



THIMUN Conference Opens with Salute to Democracy

by David Wolfe Bender



Photos by Julie Andersen, Selina Demaré, Emre Erçakır, Tamar Kreitman

On January 27th, thousands of students from across the globe gathered at the World Forum in The Hague to watch the opening of the 52nd annual THIMUN conference. A group of notable speakers aimed to address the conference's theme of "Securing and Advancing Democracy," an issue that has drawn significant attention worldwide.

The ceremony opened with a video showing a series of notable democracy advocates, including former U.S. President Barack Obama, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

"Everyone in this room has a voice," THIMUN Secretary-General Elie Topka said at the end of the video. "Engage here and now. The [United Nations] is listening to you. Your solutions to global issues matter."

Following the video, the room observed a moment of silence honoring the 1.3 million people who died at the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland, in observance of Holocaust Remembrance Day.

The Hague Deputy Mayor Saskia Bruines spoke next, welcoming the assembled delegates to the conference's host city. "You've come here for THIMUN, an annual event which has taken place without interruption for nearly half a century," she said. "We

consider it an honor to have you all here."

"There is no minimum age attached [to diplomacy]," Bruines continued. "And that is why I am so delighted to see you all here... to learn about the work of the United Nations."

THIMUN Foundation Chair Alain Meidinger first gave an overview of the conference's schedule, but quickly shifted to an experiment that correlated to the conference's theme. By asking people to raise hands to answer questions based on identity, personal situations and personal opinions, he aimed to show how openness, tolerance and consensus are the "pillars of the political system that the United Nations has used to give a voice to everyone: democracy."

An international choir, made up of students from the International School of The Hague, the American School of The Hague, and the British School of the Netherlands, performed an a cappella rendition of Beatles singer John Lennon's "Imagine," a common paean to the messages of peace and love.

Andrea Vonkeman, Head of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the Netherlands, delivered the keynote address at the ceremony. She told delegates about her organization's work with refugees. "In December 2019, UNHCR organized the first ever global refugee forum.

[It] drew 3,500 participants... and the World Bank announced they would increase private sector [funding]."

Vonkeman continued to talk about how democratic reforms and nations have an impact on refugees. "Policies towards... social services should aim towards reducing imbalances and social insecurities," she said. "Democratic institutions should be inclusive at all levels."

To finish off the ceremony, Secretary General Topka invoked decades of democratic movements, from Tiananmen Square to the Arab Spring, drawing upon President Obama's refrain "The Audacity of Hope," which he said threaded them all together.

"While all of us in this room hold the 'audacity of hope' and believe that democracy is unstoppable, let's be honest: democracy is under siege," he warned.

"We are here to secure and advance democracy through discussion, deliberation, and debate."

President of the General Assembly Bill Michalis concluded the ceremony with a bang of his gavel. He announced: "I now officially declare the 52nd annual session of The Hague International Model United Nations open."

Layout by Yuzine Yi

The Role of POLITICAL CARTOON in Democracy

by Suakshi Soni

"Sometimes, a simple drawing can express more than 100 words," said Mr. Alain Meidinger, the Chair of the THIMUN Board of Directors and a supporter of the Cartoon Movement and its association with THIMUN. Cartoon



Movement is a business that offers a global online platform for political cartoons and comic journalism and has curated an exhibition on the second floor of the World Forum. The Cartoon Movement began in 2010 to promote editorial cartoons as an essential style of journalism, and to support freedom of the press and the rights of political cartoonists.

"The main question is: can you make a joke out of everything?" shared Mr. Meidinger. On one hand, cartoons are about freedom of speech, however, on the other hand, they are often treading a fine line of immorality. This line between immorality and humor, according to Mr. Meidinger "isn't universal; instead it is subjective.[...]What is offensive to me might not be offensive to the next, and thus, it is critical to find a balance."

Cartoons often inspire conversations that can change people's opinions or at least challenge them. "Satire, due to the offense it could stir, usually sparks controversy and inspires conversation which is the primary premise for building a democracy," said Dariia Panasenka (Artist, press team). This means that cartoons can spark new ideas and reveal new perspectives.

Additionally, Mr. Meidinger said "Cartoons have the power to displace people from their metaphorical pedestals." President Vladimir Putin, for example, exhibits an image of a fierce authoritarian leader, however, in cartoons, he is often depicted with overly-exaggerated facial features, which not only evokes humor, but also decreases "his aura of grandeur [to some extent]"

Cartoons are considered to be a powerful form of journalism primarily because they transcend borders of culture and language and instead unite by sparking new ideas. Much like Vikram Sivashankar (Delegate of Turkey, Advisory Panel on the Question of the Kurdish Region) said, "If you can't read, a drawing is the first thing you can understand."



Photograph by Julie Anderson
Layout by Doris Huang

The Wuhan Virus: Cause for Concern?

by Sunny Choi

A new virus has been sweeping across the globe, and its symptoms are similar to those of pneumonia. Those ill from the outbreak are reported to be suffering from coughs, fever, shallow breaths and even organ failure. Moreover, no drugs on the market are capable of curing the virus at this time.

This is a novel coronavirus (also known as the Wuhan virus), a member of the coronavirus family that has not been encountered before. Its first reported case was on January 19, 2020, in China, outside Wuhan. Furthermore, the Chinese government warned yesterday that this coronavirus appears to be contagious as early as two weeks before symptoms appear, distinguishing it from its predecessors.

At a large international MUN conference such as THIMUN, an outbreak of such a contagious virus would be devastating. Hence, a question is raised: what has THIMUN done to tackle the issue?

THIMUN sent out an email to all MUN directors, affirming that they follow all the recommendations from the Dutch Health Authorities as well as the World Health Organisation (WHO) relating to health issues and possible outbreaks. In addition, THIMUN informed all schools attending and those coming from countries affected that individuals feeling ill should stay home and consult a physician.

Fortunately, the delegates confirmed that the atmosphere at THIMUN does not appear to

have been affected by the outbreak around the world. Yaqi Yu (Delegate of Algeria, General Assembly 1) stated that she had fortunately not been treated differently at THIMUN for coming from Beijing, even though "[her] friends staying in Europe or the United States have been facing some discrimination due to the virus."

