

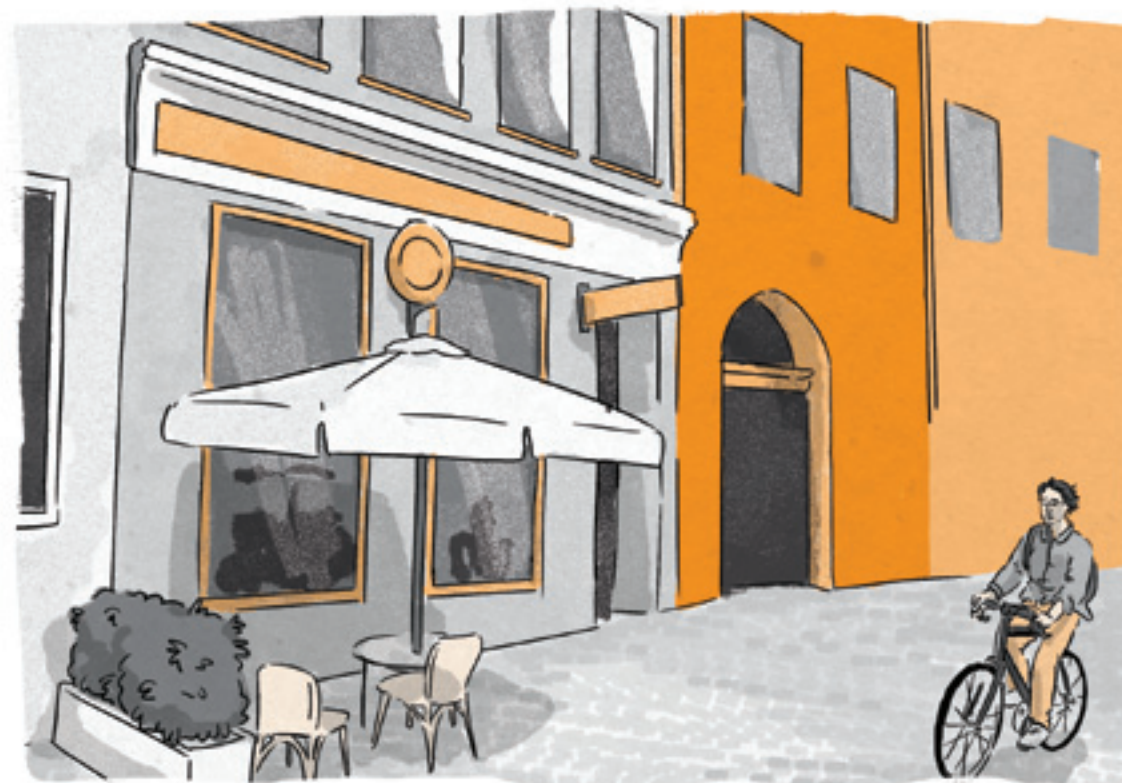
#FREE OUR MEDIA

**A COLLECTIVE COMIC BOOK
ABOUT MEDIA FREEDOM IN
EUROPE**

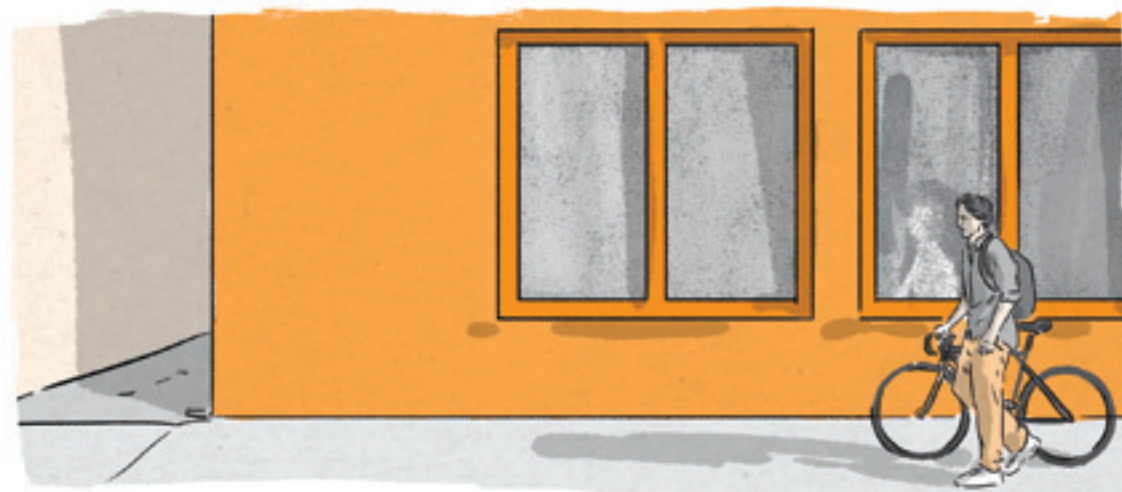


**ONLINE
PREVIEW**

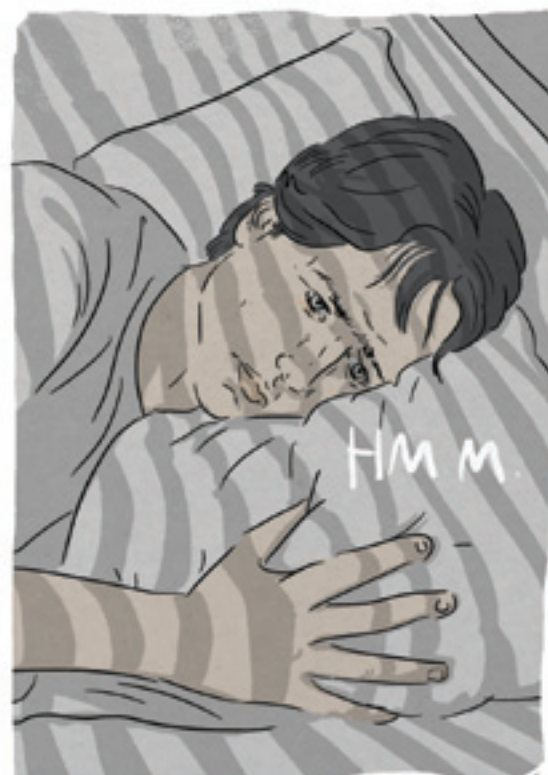
COPENHAGEN, DENMARK



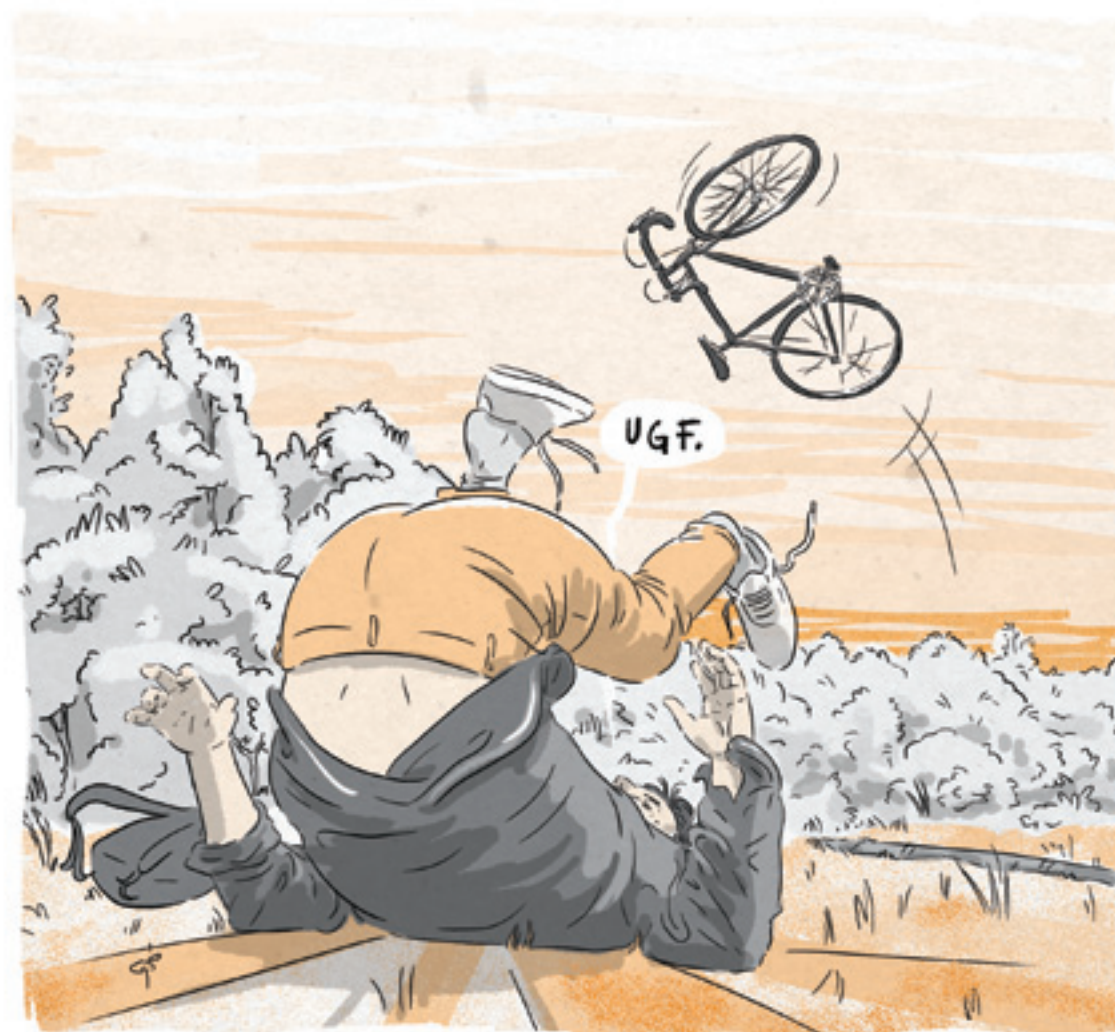














DENMARK

Denmark is the happiest country in the world with almost no corruption and one of the most comprehensive public transparency laws in the world. But despite the country's enviable rankings in corruption and transparency, something is clearly rotten in the state of Denmark. At least according to documents leaked in 2013 by the former NSA employee Edward Snowden. The internet that we all use everyday is essentially a large number of interconnected computers, storing and sending data to each other, from all over the world. All countries are connected through large intercontinental fibre cables. Data on the Internet rarely transfers linearly from A to B, meaning that it often passes through a lot of different locations before it loads into your browser.

