesses, and regional organisations. The aim was to conjecture about how LU, and the world, would look in 2080.

Of course, a university should take the long view—LU, in fact, turns 375 this year—but this should not obscure obligations nearer to hand. And discussions about the future should not take the form of wild fantasies

which, to use an old expression, seem like a load of hogwash.

With concern, I have watched as the University granted more space and money in recent years to these types of vague, wishy-washy cooperative arrangements, and to rose-coloured fantasies of an improbable future. Meanwhile, of course, the available space for traditional, reproducible, fact-based research shrinks and shrinks.

Yet traditional research is needed now more than ever. LU must continue to conduct research into new forms of energy and energy transfer, and medicines (like those that I research), which are needed for the many new ailments spreading on our warming planet. Social scientists may need to investigate cultural clashes in the wake of waves of refugees.



Where is LU headed? Dan Hume asks.

Given this situation, LU should not devote time to politically correct stunts, like insisting upon non-gendered pronouns, fantasising about the state of the world in 2080, and seeking cooperation with actors beyond the University for the sake of appearance, rather than to get real results.

Dismissing the new ‘fantasy faculty’ is, sadly, impossible, so I cannot hope to do so with this contribution. But I do hope that LU continues no further on this dead-end road towards an intellectual abyss, and instead takes care to prioritise the research and teaching work that should be the principal tasks of the entire University.

DAN HUME

PROFESSOR IN BIG DATA IN MEDICINE

ANSWER: The idea of the future guides today’s decisions

“FUTURE GUESSES” Thank you, Pr. Hume, for your contribution. Here are some answers and comments.

Lund’s Agora for Making Futures, which organised the workshop you visited, does not deal with ‘conjecture,’ but rather with making futures—that is, investigating different possible futures. The aim is to look at all possible alternatives, and to show how, together, we shape the future. Our expectations about 2080 have an impact on decisions made now, and vice versa—decisions we make today shape our tomorrow.

Pr. Hume refers to ‘rose-coloured fantasies.’ I counter that all visions of the future are based on values and norms. An objective prognosis of present trends is also an expression of values, since one thereby

chooses not to question present circumstances, nor whose visions of the future they are based on, nor whom they serve. Pr. Hume surely recalls how the tech industry, throughout the 2020s, pushed for a Big Data future, which was not necessarily in the interests of all, even as they increased our dependence on an increasingly uncertain energy and resource supply. That is why it’s so important that many voices are heard, especially the ‘quiet’ voices that are so often neglected in cooperative undertakings. That is something that we at the Agora put a lot of effort into ensuring, even though it takes a lot of time.

Speaking of time, we are also painfully aware of the need to look beyond the three- to five-year terms of prognoses and politici-

ans. The ecological and humanitarian challenges that we continue to meet require not just small adjustments, but a profound shift unprecedented in modern society.

Pr. Hume mentions new forms of energy, diseases, and refugee waves as discreet issues, but these phenomena are in fact deeply intertwined. Making futures helps us to identify underlying interrelations, and to work between and even across disciplines. This is necessary in our uncertain times, as is more traditional research, conducted in a single subject, as Pr. Hume advocates. My belief is that LU is strong enough, and smart enough, to work *ad utrumque*, with both.

PAUL FOX

HEAD OF AGORA FOR MAKING FUTURES (AMF)

Student-driven pedagogy challenges regulations

'Active Learning' is a ground-breaking teaching method, a new version of which has returned to Lund University. These popular courses make students into co-teachers. The first graduating class of active learning students, who will receive their diplomas despite studying completely without a curriculum, is soon to arrive.

This well-received teaching method started to pick up speed at Lund towards the end of the 2020s, but it dates back even further. Active learning, in its new form, has drawn widespread acclaim for its more intensive focus on increasing students' independence and creativity, as well as for its bottom-up design. Enrolment draws record numbers of students—even though the courses, until now, have not offered official credits.

The active learning method is premised

on the fundamental value of considering students as co-teachers, co-researchers, and fellow travellers. During the different knowledge journeys that make up the courses, teaching is carried out in hybrid form.

THE FOUNDER of this initiative is Inspiration Journey, member of the faculty of Planetary Studies. Yet when LUM arrives for a planned interview with this maverick, no fewer than three individuals introduce themselves as Inspiration Journey! Asked who provided the original impetus for the project, the oldest of the bunch answers, with a big smile:

"That's me. But Journey is bigger than any of us individually," they add.

The fact is, until now, Inspiration Journey has never been one and the same person in public. For example, a new person will appear as Inspiration Journey at Etikhuset whenever IJ is invited to lecture about teaching projects and insights derived from their work.