However, the coronavirus is a topic frequently discussed among delegates in and outside of the conference. "It's a very 'hot' topic, where I'm from," said Hanliang Xu (Delegate of Colombia, the Economic and Social Council), who attends the Experimental High School Beijing. Students from countries other than China mirrored Xu's statement. "While I haven't heard much about it in school, I have discussed it in small talk and among friends and family," Ugo

Lejeune (Delegate of Canada, Historical Security Council) from the International School of Zurich said.

Overall, all students interviewed were content and felt safe with the approach THIMUN has adopted to tackle the health concern. Furthermore, it

should be noted that delegates wearing masks wear these to protect themselves from pathogens, due to requests from parents and friends, not because they are sick themselves. There have been no reports of ill delegates thus far, illustrating the effectiveness of THIMUN's measures.

Artwork by Tep Khemarin Chan
Layout by Melody Tai



HOW Sustainable Is THIMUN?

by Christina Brusco

THIMUN 2020 announced a monumental goal: going paperless. Taking into consideration the needs of over 3200 students at the conference, how has THIMUN balanced between sustainability and practicality?

For the first time, the MUNITY press is going digital. It was estimated that 7000 to 9000 papers were printed in the last few years. MUNITY is now published digitally on to the THIMUN app.

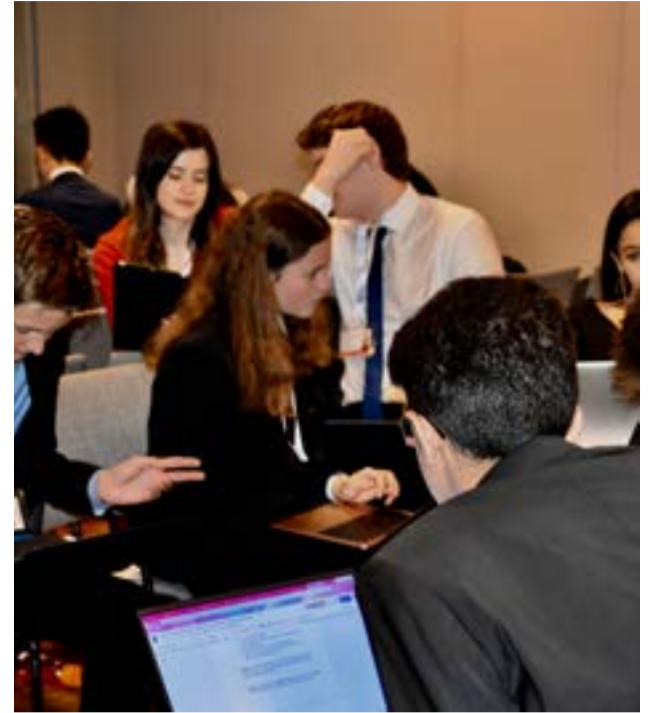
MUNITY is not the only element going digital: the chairs have announced that resolutions will no longer be printed. Last year, around 100,000 papers were used in order to print the resolutions, which were later thrown out, this waste sparked concerns amongst chairs. The decision has been made to publish resolutions on the THIMUN website in order to not only meet the needs and spread awareness for sustainability but as a reminder to all delegates to make sustainable choices.

Despite THIMUN's progress, note-passing continues to use up double the amount of paper than printing resolutions, and many are used for informal conversations between delegates. In fact, upon asking delegates how much paper they used for note passing, the average added up to 10 pieces of paper a day.

Many chairs are already devising solutions to the issue. Vanessa Lin (Deputy Chair, General Assembly 5) proposes the construction of an app similar to Whatsapp where delegates could communicate without using notepaper. The Pacific American School puts a similar practice into action with a special platform that allows delegates to send messages which are later approved by the chairs or admin.

Regardless, by publishing newspapers and resolutions digitally, the five-day conference sets an example of intelligent and efficient use of technology in order to combat the growing threat to the environment. The Hague International Model United Nations has taken matters into their own hand, turning 2020 into a year of sustainable advancements never seen before.

Layout by Yuzine Yi



Photos Sourced by Christina Brusco

MUN Impact Chennai: Balancing Education and Action

In the spring of 2018, the American International School Chennai (AISC), a THIMUN-affiliated school, began collaborating with Model United Nations (MUN) Impact.

MUN Impact is a global community that motivates its participants to action in support of the SDGs. Students gather to share and collaborate through projects.

Since 2018, MUN Impact Chennai has only grown, branching out with education and action projects that are oriented towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Directors Sanjana Kumar and Trevor Bridgeland want to move beyond debate and make a real impact in their community. Accordingly, MUN Impact Chennai encourages MUN programs to embed outreach, service, and support of the SDGs.

Kumar said, "I truly believe that MUN is a great tool for students to creatively think about solutions to the problems which surround our day-to-day

lives. It fosters a collaborative mindset and inspires the youth to take action in an active manner."

What makes MUN Impact Chennai exceptional is their ability to balance education and action through unique projects. These projects vary from an educational sustainability maze to fundraisers for local organizations. It is this variety that allows MUN Impact Chennai to tackle multiple SDGs.

Furthermore, the number of projects demonstrates the diversity of MUN Impact Chennai's goals. The group of 20 members has executed 12 successful projects that target both local and global issues.

Their first project supported slums in local Chennai communities. From building roofs and walls for

shelters to organizing workshops with children, the project works toward SDG 1 – No Poverty. The project expanded to volunteering at local schools where AISC volunteers train students for MUN by teaching public speaking skills, resolution

writing and other MUN-type skills. Another project is the CNN #MyFreedomDay that targets SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth. The goal of the event was to raise

awareness about modern-day slavery. The week-long project turned included a gallery work outlining the history of slavery, a blue ribbon campaign, a lap-a-thon—which is similar to a walk-a-thon or marathon—to raise money for Madras Christian Council of Social Service and the high school's Celebration of Learning. The money raised from the lap-a-thon helps house freed child slaves in Chennai, India.

The CNN #MyFreedomDay project demonstrates MUN Impact Chennai's balance of education and action. With the awareness campaign, students gain a better understanding of modern-day slavery. The lap-a-thon allows students to make a real impact through action.

An awareness oriented project is the Impact Zone: Sustainability Maze, which is directed at SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities. The maze represents the difficulty in creating sustainable cities

and communities by requiring delegates to make choices with different turns and consequences. Students were also required to answer questions about SDG 11 to evaluate their understanding of sustainability.

The importance of education and raising awareness is essential in the MUN Impact Chennai mission. Pepper McFarland, the MUN Director of AISC, said, "Participation in MUN will help in all academic areas as well as in life outside of school."