If you are located in Denmark and load a German website, it is possible that the data you request will take a detour to the United States or the United Kingdom before you will be able to see it. And because the data in the fibre cables is travelling with the speed of light, you will not notice the longer distance.

During the Cold War Denmark was an important surveillance point for the United States and NATO, because of the country's geostrategic advantage: it controlled the access to the Baltic Sea – the Soviet Union's only route to the Atlantic during winter. Today the Baltic Sea might be a less important geostrategic location, but with the implementation of the transatlantic fibre cables, Denmark is. Due to the cables, a significant amount of the Internet traffic to Russia passes through Denmark, potentially containing information in the interest of western intelligence agencies.

The Danish newspaper *Information* has been working closely with filmmaker Laura Poitras to expose the Danish connection to the NSA's mass surveillance. In the fall of 2014 *Information* revealed that the NSA and their Danish counterpart Danish Defence Intelligence Service (DDIS) have almost unlimited access to all the Internet traffic passing through Denmark.

In an internal speech paper revealed by Edward Snowden, the former NSA general Keith Alexander notes that he should remember to »emphasize the NSA's commitment to the special access and assisting DDIS in managing the access«.

The DDIS is one of two intelligence agencies in Denmark, both with limited democratic oversight. Officially it is the Parliament's responsibility to oversee the agencies, but it is the agencies and ministries themselves that decide which documents the Parliament representatives are allowed to see, leaving the Minister of Defense, the Minister of Justice and a few government officials the only people outside the agencies knowing the full extent of their surveillance.

In Denmark there has not been any conflict between the journalists and the intelligence agencies so far. But the scale of the potential threat that governmental surveillance poses to the freedom of our media and investigative journalism is disconcerting. And with the technical possibility to access all Internet traffic, and specific tools to monitor individual targets' Internet traffic, it is not hard to imagine how intelligence agencies could obtain practically any information they seek.

