BJØRN FØRDE

THE HOUSE ON THE LAKE

AND OTHER STORIES FROM FURUKOLLEN

FØRDE
FOR DIALOGUE

LIPKESGADE 5B, 1. TH - DK-2100 COPENHAGEN - TEL +45 50 93 53 86
BJF@F4DIALOGUE.DK - WWW.F4DIALOGUE.DK

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WHY THESE STORIES?

I have travelled the world extensively ever since my first study tour to Germany at the age of 14 and my year in the United States with American Field Service in 1966-67. Touring the world in a sense became my job after having studied at the University of Copenhagen. This has also included living with my family in Zimbabwe in the early 1990s and in Botswana in the early 2000s. In Denmark, I managed to live in four different places before I left the home of my parents to study; since then I have lived in houses or apartments five different places in or around Copenhagen.

What struck me one day during the summer of 2017, when I once again spent time in our house *Furukollen* in the village of *Lesjaverk* in *Norway*, was this:

Wherever I have travelled or lived during almost seven decades, for 50 years 'Furukollen' has been my home, a safe haven, a place of permanency, and a territory where the roots of our family continue to be looked after, cared for and refreshed. Before it was 'Furukollen', it was 'Lesjabo' nearby, the cottage built by my grandfather. Therefore, since I was one year old, the village of Lesjaverk has been what I consider my permanent home, although I have never spent more than maximum one month a year in this small spot on our planet.

When you look at the photograph at the beginning of the introduction, you will find *Furukollen* where the rainbow crosses the lake, and *Lesjaverk* is the small collection of houses, some of them white, just north of the rainbow. This is as close as you will actually get to see a photo of the house and the

village in the nine short *Stories from Furukollen* I ended up writing during the summer of 2017 for my website www.f4dialogue.dk.

Let me explain why I decided to write.

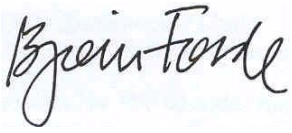
Most of the family and friends that spend time in our house fall in love with the place. The reasons can be different, but my sense is that all of us cherish the special sense of solitude, the opportunity to be together without being distracted, the simplicity of life between the mountains, and the reminder of the forces of nature we need to respect. In a way, you get the feeling that you have escaped from 'civilization', as we normally know it.

Of course, this is not the case. *Lesjaverk* and *Furukollen* are as much part of civilization and globalization as the places where we live on a daily basis. The place actually reminds me of some of the major challenges humanity urgently needs to confront and solve. Climate change is one such almost frightening threat and challenge. How societies can manage to get the elites in the center to live harmoniously with the communities in the periphery is another. The importance of knowing your roots when you live in a globalized world is also an important issue we need to discuss.

The stories were conceived at *Furukollen*, and they play themselves out in the territory of *Lesjaverk*. They are also personal in the sense that they tell stories about how I grew up. However, more than anything, I see the stories as political statements, written at a time when things are unravelling and we need to find new strength to define our place in the world.

I dedicate the stories to the memory of my parents, Ingrid and Hother. They had the foresight to make *Furukollen* a sanctuary for their children, as well as for many friends and relatives who have spent time in the house and enjoyed the precious environment of lakes and mountains surrounding it. Unfortunately, they both died too young, before they could experience their great grandchildren learning and enjoying the very special *Furukollen virus*.

Enjoy the reading!



LIVING ABOVE SEA LEVEL

Decades ago, the wooden building at Lesjaverk train station was a well-functioning train station, with a full time stationmaster, dressed in the Norwegian Railroads official uniform. He would stand on the platform when the train came to a screaming halt, waiting for the doors to be opened by locals returning or tourists arriving, helping the passengers with a firm arm when they jumped off with their luggage.