The benefit of sharing MUN Impact Chennai's projects is applicability. Schools all over the world can initiate similar projects in their own communities. The issues that the SDGs aim to eliminate exist everywhere. If students want to make a real difference in the world, these projects are the answer.

by Carrie Zhang
Layout by Charlotte Widmai-



HSC Debates Sparks Real World Controversy

By Yunrong Chen

The Historical Security Council's (HSC) first debate topic is "The Situation in the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan," which traces back to January of 1990. As a relatively small committee, the debate was concentrated on one specific aspect: the ethnic tension rising between Azerbaijani and Armenian communities.

A special event took place from 10:30 to 11:30 in Asia for the HSC. The representative from the Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the representative from the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia to the Kingdom of the Netherlands visited the committee and each gave a presentation on the issue from their countries' perspectives. The Azerbaijani representative, First Secretary Seljan Verdiyeva, explained the Azerbaijani side of the story. According to Verdiyeva, the Sumgait event of 1988 resulted in the death of 26 Armenians and 6 Azerbaijanis. Verdiyeva then presented two pieces of evidence that claimed the KGB was the aggressor, manipulating the situation against the Azerbaijani National Front – a newspaper stating Azerbaijan National Front calls for peace and an end to violence, and an "appendix to the Congressional Record" showing the collaboration of the Armenian Dashnak party with Nazis. The presenter concluded by stating that Azerbaijan is a multinational state and every ethnic group is well respected.

Verdiyeva suggested that, in the HSC, the USSR should advocate for peaceful settlement and facilitate the negotiation. When Azerbaijan was blamed for the provocation, Verdiyeva explained that there was no reliable record of the Sumgait events, and there was no



point for the Azerbaijan government to initiate the conflict. She stated that Azerbaijan is not afraid to open up their archives, is not hiding proof and is not rejecting investigations. Lastly, Verdiyeva wished to increase foreign media coverage of the event to resolve this conflict.

After a 15-minute break, Third Secretary Ms. Kristine Stepanyan, the representative from the Armenian Embassy, presented their side. Stepanyan stated that the Azerbaijan police continued to deny their role in the conflict, claiming it is a conspiracy against Azerbaijan. The representative indicated that nothing can be an excuse for crimes against humanity. She then claimed that Azerbaijan did not have any evidence presented that showed Armenian violence against Azerbaijanis and urged the USSR to take action immediately. Lastly, Stepanyan expressed the concern of the long-lasting effects of genocide and threats against the Armenian people.

As a result of the actual diplomats' presentations, delegates were confronted by the fact that each country denied certain parts of the chair's research report. Olivia Hunt (Deputy President of HSC), who is also the writer of the report, said, "The research report sought to represent two largely differing opinions... the information that was acknowledged by Armenians was not acknowledged by Azerbaijan. The information... was not false. It simply aimed to summarize a complex topic in a way that was as unbiased as possible." It was clear that this remains a highly sensitive and controversial topic, which will produce tense debates in the upcoming sessions.



Layout by Melody Tai

Photograph by Serkan Emre Erçakır

ADVISORY PANEL

Tackling Conflicts: Finding Peace for Kurdistan

by Ella Westland

The Advisory Panel has gathered this year at THIMUN to discuss stabilization in the Kurdish Region to prevent further conflict. The Kurdish people are native to a mountainous region in what is now south-eastern Turkey, north-eastern Syria, northern Iraq, north-western Iran and south-western Armenia. They are the fourth largest ethnic group in the Middle East but have never had a permanent nation state to call their own.

The Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) has been fighting for autonomy in Turkey for over three decades and is now listed as a terror-

ist organization by both the UN and EU. Delegates from countries surrounding the region and representatives from organizations such as Amnesty International and UN Water have gathered to discuss how to prevent further conflict. They will also be discussing the issue of promoting an even distribution of water in the Kurdish Region, returning displaced Kurdish people and the restoration of Kurdish cultural sites.

Kurdish people constitute about 15 to 20% of the Turkish population. Since the beginning of the PKK's armed struggle in 1984, more than 40,000 peo-

ple have been killed. A ceasefire was called in 2013 but collapsed in 2015 when the Turkish Government called a "synchronised war on terror" against the PKK and Islamic State (IS) following a suicide bombing in Suruc. The delegate from Turkey

Dhruva Sankhe, Turkey, APQKR blames the PKK for disruption in the region and states: "Turkey will stop at nothing to end this evil. There have been many talks of peace, but time and time again, the PKK have violated ceasefires and provoked our attacks." However, the delegate advocates that "IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) [should

be returned] safely to their respective regions, as well as improving the quality of life for refugees in refugee camps."

Water flow to the Kurdistan Region has been severely restricted by dams in Turkey, and since 2018, the Iranian Government has severely restricted water flowing from the Little Zab. This has resulted in a water crisis, most importantly drinking water.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is working to end the humanitarian crisis "through forms of humanitarian aid from NGOs, the UN, UN agencies, and other nations," (Teoman Kerki, UNDP, APQKR). Kerki added, the UNDP was also looking for "a solution to the political crisis by ceasefires, with the mediation of international organizations

and other nations; and a possible peacekeeping mission with the consent of all the nations in the Kurdish region."

Regardless of views on other related conflicts, there appears to be some agreement from parties involved that those displaced should be able to return to the region.



Photographs by Selina Demaré



Photographs by Selina Demaré

SECURITY COUNCIL

VETO THE VETO

By Nicolas Ghandour

THIMUN's Security Council (SC) operates to keep international peace by identifying the potential threats to peace and security in the world. "The discussion is about countries that face wars, extreme violence and terrorism or that are considered dangerous, and how countries can achieve sustainable safety and peace," said Eva Dadoun (Delegate of Russia, SC).

Accordingly, during the first day of the conference, the SC addressed the contentious situation in Afghanistan. Dadoun said that "The USA wanted to keep troops in the country and slowly replace them with the Blue Helmets. Russia

is absolutely against military presence in Afghanistan."

They were finally able to find a solution with help from China by replacing military action clauses with diplomatic conversations between the Taliban and the Russian Federation: "This solution benefits all, which is what we are looking for," Dadoun affirmed. This illustrates the efficient work of the council and, unfortunately, its drastic gap with reality.