"We all contribute. Many have shared the journey, and we are just temporary participants," says one of the other two.

With enthusiasm, they describe how it all began, a few years ago. First came the student protests, the hopelessness, and the empty lecture halls. Then came the pink flyers and subsequently the travel agencies that popped up all over Lund. These were no normal travel agencies, but rather small groups of teachers and students, calling themselves The Wayfinders. They worked together to create ground-breaking knowledge that could be re-integrated into the Journey.

"A particular challenge has been a shortage of reliable technology," says Inspiration Journey #3.

THE KNOWLEDGE JOURNEYS are undertaken both digitally and in-person in any given course, depending on students' needs.

Inspiration Journey took the initiative for the popular Active Learning courses, but it is unclear who is hiding behind the name. LUM has interviewed three people who all introduced themselves as Inspiration Journey.



new names.

Attendance via hologram, as an alternative to digital participation or virtual reality, is currently under development, but powerful servers are needed. That's a problem for students from nations struck by recurring power outages and cyber-attacks, limiting their ability to participate fully in the journeys.

INSPIRATION JOURNEY'S OPERATIONS were previously grassroots-based, but since last year they have been incorporated into the institution's official hierarchy with a spot in the Experimental Pedagogics Agora. Thus, this fall's matriculating class will be the first to receive official credit towards graduation for Inspiration Journey classes.

The University leadership's approval of Inspiration Journey comes as a much-desired affirmation of their work, but it does entail certain challenges. Critical voices have been raised regarding the continuing lack of clarity about who or what is ultimately behind the name, as well as the difficulty of knowing whom to hold responsible for the quality of the courses offered.

THIS CRITICISM is grounded in worries about what might happen to the University's credibility and authority when students no longer follow clear and established curricula. Not that Inspiration Journey themselves see this as a problem. In their opinion, what matters is the result of the education they provide.

"Who learns most and best? Us, or students in traditional courses?"

Inspiration Journey #3 poses the question rhetorically. The other two nod in agreement and explain that knowledge acquisition does not have a definite beginning and end, but is rather a continuously ongoing process.

"During my Journey, for example, we got to study fungal computers, we cooperated on open source AI projects, and we even helped to expose a foreign dictator," says Inspiration Journey #2.

"Show us a traditional course that offers students possibilities like that," adds Inspiration Journey #1.

YODA BETULA

Meet the new EnDAO Open Science Citizens in Residence!

FREDERIK BRÜM

Desktop bioengineer Frederik Brüm has worked extensively with drone pilots involved in environmental mapping efforts documenting nootropics use, abuse and addiction. He will be working in collaboration with LU scientists to formalise and publish the findings from his community-based research on the influences of microdosing cognitive enhancers regarding the long-term mental health of these precarious remote workers.

"We have found that these

enhancements not only allow the pilots to better project themselves into their flight immersion, the "freedom of mind" they describe also seems to be manifesting in the development of greater empathetic capacity for life in the environments they are interacting with", says Brüm.



Fredrik Brüm.

NASSIM OLSEN

Regenerative urban horticulturist Nassim Olsen will be receiving support for his seed-saving and assisted succession/migration program, which has been monitoring the development state of various community forests and plantations throughout Lund, tending to their density and propagating plants best suited to the various microclimates where locally needed.

"Many species we used to take for granted are having trouble surviving

in our current climate, and new ecological niches are constantly opening and evolving throughout the city. Our goal is not only to fill these niches, but to anticipate and support them with new plant life that will benefit all participants in these ecosystems", says Olsen.



Nassim Olsen.

MAXI STAHLBOOT

Underground economist Maxi Stahlboot will be given support to complete their oral history on the informal economies of the former Science Village. The calm and security the area was known for in the late 2020's hid a roaring trade in travel credits, food resources, exotic fruit

and spices all making their way through informal supply chains and crypto networks.



Maxi Stahlboot.

The EnDAO Open Science Trust is a stakepool endowment fund granting annual stipends for citizen researchers to assist them in having their work written into paper-chain. The funds are redeemable in \$OSCT, a stable credit on open markets.

Hello Lois K Gold...

... climate-change historian from the Malmö Art and Environment Centre. Your play, *Emergency Actions for Emergency Times*, was just accepted for publication by the renowned journal, *Environmental Humanities*. Congrats!



At the time of the conference, a meme began to circulate, replacing the sword with a pair of bolt cutters to symbolize activism instead of war.

What is your play about?

"It's about the development of climate-change activism during the last quarter century. It starts with the Fridays for Future campaign and prior activism by climate-change researchers, then going into the subsequent shift."