With his red flag in the left hand and a black whistle in his mouth, the stationmaster was undoubtedly a person of impressive stature, at least seen through the eyes of a small boy, whose Norwegian grandfather was the stationmaster in a larger town further south. When the whistle sounded, the train would slowly get moving, heading further up through the valley, towards the much larger end station, where water and mountains made it impossible to get any further.

When I learned to read, the information on the sign on the front of the building was something I learned to remember, and something I was more than willing to share with my friends back home, who would listen in awe with open mouth and disbelief.

I would tell them that the monumentally large village called *Lesjaverk* was situated exactly 379.89 kilometers from the capital of Oslo, and equally precisely 77.39 kilometers from the city with streetlights and a harbor with big ships coming in through a long inlet – or a *fjord* as we call it - at the end of the valley of Gudbrandsdalen.

However, what was most terrifying to a young boy used to live about two meters above sea level was that the sign stated that you were now standing 633.15 meters above sea level. This was more than three times higher than the highest hill in Denmark. Terrifying!

Since those early days, I have had the privilege to breathe the air at much higher altitudes.

I have done it in the extreme way in *La Paz*, the exceptionally intriguing capital of Bolivia. The city is built in and on the slopes of a cone shaped hole at the altitude of around 5.000 meters, and the airport is on the plateau a bit higher up. I remember feeling dizzy when I departed from the plane on my first visit. I have heard about passengers falling down the stairs, because they could not cope with the thin air.

I have enjoyed it at the cliff-hanging monastery *Tigers Nest* in Bhutan, at more than 2.000 meters. Walking up through the forest on the winding path, you feel dizzy from the beautiful and impossible sight of a structure clinging to the side of a steep mountain. How is this possible?

Still, whenever I arrive in *Lesjaverk* and look at the sign on the train station building, now painted a different color than when I first saw it, and with the name sign renovated several times, I get the feeling that 633.15 meters above sea level is without question the most astonishing and miraculous feature of nature I have ever experienced.

I know very well that this is not the case, but I think we all have such examples of experiences that continue to surprise us.

TOO MUCH OR TOO LITTLE SNOW?

Having absorbed the well-known information about distances and sea levels, standing with my back towards the lake and the mountains on the other side of the lake, I would turn around and quickly register and calculate the amount and areas of snow on the top of the mountains. I would investigate the situation right here and now, and compare it with last year and with the month of the year. Even as a small boy, I knew instinctively that there would normally be more snow in June than in July, because the summer and the sun needed time to melt the snow; there would definitely be much more in June than in August, when the snow closest to the top would have almost melted.

Back in the 50s and 60s, this knowledge about too much or too little snow did not reflect an understanding of the perils of climate change, which I remember not even my well-educated parents had a clue about.

My primary interest was how much water there would be in the lake [covering the whole of the sandy beach in front of the house or not], and how cold the water would be [over or below 12 degrees Celsius]. This had profound consequences for my wish to swim [I hated swimming in cold water and still do], and it gave us a hunch about the fishing situation [the belief was that with

very cold water, the trout would tend to move towards the surface, which is nice when fishing with flies].

Weather is the source of much speculation and debate all over the world, including here in *Lesjaverk*. This is how it should be. Weather influences our daily life. It also affects our future.

Therefore, I believe that up here, like in villages all over the world, people spend a lot of time talking about the weather, more than they speak about politics. Although in this particular case, the founder and former leader of the Norwegian *Progress* Party [from my point of view, however, there is absolutely nothing *progressive* about the party, but this is the way words are used and misused in politics] is married to a girl from Lesjaverk, so maybe politics is equally important as the weather when people meet. Increasingly, the speculation and debate about weather – and politics - includes the impact from climate change dynamics. The reality of too little or too much snow is really also about money and livelihoods.

This can be observed around 20 kilometers further up the valley, at the skiing resort called Bjorli. The place offers great alpine options, as well as different colors [indicating levels of length and steepness] of cross-country tracks [the only type I indulge in]. The area has several hotels and hundreds of wooden cabins, some used as private homes and some primarily being rented out.