The successful outcome of such crucial problems relies on the ability of delegates to listen to each other and be open to diverse points-of-view. "This aspect is essential so that all

countries can find fulfillment in the clauses," Dadoun said. The Chairs play a significant role as well, especially during lobbying, when they come in and help propose different ideas for the resolution or find a common ground.

The five permanent SC member states (P5) play a particularly important role as they possess the veto power. Dadoun said that "as a P5 country this year, we have the chance to deliberate with other P5s, and compare our perspective in order to value our opinion. We debate clause by clause; main submitters don't associate with full resolutions, but with clauses that add up to form a res-

olution."

The delegates must also try to follow their country's stance, which complicates the debate. Even though disagreements between China, USA, Russia, France and the U.K. occurred for every issue, delegates still strived to find common ground while minimizing the use of the veto.

By the end of Monday, the SC delegates – including the P5 nations – have collaborated with one another efficiently to keep peace in Afghanistan.

Layout by Selma Choden

IS THERE AN END TO FREEDOM OF SPEECH?

by Fatima Djalalova

Where do we draw the line between hate speech and exercise of free speech?

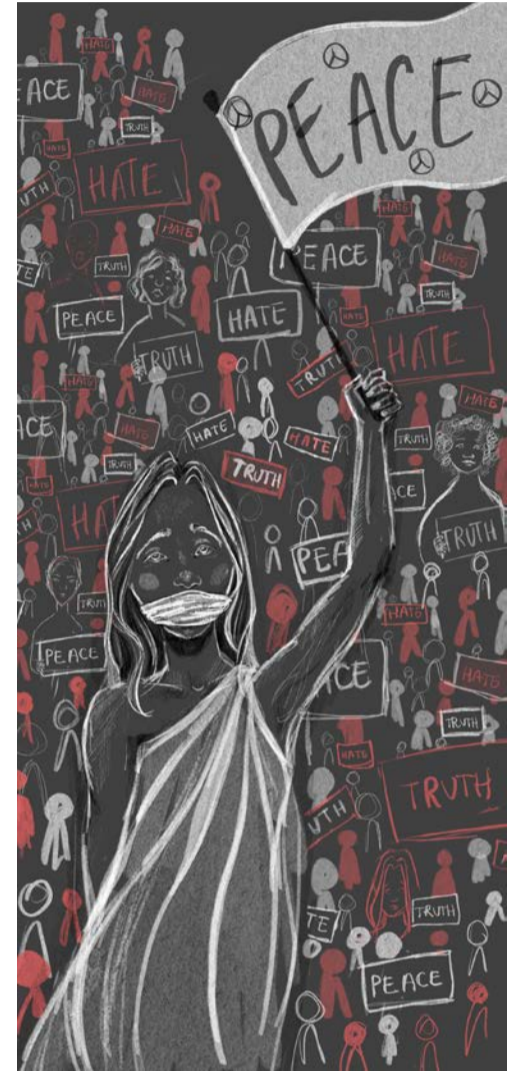
It is vital to distinguish between free speech and hate speech to understand how the government can allow the freedom of expression without resulting in outbursts of violence – probably the main concern of the governments that still put constraints on the press and social media. After all, as history teaches, the introduction of the Glasnost (“Openness”) policy by Gorbachev in 1986 led to an outburst of ugly revelations and was arguably one of the main factors leading to the downfall of the Soviet Union. Similar situations can be found in modern day, where the advancement of the Internet has not only made it easier to express one’s opinions, but has often been the root of conflicts and misunderstandings. So why does the Universal Declaration of Human Rights continue to fiercely defend the right “to hold opinions without interference”? This right ensures that all are able to take part in shaping society and to express concerns – a prerequisite for a healthy democracy and positive changes. But does that mean that the right to express hate should be granted because all opinions have the right to exist? And if not, how do we draw the line between free speech and hate speech?

Freedom of speech aims to spark positive changes and lead to peace, whereas hate speech breeds more problems than before. According to Dr. Richard Friedman’s New York Times article “The Neuroscience of Hate Speech,” aggressive speeches only amplify the problems by awakening rage within the audience. Where the emotions take over, there is little promise of logical and rational thinking, which can lead to conflicts and impulsive actions. A vivid example from history is Hitler, whose anti-Semitic rhetoric spread an antagonistic mood across the population. Therefore, hate speech undermines the purpose behind establishing freedom of speech by affirming the seeds of anger already present, instead of promoting peace.

However, there are other cases when a speech delivered with noble intentions is suddenly perceived as “hate speech” by the audience. Having access to different opinions from all around the world poses a problem of misunderstanding due to different perceptions of the same concepts. Hence, while receiving any information, the first question we should ask ourselves is whether we are the primary audience of the publication. If

not, we should remember that the writer comes from a different context, and it is possible that we do not share the same understanding of concepts. Therefore, it is important that the writers explicitly state the meaning behind any ambiguous words, and that the readers make sure to try to understand the writer’s origins and context of production before perceiving any words as offensive.

To put it simply, people should be free to express opinions as long as they do not offend another person. Freedom of speech ends where the rights of another person begin. Firstly, one should think twice about the end goal before delivering a hate speech. The hate speech only results in more issues, meaning there would be no positive changes in any direction, except for the increase in the conflict. Secondly, both the producers and consumers of information have to be aware of cultural and contextual differences, and make sure to foreground common understandings.



Artwork by Dariia Panasenka

Should THIMUN Model the UN or Be a Model UN?

by Amalia Anhalt

THIMUN, as a Model United Nations conference, seeks to model the United Nations (UN). While the UN is generally considered to be a force of good in the world, it is not free of controversy. One contentious issue is the structure of the UN Security Council (SC), which has the power to issue binding obligations to member states. The SC has five permanent members – the United States, the United Kingdom, France, the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China – chosen in the aftermath of the Second World War. These five members share a monopoly on the veto power, though they share the council with 10 elected members with two-year terms, according to the Council on Foreign Relations. Considering that the UN SC holds the power to create binding resolutions, many worry that its balance of power is not truly democratic.

Many participants in the Historical Security Council (HSC) and SC voiced their concerns with the equity of the current structure. Jonas Dills (President, HSC) expressed his concerns about veto power: “In the UN, veto powers are often used to protect one’s own interests, which is not what the UN is for.” This was a common sentiment, also shared by May Aon (Delegate of Cuba, HSC), who argued that “although it is efficient sometimes, it might not be necessarily a very constructive way to reach solutions that are for the well-being of several parties and not just one.” Relating to individual

versus collective success, Skander Lejmi (Delegate of the United Kingdom, SC), noted, “I think the way that veto power came to be is simply an indication of how people that are in power... would like to keep that power.”