What caused the shift?

"During the 2020s universities had to endure tough criticism, especially from the political right. Many considered that researchers had a left-wing bias, and ignored them for that reason. This created a widespread sense of resignation among researchers, and even a fear of carrying out critical research and becoming politically engaged. There was also a growing divide between those who sought to solve the climate-change crisis using new technologies, and those who considered deeper societal changes necessary."

Yet, today, the international organisation *Academactivists for the Future* is hardly controversial. When did the pendulum swing back?

"An important milestone came in 2032, with the conference 'From Citations to Civil Actions'. As climate-related catastrophes worsened and increased, frustration grew among researchers. Many considered that there was no longer enough time to wait until practical use was made of their results, via the usual avenues of reports and articles."

What happened at the conference?

"The limits of activism were discussed. How far might one go in an attempt to make a difference, and what happens when the law and ethical considerations are at odds? For example, when legislation favours those working to worsen the effects of climate change, despite devastating consequences. The old university motto, *Ad utrumque paratus*, got dusted off..."

What was the result of this discussion?

"Most importantly, research regulations were expanded to include activism as a way to enable cooperation between academia and society at large. Today, activism is con-

sidered in hiring decisions. Researchers go on sabbatical in order to work for activist organisations, or in politics."

How did criticism of academic activism look during the period you studied?

"Where many once tried to distinguish between research and activism, in the 2020s, more and more people considered activism as a way to spread knowledge in society, a part of science outreach. Now, you have an ongoing and often contentious debate among different branches of academic activists, those advocating sabotage of environmentally dangerous property, and those advocating non-violence or civil disobedience, for example."

When does your play have its debut, and who do you think will attend?

"The play's run at the University starts 18 November, at Etikhuset. I hope, and believe, that it will attract a broad audience. The development of academic activism concerns the general public, too."

AISHA PEREZ ANDERSSON

LU375—Philosophy and Methodology

1. Introduction

Thanks for picking up this special future issue of Lund University Magazine, LUM. We hope you've enjoyed reading it as much as we've enjoyed making it.

Everything in this magazine is fictional—but that doesn't mean it's totally made up! All of the characters, situations and ideas were developed from a base of knowledge and research, in collaboration with 62 participants from across LU in a series of 9 workshops, representing over 18 hours of imaginative exploration in total.

Some major themes emerged which we felt were relevant to not only LU, but to higher education and research (HE&R hereafter) across Sweden, and the world: academic freedom; universities' contribution to society; ethical considerations in research; new forms of student-led education and internationalisation; knowledge authorisation.

But LU375 is not just "about" the university, just as a science fiction movie is not simply "about" its protagonist. HE&R is linked to the world beyond its walls, and it studies that world even as it works within it. HE&R influences the world, certainly—or so we hope, at least—but in turn it is influenced by the world, as a source of new ideas, influences and impetus for change.

As such, LU375 is a sort of science fiction—albeit a science fiction whose imaginings are rooted in quality research. But it is not an act of prediction! What you find here is *not the future of LU, but one possible future of LU*—one of many. It is an exploration, a provocation—the first proposition in a conversation.

The magazine articles should do the work of making you think without further explanation. But you might like to know how we went about making them, and why.

2. Past futures: precedent and methodology

After many years of working with futures across a variety of disciplines, we have developed a rubric for our approach: the work of social futuring requires that we **concretise** changing circumstances, **situate** them in the locations and lives that they will affect, and **democratise** the exploration of possibilities. These principles are less a sequence of steps to work through than a set of stars to navigate by.

Fortunately, we didn't have to start from scratch. All three of our aims find expression (in varying degrees) in such fields as design fiction (Auger 2013), narrative prototyping (Raven 2017), transition design (Wangel et al. 2019), placemaking (Courage 2020), and many more. As part of the "speculative turn" in the social sciences (Raven & Stripple 2020), a growing clade of scholars and artists are retooling inductive futuring with the latest theories and techniques. We are proud to be a small part of this movement.

2a. Concretise

To concretise long-term changes, such as the effects of global warming and/or sociotechnical change, is to take them out of the abstract.

Futures reports—such as the IPCC's publications, or the planning documents of governing bodies and corporations—tend toward the abstract. This is partly due to epistemology: the presumed objectivity of the hard sciences, or the top-down perspectives of urban planning, business management or economics. It is also due to necessity: such reports are aimed at decision-makers, and must therefore speak the language of facts, trends and statistics. Ironically, this means that the challenges of long-term change are converted into material used to justify short-term decisions.