Investments in such recreational places are based on a simple assumption: Snow will fall in reasonable and necessary amounts, preferably around Easter vacation in particular. Looking into the future, this no longer seems to be as safe a bet as it used to be.

I wonder if I will still be active in the cross-country tracks when things have changed dramatically.

THE HOUSE ON THE LAKE

This summer 50 years ago, my parents bought a two story wooden guesthouse called *Furukollen*, located close to the railroad tracks and the main road running through the valley. For half a century, this house has been my beloved vacation home.

However, the *House on the Lake* - also called *Lesjabo* - is still the cottage I associate with summer and winter vacations in Norway. The first thing I do after arriving, irrespective of time of day and weather conditions, is to walk down to the lake and look out over the water. My favorite spot for this ritual is the stump left of the huge pine tree that once upon a time stood tall directly in front of the house. This is where you see me sitting in the photo taken in 1951, when I was two years old.

Since then, the house has been renovated and modernized several times. Most dramatically for me, it has been painted black. I loved the natural style of the thick wooden and slightly rough and rounded planks, and I tease my relatives that changing the color amounts to treason against family and tradition.

The house now belongs to the family of my Norwegian cousins. Emotionally, I consider myself a co-owner, because this is where I acquired or learned my Norwegian genes.

I learned the *language* by playing with my now deceased cousins [they were twins, a boy and a girl] in the forest and on the lake during the summers. As a child, you could not ask for a better environment to grow up in.

I learned to *smoke* by rolling the bark from old birch trees into something resembling a cigarette. As far as I remember, we never got real sick, but I do remember coughing a lot.

I learned to *fish* by watching and listening carefully to fathers, grandfathers, uncles and local friends of the family. Back then, there were more fish than today, and I remember the fish as being much bigger than today.

I learned to *respect* the dangers of the mountains from listening to my grandfather, when he explained how you should behave when trekking through forests and valleys.

I practiced how to *show off* with my brother on the beach by the house, where we performed [brother Stig in particular, and with style indeed] gymnastics of all kinds. This was our way of letting the villagers know [they had to buy a ticket to get to see us] that the two Danes were capable of things Norwegians could not even dream about.

My grandfather's house *Lesjabo* and our present house *Furukollen* were among the relatively few houses along the lake in the 1950s. They were different in style, but both are traditional and Norwegian in architecture. This is not always the case with some of the cottages, houses and mansions built in the area over the last 15 years.

A summerhouse or mountain cottage used to be a construction smaller than what you had at home. It should also be a bit simpler, if not outright 'primitive'. This is no longer the case. The new cottages are in some cases extensions of the house at home, and with a click on the iPhone, you turn on the heat and get the Jacuzzi ready for your arrival hours later.

In this sense, the same ‘modernization virus’ as the rest of the world is struggling with has infected development in *Lesjaverk*.

REFLECTIONS FROM A VILLAGER

Rain drops fell gently and silently on the dark and mirror-like surface of the lake, while I was standing close to the stony shoreline, looking across to a small group of birch trees decorated with fresh green leaves on the opposite side of the lake. Suddenly I heard soft steps coming up from behind, and when the person stopped next to me, I saw that it was one of the slightly less than 200 villagers still living in *Lesjaverk*. He knew this spot of course, and for one reason or another, he had decided to join me on this bright and beautiful evening. Maybe he came here every evening?

I knew him. He is close to my own age, and while we never played together as children, when I visited during the summers, I do remember him. In recent years, we have been superficially in touch on a regular basis. Of course my mother knew his mother, just as she knew all other mothers in the village. Like me, he is now retired.

Local people like to socialize, but my experience is that they do not talk a lot when there are 'strangers' around. Since I am not born here, I am by definition a 'stranger', although I have been visiting almost every year since I was born. When they *do* talk, you should listen carefully.

"Have you been to the ironworks at the end of the lake?" he asked me, true to his habit of always starting a conversation with a question.