When asked whether THIMUN, which does not have many of the real-world pressures that characterize the UN, should consider simulating a more ideal version of the UN, responses were mixed, but interviewees ultimately sought to retain a true simulation of the UN as is.

Emre Erciyes (Delegate of Côte d’Ivoire, HSC) noted that especially for the HSC, “In order for us to have an accurate experience on the events of 1990, a veto power is necessary.”

According to Dills, THIMUN should simulate the UN as it is in order to “learn how to identify problems in the system and try to solve those



Artwork by Paree Rohera

accordingly.... That is a life skill that every person needs, especially if they want to go into politics.”

Lejmi emphasized the complexity of such a decision when he expressed that “some of the countries in the Security Council need to be in the Security Council because ultimately they have the resources to be able to solve the issues that we are targeting and addressing, but on the other hand, it is ... reprehensible... to have countries with superior powers merely because in a war that happened half a century ago, they did a pretty good job.”

Similarly, Sabrina Baur (Delegate of France, SC) stated that “all of us are here to learn, a lot of us want to go into politics. This is Model United Nations so we want to mimic the actual United Nations as much as possible, so on that aspect, I don’t think we should necessarily be changing anything.” However, Baur continued, “being able to test things out here, and make it work, might be incredibly beneficial for the actual UN, where our decisions today won’t necessarily impact what is happening in the actual world tomorrow.”

At the end of the day, the question of whether THIMUN should directly simulate the UN remains. While there are a plethora of ways that this question could be addressed, I think there is a strong argument to be made that the program should facilitate innovation and encourage students to go further than accepting a presented framework as perfect. While it is certainly valuable to continue to simulate the UN as it currently is, a place for creative new solutions should be allowed to exist alongside it. Giving future politicians the space to innovate could enable a future in which norms are challenged and institutions are elevated. If we reconcile our ideal structures with our current ones, we can move ever closer to a “model” United Nations.

Layout by Selma Choden

Passive Activism: ECO-AWARENESS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

by Emma Nathenson

A retweet. A metal straw. In the whirlwind of eco-activism, how do we find our foothold in making a difference? With no shortage of environmental challenges plaguing our planet, it can seem like a daunting task to approach them. In recent years, youth activists like Greta Thunberg and popularized conservation movements like banning plastic straws have encouraged greater participation in creating change. Social media plays an indisputable role in forwarding environmentalist agendas. While online activism may seem like an equally impactful and accessible solution, we run the risk of forming a generation of “slacktivists.”

Social media can assist in generating awareness on a prominent issue such as climate change. However, the risk in relying on online platforms emerges when one feels a “republish” suffices or when the magnitude of one’s contributions becomes unrealistic.

Recently, posts to ban disposable plastic straws have appeared on platforms like Instagram and Twitter to combat excessive plastic waste. Companies have started marketing reusable drinking straws to their customers. While making the switch from disposable to reusable minimizes waste, individuals who participate in such an effort may feel what Jim Leape, co-director of the Stanford Center for Ocean Solutions, describes as the “moral license.” This sentiment arises when people believe they have done their part to combat an issue whereas, in reality, they have hardly scratched the surface.

What appears as activism is more accurately the “slacktivist” trap. With much of the straw banning movement occurring online, primarily targeting a younger audience, the risk is that our generation only completes low-impact, self-affirming changes like banning straws that constitute under one percent of plastic waste in the oceans.

Adina Cazacu-De Luca, Delegate of Costa Rica from Environmental Commission 1, states, “the danger of social media is if people keep their activism efforts completely online instead of taking action.” She explains that one can effectively “take action by cutting out red meat, thrifting, trying to reduce overall waste. But you can also use social media to get more involved, more aware, more education on any topic of your choosing.”

Influencers like Mikaela Loach, an environmental activist, have used online platforms to develop and educate an audience willing to become more eco-friendly or ready to take action in real life.



Artwork by Valentine Leroux

Loach considers herself an activist and suggests impactful changes her followers can make encouraging that of others. Where many online “activists” fall short is when they stop after proving their own involvement, rather than encouraging that of others. An Internet presence has the power to put issues “in sight” and “in mind,” which is vital in actually affecting change.

Deputy President of the Sustainable Development Committee 2, Selim Hanter claims that “the concept of social media awareness stems largely from how much we see it everyday. Since we have to shift the entire mindset concerning consumption, it has to be something that is ingrained and seen everywhere. People open social media everyday, and because of that, that awareness is so much more effective than just things they see in school.”

However, Hanter raises concerns. “At some point, people can become desensitized to information. We want to make sure that climate change is some-

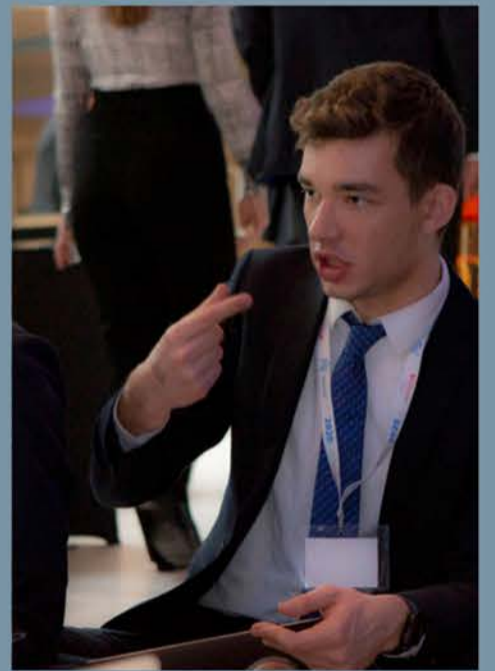
thing people realize is a problem, but when you beat it over their heads so much, at some point they begin to feel it’s less pressing.”