That's not to say that such reports aren't necessary or useful; nor is it to pretend that electoral and business cycles are not constraints upon futuring. But it is to say that it is hard to relate to such representations of futurity for those who are not attuned to their rhetoric. The ability to think in the abstract results from a combination of education, experience, and circumstances where one's capacity for planning is not entirely consumed by the necessities of day-to-day life.

Put more plainly: futuring is an elite skill, for an elite audience. So how might we open up futurity to non-elite audiences? How to render abstract change as relatable to those who have neither the time or training to parse hockey-sticks or Laffer curves?

The answer is to use the data differently. As Curry (2021) has shown, a distinction can be made between the extrapolative and abstract approach to futuring (the "deductive school"), and a more imaginative approach (the "inductive school"). The focus of the latter upon narrative over numbers allows the imagination to work at a human scale, and escape the constraints of continuity.

It reduces the influence of trends, an over-reliance on which can serve to reinforce “business as usual” choices.

However, any such futuring must still be grounded in scientific knowledge. The difference is that, rather than presenting those futures in the abstract, they are instead *translated* (see e.g. Wang et al. 2019) into stories: the implications of change are presented through the subjective perception of (imagined) people.

2b. Situate

Situatedness is a challenging concept to simplify, because at its heart is a rejection of simplification. In her essay “Situated Knowledges” (1988), Donna Haraway describes the traditional scientific understanding of objectivity as a sort of “god trick”, an assumption that the world can be studied from a position which is somehow exterior to (and thus not affected by) that which it studies. As an alternative, Haraway proposes “situated knowledges”, which are achieved (in part) through researchers (and their sources) being clear about their own positions and perspectives, both within the work and without. Knowledges thus generated are rooted in time and space, and their objectivity is based on this connectedness.

In practical terms, Haraway’s advice means that individuals, organizations and communities should not be seen as isolated entities; rather, we should always trace and follow the ways in which they are anchored and embedded in different contexts, from the local to the global. LU consists of people and things that are connected to many other people, things, places and institutions: we therefore attempt to intertwine concrete individual experiences with the global circumstances that give them form and content.

The result is a future LU in which contradictions and tensions persist, albeit in changed configurations. This stands in deliberate distinction to the impulse of techno-utopian futuring, in which “innovation” delivers one-size-fits-all “solutions”. This commitment to tension is summed up in a more recent Harawayian injunction, to always “stay with the trouble” (2016). Working with the (imagined) community of a future LU has allowed us to do exactly that—albeit within the limits and contradictions of our own situation as researchers.

2c. Democratise

The directive to democratise comes from a belief that any future of a community should also be a future *by* that community, to the greatest extent practicable; hence our decision to explore LU’s future in collaboration with staff and students (for more on the process through which this was achieved, see section 3 below).

In that context, LU375 represents a new methodology, rooted in a further commitment to democratisation. It is traditional to do some amount of the worldbuilding in advance of the participant contributions: the future is thus imagined from the top downwards. But having chosen to use the familiar format of LUM, we needed to work with its particular affordances: LUM is “about” LU, but the articles are about people, about characters. So, what if we started with the creation of characters, and allowed their world to emerge organically from their concerns and interests?

This meant relinquishing the assumption that we were any better qualified to imagine the future context of LU than any other of its staff. This was challenging in terms of method, and also in terms of self-conception: the academic identity is rooted in the assumption of expertise, and it is difficult to give up that authority, even temporarily. Difficult, but increasingly necessary... and perhaps also healthy, for us and our communities.

This leads to a political-theoretical justification for our approach. Narratives of futurity tend to depict the people of the future as its objects (Raven & Strippel 2020): the future simply *happens* to them, or worse, is *done* to them. By focussing instead on approaches in which plural futures are explored through the subjective personalities of (imagined) individuals, and by informing those imagined individuals with the experiences and knowledges of actually-existing individuals, such an approach to futuring might thereby reinstate agency over and within futures to individuals: people are thus no longer objects of the future, but its subjects.

3. Virtual workshopping: methods and mechanics

The workshops were designed as a participatory process through which to create the raw materials for the articles in this magazine. We needed a catalogue of characters that would inhabit the world of LUM in 2041, and to map out the world they lived in, and the events (and the systemic consequences) that shaped their situation.

The workshop environment had to enable a range of participants from students to deans to feel comfortable expressing unconventional ideas beyond the status quo, radical alternatives to the future-as-usual, without the ranks and statuses of the present interfering. Above all, it needed to be *fun*.