I told him that yes, indeed, I had visited the place, and I had found it extremely interesting.

"It is," he continued, *"and it is both interesting and a bit strange, almost unbelievable, to know that our little spot on the planet was once upon a time an important part of the economic development of our country as well as the rest of the world. The ovens of the ironworks closed around 200 years ago. Before that took place, the high quality iron produced here was used for building ships in Norway and abroad. Workers would come from as far away as Germany."*

Many years ago, when I started writing educational books about development issues, the Swedish writer Sven Lindquist inspired me. I found his book called *"Dig where you stand"* particularly interesting.

His thinking was simple: once you start looking into the history of the place where you live, you will find all kinds of connections with the world around you, both the parts close to you, and even those far away. I adopted this approach in a series of books for children and youth, trying to explain in a straightforward manner how we depend on and are interdependent with others. We may not be aware of it, or we may not want to know about it, but this does not change the reality.

The villager pointed towards the group of birch trees on the other side that I had admired when he sneaked up behind me. Then he said:

"They are reflected in the lake, but you need to dig much deeper to find the whole story about how globalization has impacted upon Lesjaverk, and how Lesjaverk impacted the larger world."

He then left as quietly as he had arrived a few minutes earlier.

NORWAY IS RULED FROM THE VALLEYS

In recent years, a heated debate has taken place in Denmark about what you could popularly call *Outskirts Denmark.* This is a bad translation of the Danish word *udkant*, which is more or less the same in Norwegian. Essentially, it is about the *center* versus the *periphery;* about *Copenhagen* and a few other large cities versus the smaller *villages*; about the *elite* embracing the rewards of globalization, while dictating the supposedly ignorant and anti-globalized villagers how the country should develop.

The debate is not new. The process of strengthening the center and weakening the periphery is global in nature. The center-periphery process has been active for decades, if not centuries, but people did not see it coming, neither did politicians. If they did, they would always emphasize the advantages [for the elite] and downplay the disadvantages [for the marginalized].

Back in the 1970s, some of us wrote about the need for *a new economic world order* to respond to what we saw as an increasingly unequal distribution of economic resources and political influence both at global and at national level. In most cases, our concerns and proposals for change met a wall of deafening silence. If there was a response at all from the establishment, it would be something about *"yet another effort by the leftists to divert the discussion about the great rewards of globalization"*.

What is new is that political parties have now understood and experienced how this *unequal pattern of growth* impacts on voting patterns, with many in the periphery tending to vote for *populist* and *nationalist* parties, rejecting traditional parties that have ruled in past decades, preferring 'America First' like approaches, criticizing the perceived dominant role of international cooperation. This is true in Denmark, and in Norway, and all over.

Right now, Norway is ruled by a coalition of the Conservative Party and the Progress Party [and again, beware of the definition of *progress* to avoid getting confused]. Aspects of religion, ethnicity, refugees and migrants need to be thrown into the melting pot to make the confusion possible to comprehend.

Norway is a much larger country than Denmark, almost exactly nine times larger in area, and the distance from south to north is five times longer. This clearly indicates that *being in the periphery* is not only a question of size. Interestingly, my Norwegian friends have always told me that legislation passed by parliament tends to favor the periphery, which could have something to do with size. A huge country needs active communities all over its territory. It is seen as necessary for reasons of national security.

In practical terms, you need to make it attractive for people to stay in the villages, fall in love in the villages, get married in the villages, produce children in the villages, get old and die in the villages.

Not all the farms I visited with my mother when I was a child, high up on the soft-sloping mountainside, have survived. This is not surprising. What *is* surprising is that so many farms are actually active. Sheep enjoy the green fields with grass, and trees for timber is plentiful. Here and there, you will run into cattle. It would not work without subsidies, and lower taxes is an incentive. It is also a necessity for keeping the only shop in the village alive, which also benefits tourism, and it probably ensures that the train stops when people ask for it.