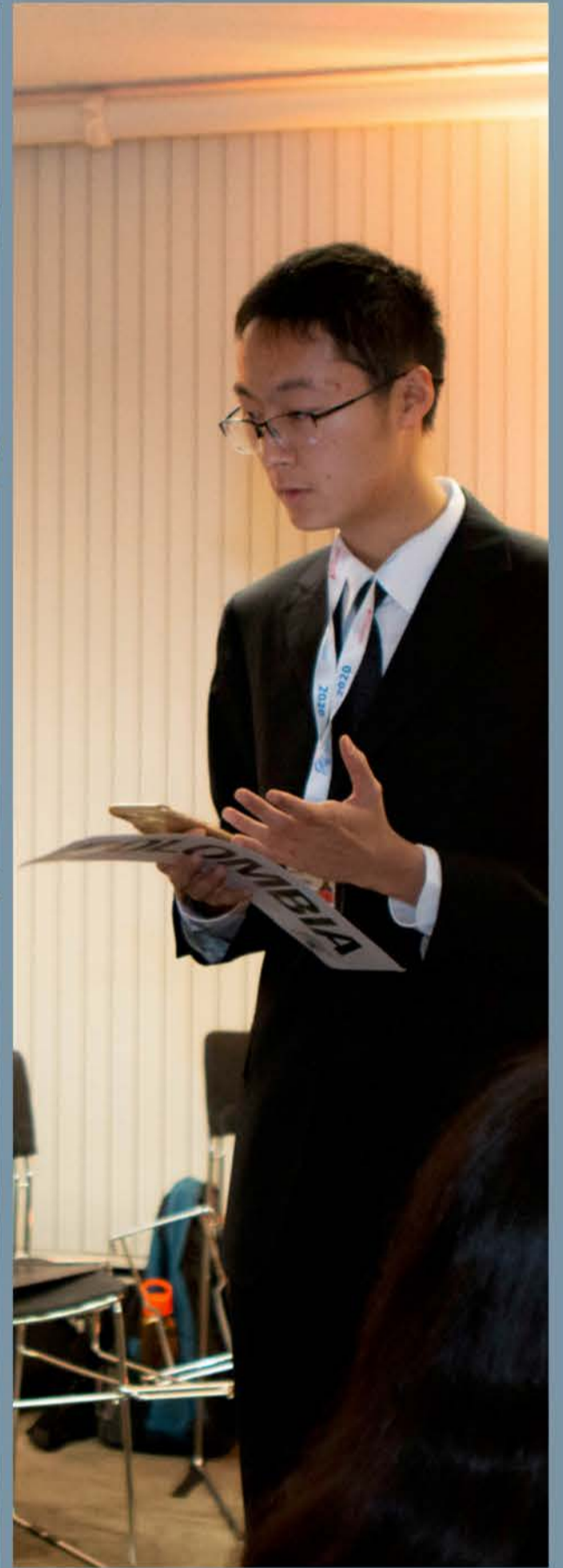
Another risk of online platforms is selectively curating information and opinions. Their activism “slacks” by failing to fulfill the fundamental goal of reaching new audiences in hopes to effect change and can instead fall victim to the ego-boost of a post. Insiyah Haji, Paraguay Ambassador from General Assembly 3, warns that “social media is a platform where people can misinterpret (information).”

The greatest risks of online activism are the posts or tweets with an impact no greater than boosting one’s own ego or shining one’s image. We must treat social media activism as intentional, not just a one-click process for rapid change. When online awareness serves as a starting point rather than an endpoint, the full benefits of such activism can be reaped.



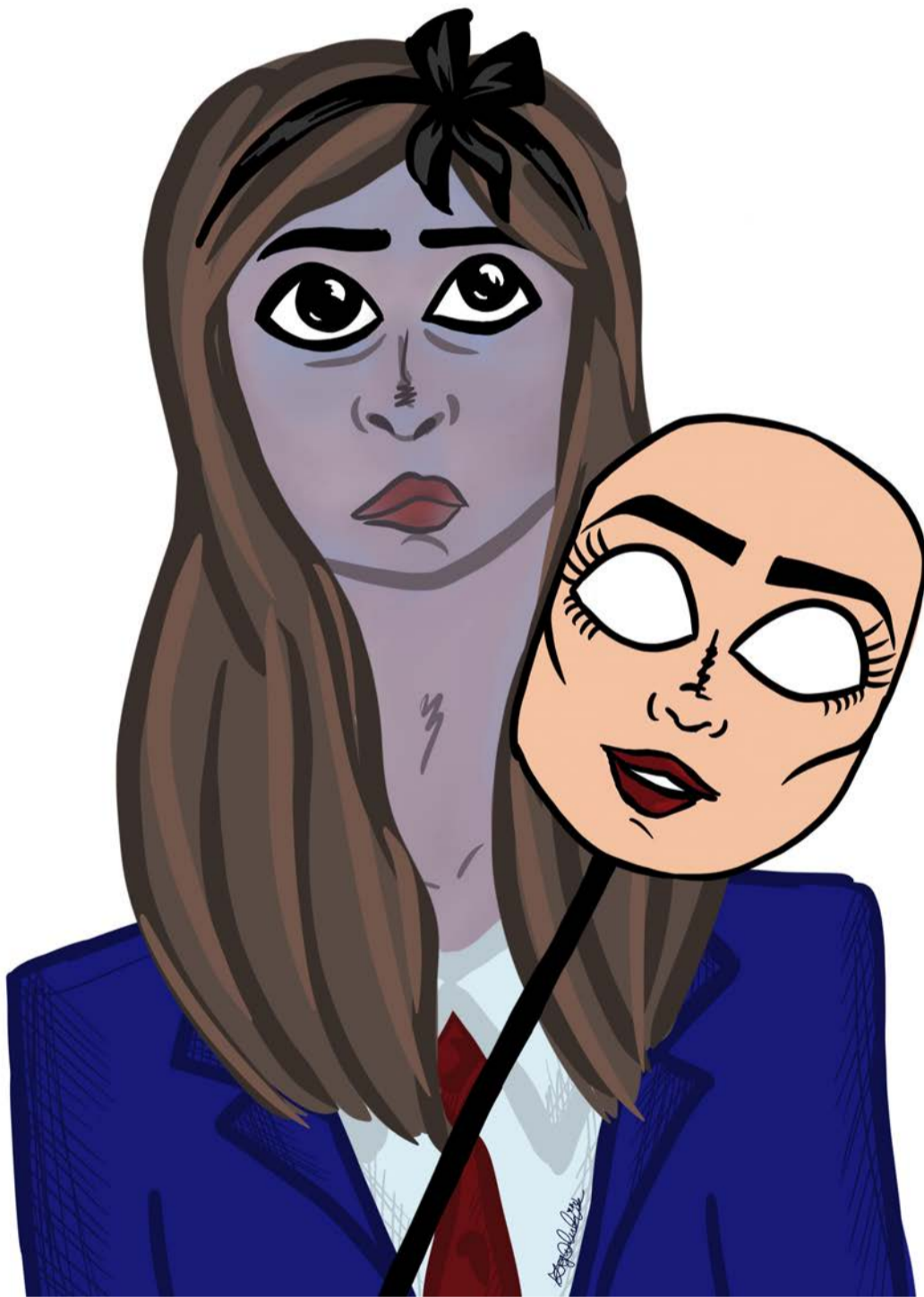
Day 1





IMPOSTER SYNDROME: Do I Belong?

by Natasha Faruqi



Artwork by Zoya Lulu Kirmani

For many delegates, THIMUN's size and reputation can be overwhelming. For first-time delegates, unfamiliar with the experience and general process, THIMUN becomes even more so.

