 

 *Christmas 2020*

Dear family and friends!

We are in the middle of wonderful Christmas days, and we share our thoughts and warmest greetings with you.

 During the strict pandemic regime, Hilde, Željka and I fare reasonably well. Also Hilde’s cousin Iva (Zeljka’s niece), husband Ilker and little young man Ivan Altay (5) at Landås are fine. In Bergen and at the University we’ve probably had among the strictest rules nationwide since we all in March suddenly were faced with quite another year than most of us had foreseen. We are all, and internationally, in the middle of this, and so far with us, things have gone well. – Hilde is PhD-scholarship holder, and we parents are still hanging in there in full service in our positions. From the very beginning when total lockdown was a fact (March 12) and up till the end of the Spring term, our attitude, as well as that of our nearest all around us, amounted to a spontaneous and sustained decision to face the challenges, this thing we‘ll fix.

 Ordered, as we were 12th March, to long-lasting digital working arrangements out of our homes, constantly in front of our screens, yet we were inventive – just like the bulk of our colleagues and the great majority of our students. Quickly we learned how to operate the new digital-teaching platforms (with reasonably good and immediate support from our university's IT-section), and we were creative. Both in teaching, in research, and in scholarly-administrative meetings. I taught and lectured a lot via Zoom, and I as well produced a long series of podcasts, combined with on beforehand uploaded pdf’s with support compendia and secondary research materials; a massive extra workload. Written and digital tutoring became sole channels, and e-mail activity as well as all queries and discussion items increased enormously. Yet in daily work, this machinery during the spring term went as oiled, with a few adjustments. Everyone worked and yielded on up-beat.

 When we entered July, however, as our first covid-crisis semester had been completed relatively successfully under the current conditions of possibility – *that* many appearances on screen with sound, and *that* many lengthy, lecturing podcasts had never before come my way – then the sensation manifested itself of how tired and worn-out we actually were. In hindsight we also fully understood how lonely our students are, how truly depressed a great number of them feel. A great many of them are in need of extra scholarly, and more: inter-human help and support. I have handled a number of such situations. When we sense and pick up such cases, we immediately share them with and report them to our administrative staff, who makes the necessary contacts and yields relevant relief and help. Beyond that, our adm. staff have as well proved themselves as outstanding in the extra professional services they provide in daily work to us scholars in this extraordinary situation. – Still, it was a great relief to be able to lower our shoulders and to breathe a bit more normally during summer holidays.

 When Fall term started, I personally think that our UiB leadership and employer were too blue-eyed. The mentor-week (with senior students taking care of the newcomers, and all sorts of indoor and outdoor arrangements) was held, yet it had to be closed down after only a few days as the infection numbers soared. University started up with full physical presence, lectures and seminars. Then total lockdown was again a fact until we – in newly acquired, considerably larger auditoriums – were ordered to conduct both teaching and meetings botg physically *and* at the same time by way of digital streaming via cameras and microphones to those who had to remain in their digs for quarantine/isolation (around half of all students). *That* was exacting and tiresome: two types of audiences simultaneously; the one half we see and hear, the other half is out there somewhere, yet with no body language nor any level for us by which to gauge reception and understanding. Then, ultimately and for the remainder (i.e. greater part) of the Fall term, we were told to revert to total lockdaown again. With all which that entailed in teaching, research, transformation of written-exam arrangements, evaluations/censoring/grading, orals, etc. Once again: extremely work-consuming and wearisome. Zoom/Teams are our digital-tool “friends” in such cases, yet when lasting in time and becoming a new normal, they also figure as part of a veritable load of garbage. The ensuing and necessary, yet massive e-mail correspondence, has become a veritable, operative “catastrophic field” – with merely semi-understood messaging in all directions, and ensuing irritations. – However – despite the fact that we are truly weary of the one-sided screen/digitally-performing work with worn-out eyes and hurting backs, yet we will prevail and fix and handle also this, during the Spring term of '21 as well! And now the vaccines are coming!

 Travelling has been banned for us during this international emergency. Željka (very active, and fully recovered after her back surgery) and I have experienced cancellations of a couple of conferences abroad. Yet this is the situation for most of us now. Željka and I also had to abandon our planned summer-trip to Zagreb (last time we visited there was in October of 2019; a great trip then!). – We, the jazz lovers (‘da boiz’), did get to physically experience live the 40th anniversary in downtown Bergen of one of our favourite bands in February before lockdown; great! – As a scholar, and also just before lockdown, I was able to participate in and complete a project I was invited to at Bergen’s The National Stage Theatre (DNS). The occasion was a magnificent, new staging of Jon Fosse’s late modern drama *Namnet* (*The Name*‚ among my academic writings)), The project’s final arrangement was a meaningful panel-discussion between some of the young and wonderful actors/actresses of the staging, director Trine Wiggen, and me, all moderated by DNS’ communications director, Silje Gripåsrud. Our panel discussion is still available as podcast at Den Nationale Scene (website). – One more fine event functioned fine before lockdown: Željka and I were able to take part in Litteraturhuset i Bergen’s (Bergen’s House of Literature) Winterfest for writers/authors/artists/critics/scholars at the end of January.