Balanced development comes at a cost, in Norway and Denmark, in Nepal and Djibouti. Like so much else, it is not possible to objectively set a fair price on everything. In Norway, it seems like people in general, irrespective of political color, accept that it is worth the cost to keep expensive village communities in mountains and valleys alive.

Fortunately, Norway can afford it! I would argue that Denmark cannot afford *not* to invest what it requires.

FROM AVDEMSBUE TO RESTAURANT NOMA

A qualified guess would be that few of my friends or readers have heard about *Avdemsbue*, a small and insignificant general store situated along the E6 highway running through the valley of Gudbrandsdalen. The store is close to the village of Lesja, less than 20 kilometers from our house *Furukollen*.

Many more people have undoubtedly heard about the Danish restaurant called *NOMA*, which in recent years has been rated among the best restaurants in the world by the French Michelin Guide. Personally, I have never eaten at *NOMA*, but I have often had the pleasure of eating the delicious cheese and meat products sold at *Avdemsbue*.

I am delighted now to tell you how this modest general store in the middle of Norway is connected with a world famous restaurant in Copenhagen.

However, allow me first to share a secret with you. My wife knows the secret, and so do my children, and they all accept it, although I sometimes sense that they find it a bit embarrassing. It has to do with my preference for a special type of Norwegian cheese called *brown cheese*, also known as *Gudbrandsdal cheese* or *goat cheese*.

I eat this cheese on a daily basis, at least once a day in the morning or evening, on white bread or dark bread or crisp bread. To be fair to friends who argue

that this particular cheese should be categorized as a 'sweet' rather than a 'cheese', I admit that they might have a good case. *Brown cheese* is definitely on the sweet side, but then again, I like sweets, so whether it is one or the other does not really bother me.

What is the connection to the world famous restaurant? Well, the following is what I have understood from talking to the family owning the store.

The farm producing many of the products sold at *Avdemsbue* store has developed a very special brown cheese called *Huldreost*. This is traditional brown cheese with juniper, spicy seeds from the mountains of the area, and in addition some schnapp, producing an almost seductive taste, which is indeed unique. You can enjoy it with a biscuit and a glass of wine, and you can also add it to dishes of wildlife meat or use it in a dessert.

No wonder a restaurant like *NOMA* decided to include this special cheese in their list of strange and different products. For me personally, I consider the Noma-connection to be the ultimate vindication of brown cheese as a highly developed, sophisticated and healthy food product.

The same is true for many other products sold in the store. It opened in July 2015 and is founded and managed by a young woman, *Anna Haugstad Avdem* [it is Anna in the photo at the top]. The building of the store dates back to 1878, and the old style has been maintained to this day.

Avdemsbue sells all the products produced by Avdem Gardsysteri, the farm close by owned by Anna's parents. In addition, you will find quality cheeses from other Norwegian cheese factories. The beer selection represents more than 25 breweries. You will also find cured meats, smoked fish, coffee, tea, flour, jam and other delicacies. All of it ecological.

To learn more, take a look at the website www.avdem.no *and find out about the resources available in the mountains and valleys of Norway.*

IS SOMETHING ROTTEN IN DENMARK?

Fifty years ago, when Lesjaverk was slightly larger than the 174 people now living permanently in this community along highway E6 running throughout the valley of Gudbrandsdalen, I remember that there was a petrol station next to the general store. Leaded petrol for the cars stopping on the long and slow drive through the mountains. Diesel for the local tractors and the trucks crowding the narrow highway.

While the goods sold in the general store were necessary for the daily life of the villagers, the petrol station was not only a practical necessity, but as much a sign of Lesjaverk as a member of the larger community. Back then most of the cars stopping to fuel had Norwegian plates [I know because we used to write the numbers down in a small book], but we also saw cars from Germany, Italy, France and Spain - in addition to the cars from neighboring Sweden and Denmark. Lesjaverk was important, no doubt about it.