"This is definitely the biggest conference I've ever seen," Madiha Al-Noor (Delegate of Tonga, General Assembly 1) said. "It can definitely be intimidating."

Daksh Khanna (Delegate of Iraq, GA1) agrees. "I've been doing MUN since eighth grade," he said. "But I don't feel prepared at all for THIMUN. I'm nervous and I'm late."

Imposter Syndrome is a collection of feelings of inadequacy that can even persist despite evident success. These "imposters" suffer from self-doubt and a sense of incompetence upon seeing their more experienced counterparts, overriding their sense of qualification. First-time delegates may feel that they are unworthy in comparison to more experienced conference-goers.

A lot of mates have definitely told me they feel intimidated when they look at all the more vocal, more experienced delegates," Ruben O'Mahony (Delegate of Belgium, GA1) said.

"Of course [Imposter Syndrome] exists," Yassin Ibrahim (Delegate of Estonia, Environmental Sub-Commission 1) said. "People get really nervous for their first time. But they have to be confident and they have to focus on their work. If they do so, there is nothing to worry about."

As a first-timer this year, Ibrahim rid himself of insecurities and prepared for the conference by formulating practice arguments and counterarguments.

Similarly, Al-Noor offset her first-THIMUN fears by preparing a draft clause, or portion of a resolution, to merge with her fellow delegates in GA1. Khanna found that keeping up with current events and listening to the news was helpful in overcoming his worries.

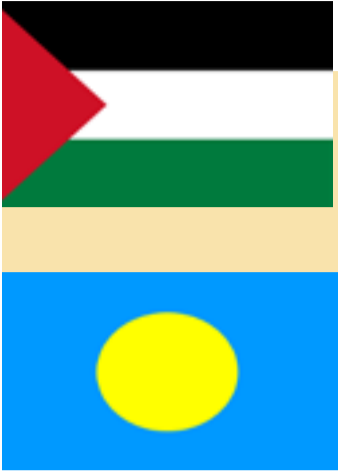
Other delegates find that the very act of being in a committee in session is fear-inducing. "I have struggles speaking in public. I sometimes find it difficult to speak when the committee is in session because I often get lost, but I'm learning," Layan Abdulmohsen Al-Yas (Delegate of San Marino, GA1) said. "I'm meeting new friends and they're helping me keep up when I'm confused."

Some people believe that the THIMUN conference should play a role in accommodating the newer conference-goers to ease the transition. O'Mahony noted that the THIMUN website features formats for writing research reports, as well as samples for each committee, but some believe this may not suffice.

"General workshops about how to speak like a delegate would really help people to just feel like they belong," Khanna said. "It's really hard to speak in huge committees when you aren't confident in yourself, so a workshop would be really helpful."

Overall, O'Mahony believes that new delegates can look to their peers not as competition or intimidation but as friends, in order to overcome Imposter Syndrome. "Everyone's on a level playing field here. It doesn't matter if you're new or old, people treat you with respect regardless," O'Mahony said. "There's really nothing to be afraid of because everyone's figuring it out together."

Layout by Yuzine Yi



MANAGING A SMALL COUNTRY

It is inevitable that many delegations will end up representing some of the world's smallest and most isolated nations. These delegations must face the challenges that come with representing a smaller, lesser-known country.

The information available about their country's political background can be limited, which could hinder delegates' ability to find strong political viewpoints to represent. Ava Chase (Delegate of Palau, General Assembly 1) states that "Palau is very, very small and doesn't have an independent government because it mostly relies on the United States to do most of its politics, so I couldn't do the topic I originally chose on Legal Autonomous Weapons. In fact, it has been hard to find any topic relevant to Palau because it isn't very active in international politics." Small country delegates also face difficulty being taken seriously by other nations. "Because [Lichtenstein] isn't necessarily a big country that holds a lot of political

geopolitical power it doesn't draw much attention from other delegates. This might make it more difficult to debate with and persuade larger countries," said Christopher Shin (Delegate of Liechtenstein, Sustainable Development Commission 1).

Nevertheless, delegates representing smaller nations are not to be underestimated. They still intend to make themselves heard and fully participate in their committees. "The UN has a lot of mechanisms to make sure that all delegates are represented equally regardless of population or size. There is only one representative for one country [in each committee], so although I am part of a smaller country, I feel like everyone has an equal voice and is able to express their opinions freely," tells Shin. Eric Sauter (Delegate of Costa Rica, SDC 1) also believes representing a small country should not prevent success in debate. "It shouldn't change your mindset. You should still try to go for head submitter and first yield so

that you can properly represent your country." Sauter adds that "as long as you are confident and have a big voice the other delegates will listen to you." In addition, Shin stated that there are advantages to representing one of the smallest nations in the world. "When representing a small country, it is more flexible and a lot easier to be negotiating with other countries. There aren't many strong alliances we have to stay loyal too." Vitalia Zadnipyranets (Delegate of Lithuania, GA 1) agreed, stating "Lithuania's neighbors are very friendly and all quite small, so we can create our own coalition together. Also, it is part of bigger organizations such as the EU, so we do have natural allies in Europe if we need their support." Other delegates also agreed that smaller nations do not usually have strong opposition; therefore, propositions and amendments are relatively unchallenged. The UN aims to give an equal voice to all of its member states; thus it is important that all countries, no matter their size, are



well represented by their delegates and have the opportunity to be successful within their committee.

by Lea Henaus
Artwork by Charlotte Widmaier

A LITTLE HELP FOR THE TOURISTS

by Nicolas Ghandour

While events at the World Forum will take up most of your time, you may find a few hours to go and explore the city of The Hague. To make your stay even more enjoyable, here is MUNITY's little help for the tourists!