 However – and for all of us: We're out of count as to how many planned events that have been cancelled (or that we've had to cancel) during the extensive lockdown this year. We have put them all at hold. – Željka and I are usually ardent theatre-goers, yet during 2020 there have been long lapses of time between each time. We were booked to enjoy Den Nationale Scene's (DNS’s) active work – among other things – in the sphere of Imgmar Bergman’s, all introduced with clear foci under the new Swedish DNS director Stefan Larsson. Yet both the dramatised version of Linn Ullmann’s novel (Liv and Ingmar’s daughter) *De urolige* (with its compositional rack derived from Fernando Pessoa’s *The Book of Disquiet),* as well as *Scenes from a Marriage* (both stagings with the rising Bergen actress Susann Bugge Kambestad) – and both stagings critically acclaimed – were shut down and abandoned post 12th March. However, we certainly did enjoy our output of rereading the the two books/scripts at leasure at home. – Another of my creative contacts in the Norwegian and international theatre world, Lene Therese Teigen, as well had to call off her Bergen-runthrough of the staging of her drama *Tiden uten bøker* (*The Time Without Books*), both this spring and no in the fall. This is a major late modern drama set in Latin-America, and with deep-sounding repercussions in our joint world. Hopfully next year! – The only performance that Ž and I managed to attend, quite recently, was the Bergen staging of one of his latest monologues for the stage: *Slik var det* (*That’s How it Was*), now in the week just before X-mas. Great! And it was a wonderful experience (although only with max. 50 in the audience, and with all the safety meters observed) to get back, and out into cultural life, as we say; we had a unique evening. Yet wearing masks…

 Asle (my close friend since childhood, my closest collaborator in artist management in the major annual, Norwegian jazz festival we founded in 1974 (Voss Jazz; still running)), and my mature life’s best buddy) and I, have also experienced down-sides in the shape of the many cancelled arrangements at BJF (Bergen Jazz Forum), this spring and fall, out at the BJF venue at Verftet (The Wharf; the old United Sardines Factory/USF); now Bergen's cultural venue nr 2) at Bergen's peninsula Nordnes. Every Friday night there is normally a gig with national and international jazz bands. It's been sad, for 10 months now. – Furthermore, the whole of Vossa Jazz 2020 primo April had to be cancelled; yet VJ is at it, planning a pandemic regime-observing, lower-scale festival end March for 2021 (it is each year organised during the week-end around Palm Sunday). All the best to our successors in VJ! – Yet, more than this: For July 2020, Asle and I and two other of our jazz buddies had as usual, already end 2019/beginning of 2020, booked and paid for our annual participation at the largest international jazz event in Europe, the North Sea Jazz Festival in Rotterdam in July (all-round festival tickets; KLM-flights; hotel stay). Also the NSJF had to be cancelled 2020 due to the pandemic. Yet NSJF are professionals, reliable, and communicate frequently: They keep confirming that all our tickets are valid for and have been transferred to the 2021 festival in July, which is under full planning. The same goes for our hotel: our rooms and bookings are valid for the equivalent week-end of July 2021. And what with KLM: as the only current and decent airline I know of in this mess, they immediately paid back to us in cash the full amount of our unused air tickets, and encourage us to re-book when possible for 2021. – Certainly, we are not naïve, and do obviously foresee the possibility that also July 2021 in Rotterdam will have to be cancelled, with compensation. – Yet the vaccine is already here, people are currently being vaccinated *en masse* – in orderly fashion, from the eldest in senior homes with underlying conditions, then the group 85 and older, then 75–84, then 65–74 (us!!), and then groups further down the age ladder. Health care personnel will be fifth in the row here, however with the sudden possibility that they will be advanced and jumping up the ladder before others (my idea all the time: they are the ones exposed to the contagiousness all the time!).