Then one summer the petrol station was no longer there. The never ending process of companies rationalizing operations and cutting down on 'redundant' parts to allow profits to be maximized had finally reached Lesjaverk. Villagers are practical people, so they understood the logic behind the decision. However, they were hurt. They were also deeply worried that the only other visible link to the greater outside world, the railroad station, would be next in line.

They were right. Some years later, the station manager left. There would no longer be a person selling tickets in the station building, nor a person with a green flag greeting incoming and departing trains. Tickets could be purchased on the website of Norwegian Railroads. Trains would still stop, but no flag.

The above serves as a background to understand why my heart started beating with happiness a few days ago, when I returned to Lesjaverk and saw a new 'station' next to the general store. No, not petrol. No, not diesel. *Only electricity.* Once again, Lesjaverk was visibly part of the larger world, and the villagers could once again walk along the road with heads high and a sense of pride.

I am half Norwegian, so I happily share the sense of being part of something important and necessary. Being a Danish citizen, however, I feel betrayed by those inward-looking and ignorant Danish politicians, who continue to believe that petrol and diesel is the future.

"Where are you coming from, and where are you going?" I asked the young couple on the photo. *"How practical is it to own a car running on electricity only in such a huge country like Norway?"*

For this generation of motorists, electric cars seemed entirely natural and straightforward. The government has introduced measures and incentives that make it advantageous to buy a car running on electricity. The young couple agreed that both as individuals and as a nation, we have to contribute to making Norway sustainable for all the reasons we know so well. Whether you vote red [centre and left-wing] or blue [right-wing], the transformation has to be pushed by pro-active and aggressive legislation, as well as by open-minded politicians and citizens.

Half a century ago, Norway was just a modestly wealthy country. Today, Norway is one of the richest countries in the world, thanks to the enormous amounts of oil hidden deep below the seabed in the North Sea. The oil will be finished in the not so distant future. Some of the oil will hopefully stay in the ground for environmental reasons, to help stop the dangerous and difficult-to-stop forces of climate change.

Denmark and Norway are admittedly similar in many ways, which should not come as a surprise, considering our shared history. However, in this particular area of preparing the nation for the future, the two countries have taken different directions and approaches. Many will probably disagree with me, but I will not hesitate to characterize the situation in Denmark right now as we know it from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: *something is rotten*.

Let me explain how I see things, as they are presently unfolding in my home country. If some readers get the sense that I feel emotional about this issue, they are entirely correct!

We need to move back around 25 years or more. I was part of the Danish NGO community working with the preparations for the global UN conference on environment and development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The major background document for the conference was the 1987 report titled *Our Common Future*, also known as the *Brundtland Commission Report* [named after the former Norwegian Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland, a social democrat]. Together with others, I helped translate the report into Danish, and I still consider the report to be one of the most important reports published by the UN system. Most of what we discuss today was covered by the report.

From January 1993 until November 2001, the Social Democrat *Svend Auken* was Minister for Environment and for Energy. I did not know him well personally, but I met him on several occasions, when I was part of organizing delegations from developing countries coming to Denmark to learn about how we tried to deal with the challenges facing Denmark. This was part of the follow-up to the agreements made at the conference in Rio.

I vividly remember one occasion, standing with a delegation on the steps leading up to the entrance to the Danish parliament, waiting for the Minister to arrive for our meeting. I knew that the minister would arrive on his old bicycle, and I wanted our friends from around the world to see how a Danish minister behaved – indeed very different from what they were used to at home. This was Danish democracy in practice, with little distance between people and politicians.

When Auken arrived, the delegates were confused. How could this happen? *Because 'minister' means 'servant of the people'*, the minister explained, before he led our way into parliament.