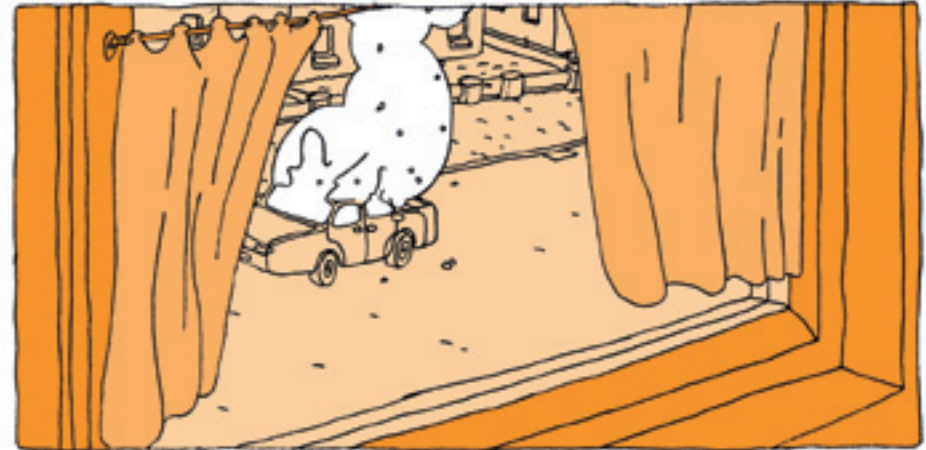
Johannes Skov Andersen

Home

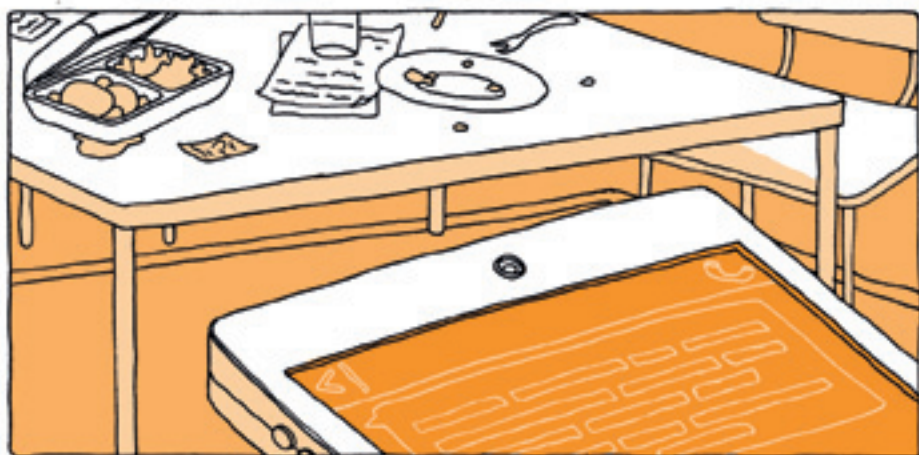
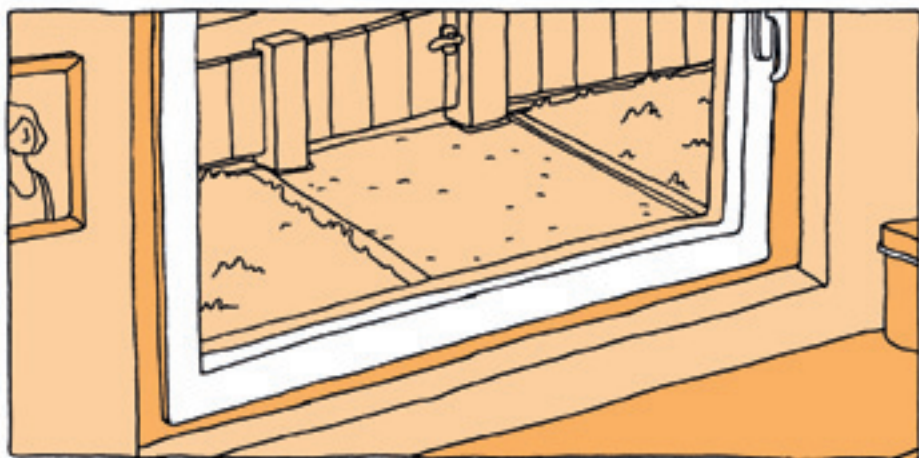
by Mario Hamberg