The Hague was founded in 1248 by Guillaume II. Today The Hague, or "Den Haag" in Dutch, is the third-largest city in the Netherlands with more than 500,000 inhabitants. It is often called the capital of the legal world for its numerous courts and law institutions, also being the democratic center of The Netherlands. If you want to know more about the city, you can participate in a free guided tour around the city.

Here is a quick selection of historical monuments that you should try to visit during your stay: If you like statues, you have to stop by the Madurodam. This park pres-

ents thousands of small replicas of famous Dutch monuments on more than 17,000 square meters! Famous buildings (to the scale 1:25) are thoroughly reproduced to the smallest detail. Gardens, castles, and even the Schiphol airport are reproduced to a small scale; you'll feel like a giant walking in a miniature world. "A great place to spend time is the city center; you can find many good and trendy restaurants to go with your delegation," says three-time participant Leonard Yoonjae Lee (President, Sustainable Development Commission). After a long day of debating, deliberating and speaking, a cozy place where you can share good food and converse with friends is the first thing that might come to mind. In that case, here are a few places to enjoy:

The international city of Den Haag offers many exotic restaurants, such as Warung Bude Kati, an excellent Indonesian restaurant. They serve typical Indonesian food, such as different types of fried rice, chicken with sambal (Indonesian spicy sauce), sambal goreng (shrimp) and Rames Ikan (fish with rice). In case you were looking for typical Dutch food, Febo, a fast-food chain restaurant, serves traditional Dutch dishes. Croquettes are their specialty. For lunch, you have the delights of THIMUN's canteen. Rumors say it is tastier and healthier than last year. However, according to Lee, "the sandwiches they give you at THIMUN don't have much meat in them, I recommend packing your own lunch or going to Starbucks, it is just five minutes away from the

World Forum!"

Lee concluded by stating "THIMUN is an amazing opportunity to meet people coming from other parts of the world and gain experience, so step out of your bubble and be as active as possible!" Now you're fully ready to make the best out of the conference. May this little essential guide for tourists enhance your visit in Den Haag for the week!

Artwork by Martina Rodriguez



The Binnenhof is one of the many places you can visit in The Hague.



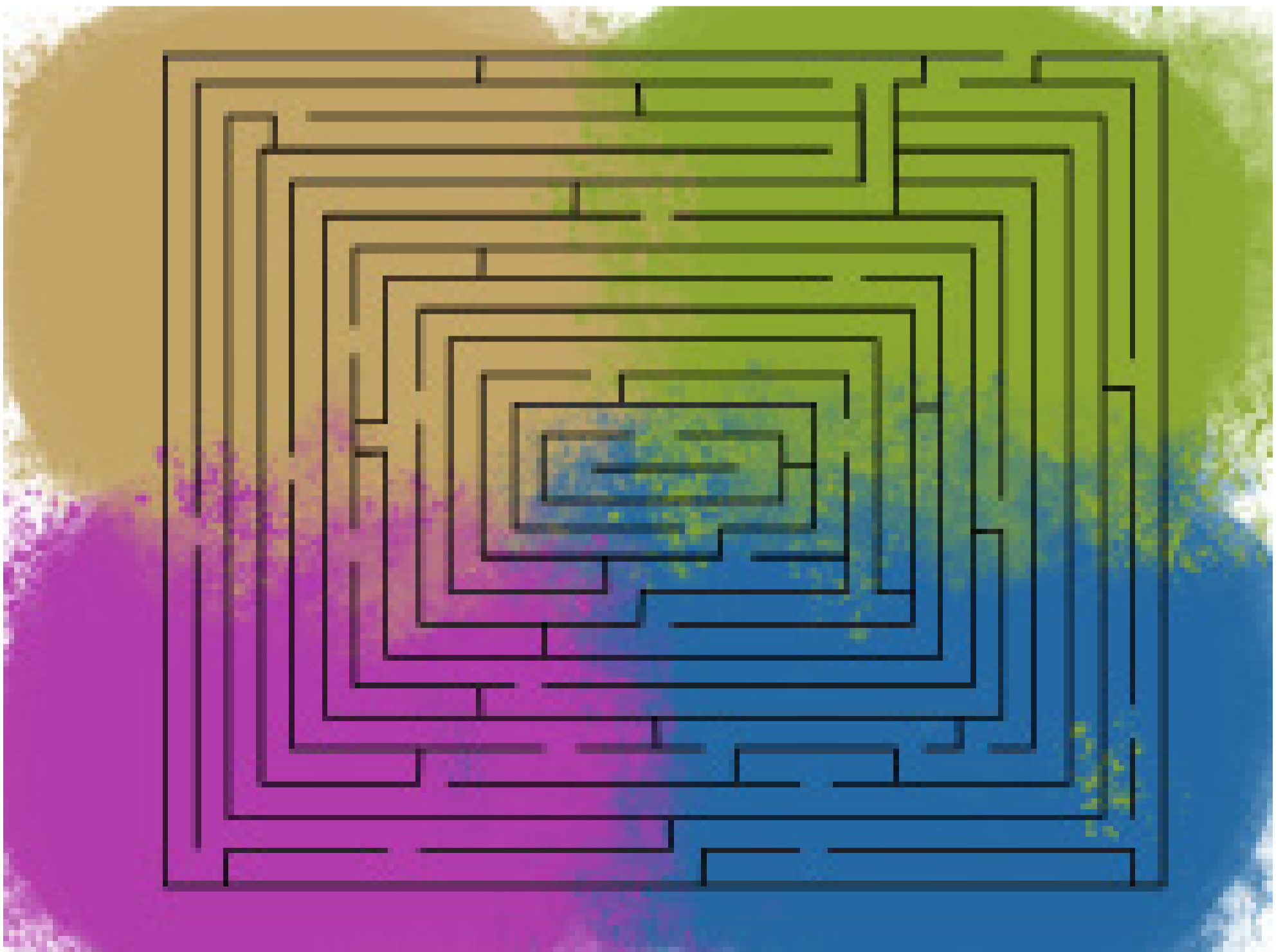
The future is in our hands. We can't change our past, but we can decide what our future will look like. Be confident and act now!



Artwork by Valentine Leroux, Tep Khemarin Chan

Will You Make Your Way Through the World Forum?

Artwork by Valentine Leroux



Layout by Melody Tai