Svend Auken was unquestionably one of the brightest politicians of his generation. For reasons outside the framework of this article, he never reached the pinnacle of politics to become Prime Minister. Still, he is one of the few Danish politicians who have managed to put Denmark effectively and convincingly on the global map. He believed in the necessity of a small country like Denmark taking the lead. Danish CO2 emissions may not amount to much in a global perspective, but we can still lead by showing others examples of what is possible – and necessary.

Today, Denmark is celebrated as an example for others to follow. Not because of what the present government is doing, but because of Svend Auken.

Right wing governments have been in power most of the time since 2001. This includes the present coalition government of three parties. They may say that they consider the environment and the climate change agenda as important, but they really do not believe in it. They have never considered this agenda as important as making sure that the private sector can make money and compete in the global market. When Svend Auken was the minister, these parties did not see the environment as an area for Denmark to show global leadership.

The rhetoric only turned more positive when it became apparent to even the most ignorant cynics that a strong global consensus to do something was emerging. CEOs, presidents, ministers, mayors, academics, church leaders, NGOs and yes, ordinary citizens all backed the call for action - *now*! When Danish CEOs across the board called for political leadership, the politicians on the right finally took action, but only reluctantly and without heart.

Seen from the outside, it has been like an ideological crusade of almost religious proportions, focused on destroying the legacy of Svend Auken. Similar to the religious fervor seemingly driving President Trump in his effort to destroy Obamacare. In both cases, knowledge is seen as an inconvenient obstacle; facts are at best 'massaged' to fit the political situation, or at worst manipulated; experts are by definition considered to be 'progressive' or 'leftist', and consequently they are not objective. A sad situation.

Before the young couple left the *Lesjaverk Loading Station* to continue the journey towards Oslo, I told them that I was actually Danish. They threw up their arms in despair, smiled loudly, and said:

"The Danes are in trouble. You have to get your 'electrical' act together, and you better do it sooner than later."

They are so right. The future of the planet as well as both present and future generations depend on all political parties coming together to take responsibility and make decisions, based on the available evidence agreed upon by the large majority of scientists. This also includes the transition to cars powered by electricity rather than petrol and diesel. It generally requires leadership based on genuine conviction rather than political expediency. It needs a show of heart that rises above crude calculation.

True, Denmark is still at the top, thanks to the investments made in the 90s. The present government is happy to take credit for that. Now we need to see that the parties in the coalition government are able and willing to provide real leadership. *Lesjaverk shows the way!*

THE ART OF FISHING TROUT

First a confession: I am not a fantastic fisherman or angler. If we rank the family members according to objective criteria like time spent in the boat, number of trout caught, size of the fish pulled out of the water, number of fish jumping off the hook right outside the boat, technical skills in throwing the line straight and far, or ability to decide which flies will be effective, then I believe a realistic assessment would place me as a distant number four. My younger brother is the undisputed number one; my nephew and my son share second and third places.

This used to bother me a bit [well, to be honest, actually a lot], but after lengthy and conscious efforts [which did not involve any form of psychological counseling], I have accepted my fate. I have concluded that fishing trout is not about being first or best. The art of fishing trout is first and last a question about establishing a *fragile relationship* with nature, and then about being serious about your responsibility as a *socializer*. Let me explain.

First the *relationship*, and I understand that some of you might find it slightly religious to talk about 'establishing a fragile relationship with nature'. This is not the intention or the case. The statement has to be taken rather literally. However magnificent an angler you think you are technically, nature always has the upper hand. Nature decides the amount of light or darkness - influencing your ability to move around on the lake; the direction and strength

of the wind - determining where to throw the line; the temperature of the air and the water - indicating if the fish will go high or low.

All of this also affects the size, nastiness and number of mosquitos swarming around your face, and thus your ability to concentrate [smokers have an advantage]. Mother nature [with some help from human beings I should add] also decides on the number of beavers in the water, elk cruising along the shore, herons flying low over the lake. Fishing trout is consequently also about enjoying and appreciating all of this. If you catch some, great - and I am proud of the modest size trout you see on the photo!