 In all of what we are living through: Thank goodness and praise to our cabin at Oppheim (inland; 2 hours drive from Bergen)!! We’ve had many nice week-end sojourns there during summer and fall 2020. There we can lower our shoulders, and at the same time also work online when we need to. During our Voss stays we also made our annual raspberry-picking trip in the area with my dearest cousin and spouse.

 xxx

 Ut over arbeidet vårt i stillingane (og trass i pålagt munnbind overalt), har i tillegg Hilde og eg hyppig vore aktive med øvingskøyring, spesielt den siste hausten, også som mørkekøyring. Hilde er blitt ein kløppar bak rattet i Audi’en, og vi skal følgje vidare opp, slik at ho lettare kan få sitt eige førarkort. – Željka har i haust vore aktiv med rydding i husværet vårt (med litt hjelp av meg...), har funne ei rekke ting som vi ikkje brukar eller treng lenger, og ho sel på Finn.no, der ho legg ut fine bilete, tekstar, og får gode responsar. Hittil har ho selt (til rimeleg, men relevant pris) fleire stk. av ting og pø og gjenstandar som elles berre tek opp plass hos oss. Eg støttar og heidrar henne i all denne innsatsen. (Ja, slikt kan òg det strenge pandemi-regimet i byen vår nyttast til, og samstundes til glede for andre.)

 Middagsmaten er det framleis eg som tek meg av dei fleste dagane i veka. Og då spelar eg jazz på kjøkkenet, og har det storarta. – Željka er nok ein langt betre kokk enn eg, og handterer som oftast måltida i helgene. Men Julaftan er det eg som er “sjef” for pinnakjøtet (innkjøpt ved Nils Inge si hjelp på Voss (røykt!) og bringa til byen sist eg var på hytta saman med Nils Inge, og då vi var på gravene på Vangen og stelte.) Men første juledag er det som vanleg Željkas omfattande kalkunrett som står på menyen her i Birkebeinergaten. – Grunna pandemi-regimet blir vår tradisjonelle, felles julaftans- og førstedags-feiring i år for første gong delt i “familie-kohortar” – éin for Asle/Gunnbjørg-storfamilien, og éin for Lars/Željka/Hilde/Iva etc.-storfamilien. Vi er tre, Iva “å di” er òg tre inkludert veslegut. Så utan Asle, er det eg som blir eine-julenisse i år... Skal vel gå greit, det òg, og ser eg fram til!

*Vi sender våre beste tankar og ønske for Jula og det Nye Året!*

Beste helsing frå

Željka, Hilde og Lars, v/ – Lars

**Du Susana, SvE and me, and Tone?**

**all the set-backs (4?) sepsis, Zeljka's back surgery with me nursing her, Patrizia’s tragic passing, and then the pandemic with all its massive extra work into the digital teaching, research meetings, administrative planning commissions, and the lot.**

**Am in continuous contact with Sve. And he certainly seems to be doing fine and being academically active. I stay in close contacft also with Tone, and with Ragnhild; recently in exam commission work with them as external sencors/evaluators at masters theses’ levels, and in connecvtion with these (Zoom) we've had great conversations about the future while we've been waiting for the candidates to enter into Zoom for their matser’s orals.**

**I have had a number of queries and questions frpm the younger members of out TAS group av to when and with what we should continue; i.e. trey are still up and running, and “hip” to continue our TAS work.**

**I retire at 70 in Sept. of 2021 (our state universitites have this arrangement); yet while with my retirement become professor emeritus, I will be given my ”office den” at the HF-Faculty like the others f my colleagues, with all connections to and enablements by way of UiB's e-mail, otherwise digitral etc. infrastructure. And I still feel fit, so I am not out of the picture!**

**With our three comprehensive anthologies from, first, 2010 (two years leading up to that), then the second in 2015, and the third in 2017/18, we should be happy and proud to have produces no less than 54 solid articles in a little bit more than 8 years. That is a feat. Perhaps we should be satisfied with the TAS project at that landmark. Yet – we are still around, and could do more, perhaps in a bit reduved format, and with a slightly reduces number of participants in our TAS research group and project team.**

**What with me contacting you again for sensible suggestions as to where you fell we should head for the overall heading; then invite SvE and Tobe into the loop, and take our further prospective planning from there? The necessary limited means to handle this I will still be eligible to apply for and be allotted, even though I will formally retire end September (but then I will be prof. emeritus, with all competencies and etc. intact.).**

**Hope you and your family are fine! Exound…etc.**

**Below I attach a few recvent photos of Hilde, our daughter (28), in various settings as PhD-schlarsjip holder and candidate in Social Sciences (adm. and Org. Theory; Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Child and Youth Welfare, at the comparative intersection of public (state), law, and NGOs’ activities in Norway, Spain and the UK.**