Thus we designed and facilitated a series of sessions, with each workshop a self-contained experience based on a repeatable template, set within an overarching structure that allowed us to iterate the design and re-focus our thematic lens between sessions. The participant experience consisted of a pre-workshop

assignment, an introduction, a character-creation phase and, finally, a role-played committee discussion.

We adapted the Polak game (Hayward & Candy 2017) as a tool to ease everyone into thinking about the future of the university before the workshops started. Participants were asked beforehand to think of an object representing existing or potential issues related to the future of the university, and place them in the shared workspace; this allowed everyone to speak up and voice at least one concern. In addition, the objects and concerns collected across the series helped to inform our choices of theme for subsequent sessions, and (eventually) also for the magazine articles.

Then the real work began! In the first half of the session participants were tasked with building a fictional character: someone they might imagine to be working in the university in 10–15 years time, familiar enough for their motivations to be relatable, but different enough that considering those motivations would provoke a perspective slightly different to the participant's own. This process involved assigning each participant a headshot image (generated by an online tool), and then having them draw virtual 'cards' to assign themselves a field of study, and an issue which 'kept them up at night'; these fields and issues were sourced from a combination of desk research, education futures literature, and an anonymous survey of career experiences sent to LU staff. Through a process of answering stock questions about their character—some serious, some banal—participants were encouraged to put some flesh on their bones.

Having created their characters individually, we next brought participants forward into the collective experience of a shared future. This crossing of the "experiential gulf" (Candy & Dunagan 2017) was performed through a narrated scenario which introduced some boundary conditions of the future world, its current situation and recent past. This future featured various challenges and tensions, and in each session the participants—split into two working groups—took on the roles of their characters, who in turn were tasked with taking part in a committee convened in order to discuss a particular issue.

Each 'committee' was 'chaired' by a facilitator, to nudge the discussion along and provide background details on the world as required. Questions to be asked and angles to explore were prepared in advance, so as to provide scaffolding for these conversations. Each group had two researchers performing live note-taking during the discussions, capturing as much of the discussion as possible.

After each session researchers and observers conducted a post-workshop, noting themes and comments that stood out, and discussing directions for the next iteration. Between sessions, the working boards were refreshed, character creation sheets

refined, and the scenario and questions updated to steer the following discussions into new territories. Through this iterative process we refined our method to a point where we could achieve considerable depth and texture in our imagined futures.

These workshops were very demanding of the participants: it is no small feat to create and inhabit an imagined personality within the space of two hours, especially while working with unfamiliar tools in a screen-mediated environment. Such forms of play always come more easily to some than to others, but we would note that everyone rose to the challenge! Speculative participatory sessions such as these never cease to surprise both facilitators and participants with the directions that the characters take—and indeed, this is exactly the power of an inductive approach.

Participants may recognise elements of characters they created within the articles in the magazine, but these are of course composites: the result of multiple rounds of synthesis, folding over of the emergent themes, and combining elements from various workshops into the writing process, undertaken in collaboration with LUM staff writers. While it behoves us to take responsibility for any failure of the project, we would emphasise that responsibility for its successes must be shared with the participants, writers and editors who shared their time and creativity with us throughout the process.

4. New horizons: LU375 in the futures landscape

When LU's Vice-Chancellor initiated LU Futura (the organisation that supported this project) in 2017, he spoke of a 'turbulent world', characterized by more rapid changes than ever before. LU Futura's mission was to position LU as the 'engine room' for formulating socially relevant questions, and to initiate transboundary dialogues around them. As an experiment in organisational form for futuring, LU Futura has worked on many different themes—but the futures of HE&R, and thus of LU, have been central.

Visions of the future of universities are everywhere: in the government's recent research bill; in international benchmarking and ranking tools; in research quality assessments; in the Dean's monthly letter. These visions, by necessity, focus on quantitative measures and statistical trends. Notable by their absence are questions relating to values and lived experience: what kind of university is LU, and what should it strive to be? Why, and how, should we prioritise one institutional form or pedagogical practice over another? How can LU researchers, departments, and faculties stay at the leading edge? What kinds of organisational spaces are required to address questions in new ways?

There is an experiential gulf between the everyday practices of teaching, research and outreach, and the top-down futures of

policy and strategy: the cool abstractions of plans and scenarios produce, unintentionally, a sense of exclusivity. LU375 attempts to address that gulf by finding ways to explore institutional futures that are compelling, and provide a space for people to contribute their own stories, skills and experience. It is not intended to provide answers or solutions, nor to predict what will come to pass. Rather, it is intended to stimulate better questions, and open up their answering to the whole LU community.

We hope you have enjoyed this encounter with a possible future, and we look forward to hearing about your own.

5. Colophon: credits and thank yous

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