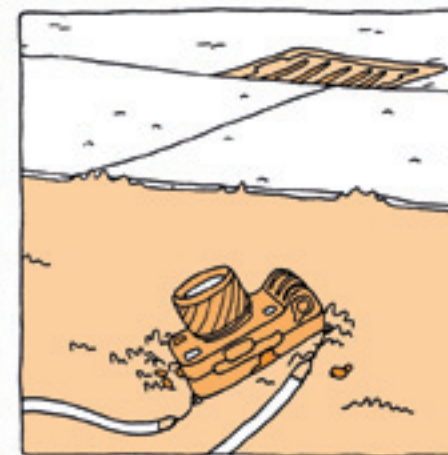
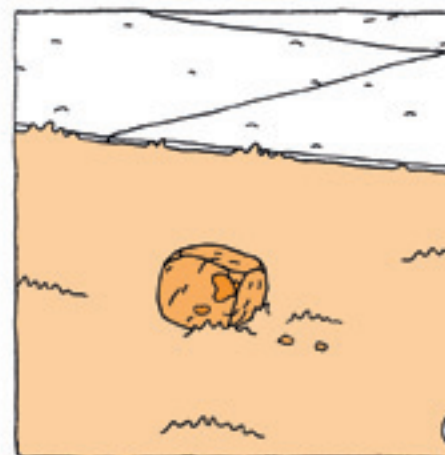
I still remember the night when my car was
lit on fire.



I was instantly wide awake, ran to the window
but knew already what had happened.
I didn't have the courage to go outside,
since they had been waiting for me all day
in front of my house.



At least the police comes by every hour to check if everything looks fine on the street. The daily text message explaining where I can safely go and where not, does not really comfort me.



The messages are almost worse than the obituary they published online yesterday. It is easier to ignore my twitter feed than a stone hitting my forehead and knocking the camera off my neck.



I've been ordering food online for three days straight now, so I don't have to take the risk of going outside. But with every day the guy bringing the food looks more suspicious.

GERMANY

This story arose from an interview with a journalist who had repeatedly endured threats from the right-wing scene. The scenes depicted in this comic have all happened but to several different people. In this story, the main character finds herself in a situation where she wants to be isolated from the rest of the world because she fears for losing her life, giving up her security and being deprived of her private space. Throughout the autumn of 2014 and spring of 2015 a series of right-wing protests were organised by the "Pegida" (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the Eveningland), spreading from Dresden also to other German cities. In the protests it was common to hear critique of mainstream media reporting, and sometimes members of the press who tried to interview protesters were insulted with the word "Lügenpresse" ("lying press").

The word was also smeared or sprayed on media buildings. As regards freedom of the press and speech, in international terms Germany comes off very well. There is pluralism with regard to opinion and information. The press is not in the hands of the government or political parties, but rather in that of private media companies. Germany has also a critical citizenry for historical reasons: after a century of first National Socialist rule and then the Soviet occupation in East Germany, surveillance and eavesdropping were well-known practices that many Germans became victims of. Still today, hate speech, threats against journalists reporting e.g. on migration and self-censorship are not uncommon threats that the press is exposed to.

Reporters without Borders sees the greatest threat to freedom of the press in Germany in the surveillance of the internet and the storage of connection data. The NSA scandal led in Germany to the establishment of a parliamentary investigation about the nature of the German secret service's cooperation with the NSA.

In August 2015, the German Public Prosecutor General made headlines by suggesting to raise treason charges against two German journalists who run the blog *netzpolitik.org*. It was the first time in more than 50 years that a similar case was made in Germany. Some of the material published in two blog posts was claimed to contain state secrets, but the argument turned out to be false. After two months into the investigation public pressure pushed the Public Prosecutor General to drop charges against the blog. In any case the German constitution and basic laws guarantee very well freedom of expression and of the press.

In August 2012 a new freedom of the press law, which protects journalists conducting investigative research against state interference, went into force. Journalists can no longer be prosecuted for breach of secrecy if they accept, evaluate or publish material from informants in government positions.

Anna Saraste