Then there is the aspect of *socializing*, which should probably be called 'socialization'. My grandfather was teacher number one, followed by my father. They made sure I learned to squeeze the unruly worm on to the sharp hook without hooking into my fingers, and then throw the line gently into the water, right into the mouth of the fat trout.

When my son was big and strong enough to hold the fishing rod in one hand, I became his teacher in the art of managing worms and flies, and also the more boring part of a fishing expedition – cleaning the fish.

Second-generation teaching starts when your grandson is forced to repeat the rituals your son had to endure, as I did decades earlier. Of course, in principle, the 'son' could also be a 'daughter', and this has been the case twice, but for reasons I am not able to explain in this story, definitely at a lower level of intensity – although both daughters have caught good size trout, and they both enjoy the art of fishing trout.

I never fish at home, and I never have. I have never felt an urge to find a lake in Denmark where I can be an angler and throw out a line. I only fish when I am at my house *Furukollen.* Why this is the case, I cannot explain. I have actually wondered about it on many occasions, in particular when friends have suggested that we should go fishing. I guess I only trust myself as an angler when I fish in a lake that I am intimately familiar with.

TRAVELLING THE WORLD WITH YOUR ROOTS

My recent publication about *"Engaging with democracy globally"*, published in December 2016 when I retired, includes a confession, which I felt was necessary and appropriate at the time. I stated that *I consider myself to be a 'globalist'*, at a time when nationalism and populism was changing the political landscape. It was also right after Donald Trump had won the presidential election in the US and made most of us wonder and worry what the future had in store for us.

I understand being a *globalist* to be different from being in favor of everything we generally associate with *globalization*. To me, being a *globalist*, or simply having a global perspective or outlook, is about actively and positively embracing and confronting the realities of interdependence among the people living on the planet we share today, and the future we need to manage together. It is also about taking care of the interesting and beautiful diversities of people and cultures of different colors and beliefs, living in around 200 small and large countries.

To avoid the type of misunderstanding that often make debates on globalization less interesting and more confusing than they need to be, I should emphasize that *embracing* does not mean *agreeing* with. I have travelled to many countries and lived for longer periods in a few, so I know

from experience that I generally agree with as much and as many *outside* my country of origin as *inside*. This means that I have many honest disagreements with people and positions all over the world; but I certainly do not have more with people *outside* than *inside* my territory of birth.

My parents could hardly be called *globetrotters*. They never took me anywhere but to Norway. My first globetrotting trip was to West Germany in 1964, when I spent a summer studying German language and history in high school, living with a German family.

I left European soil for the first time in 1966, when I sailed across the Atlantic from Rotterdam to New York [ten fantastic days on M/S Seven Seas], together with 500 other European students on an American Field Service programme. For one year, I studied at the elite Tatnall High School in Wilmington, Delware, at a time when the war in Vietnam was raging, with the United States on the wrong side of history.

Then came the 70s, when I started a series of low-budget backpacking trips, first to countries like Mexico, Peru, Bolivia and Chile in Latin America, later visiting countries like Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand in Asia. Africa started to dominate my globetrotting life when we entered the 1980s, and Zimbabwe and Botswana later became my second or third home.

My Norwegian grandfather started to teach me how to fish, when I was a few years old [the photo shows the two of us down on the beach in front of his house]. Later he also enlightened me about the world. He was an employee of the Norwegian Railroads [NSB], and before being appointed Station Master in Hamar north of Oslo, he headed the local NSB Travel Agency.

As far as I know, he did not travel much himself. However, his storytelling abilities were well developed, and listening to his fantastic and colorful stories about countries like Italy and Spain made me think that one day, when I was myself a grown up person, I would travel just like him, with an open mind and an appetite to know more about the world.

I am sure he would have loved to hear my fantastic stories from around the world. He would also encourage me to travel with an open mind – and be true to my roots.