

Reflections on hope - Margot Wallström

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Ladies and Gentlemen, Dalkullor och Masar,

Do you remember the story about Pandora? According to Greek mythology she was given a box by Zeus. He wanted to punish the humans and in the box he had put all evil things. When she got the box she was warned never to open it. Of course but she could not resist the temptation and all evil flew out over the world to torment mankind. But one thing remained in the box. Hope! Pandora finally opened it again and hope fluttered out, released to comfort in times of evil and hardship.

I want to talk about hope. **Because hope is an interesting and important word that can be used in so many different ways.** For instance, I am quite sure that many of us here tonight are hoping that we will be able to put away our fleece jackets... and that the summer will come back... **Martin Luther King** was a great leader who understood the **strategic value of hope**. He described the inhuman face of racism. But he also described the dream of equality – and gave a vision of a better future, what it could look like from the mountaintop. And **Vaclav Havel** said that *“hope is not the same as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.”*

Hope is not easy given the times we live in. When we see what happens around us, abroad and on our own doorsteps; climate change, poverty, terrorism, wars and human trafficking... **we risk being overwhelmed and lose hope.**

Tage Danielson - a Swedish poet/author/comedian/film-maker – had a wonderful sense of humour. He used to say **that even if we really didn't have a reason to be optimistic, that was not a problem at all, because we could always invent one.** He would talk about **hope as absurd optimism.**

Absurd optimism is born out of despair. But it entails a **steadfast belief in the human power and ability** to create something good during our short stay on earth. **Optimism** is often perceived as the **opposite of realism, and can accordingly be viewed as an absurd conviction. But that is the entire point.** Absurd optimism believes in hope as a tool, as a driving force against injustice and destruction. It believes in the effects of humanism and optimism; that is constructive resistance and progressive change.

I think **Tage** meant that when we tell stories of desperation, if we expect people to want to learn new ways and change, we must begin by offering hope – **a motivation that shows that change - a sustainable world - is possible and makes sense.**

What Tällberg forum is about this year certainly makes sense - "*How on earth can we live together? Learn to live to learn*". **The underlying theme of the Forum** is the radical systems transformation that climate change requires. We have to learn to think differently about the way our economic and social systems function and how they fit with nature. And we need to change the way we act as individuals, employees, consumers and as leaders.

For me climate change is a story about desperation and hope. It can literary kill us or it can save us. As we deliver the diagnosis - as Al Gore has done so effectively - we share news that is devastating, immediate, and very powerful. Climate change - will test us, threaten us and force us to change. Change, the unknown, is scary. But it doesn't have to be.

Because we have reasons to be optimistic, even to be very optimistic. We do actually have the know-how, the tools, **the technology and economy to fight it!** And technologically, fighting climate change is in fact an easier target than when John F Kennedy said that we would reach the moon by the end of the '60s.

If we look at Europe, we have taken the first steps. Climate change will be the primary driver in our biggest decisions over the next 20 years. It will define our major economic investments, tax policies and foreign policy. In fact, all our policies will have to be developed within the context of climate change – we will be forced to do so. Take migration as an example, we will soon have to deal with both internal and external population flows, with displacements of climate change refugees. It is that big of a threat, that big of an opportunity to reinvent the world – to create a sustainable world that is more just. It is not merely one of many important issues - it is the issue that will define our generation. It is our destiny.

If we deal with this challenge successfully, the European Union we will have led a transformation of the global energy system. We will be respected around the world because we will have engaged with our global partners in a respectful way. We will be safer because we're less dependent on foreign sources of energy. We will be a continent driven by pathos rather than power. The citizens of Europe will have taken part in this reinvention. Together with the rest of the world we will have done something amazing - not only for ourselves but for our children, grandchildren – for generations to come...

In the end it will be our daily decisions - yours and mine - that will determine how many degrees the temperature will rise. The action of every single individual will matter; if we walk, take the train, switch off the light, recycle, cycle, get a hybrid car, start growing bio-fuels and buy green... If WE do these small and big things, at the scale we can manage, a better future will be ours.

So, in a way there is more hope now than ever before, for change, action and survival. I think perhaps that absurd optimism finally has become possible realism and that is indeed very hopeful... Ladies and gentlemen, hope is not like a soil nutrient, added only to foster growth in the spring. It is far more important. It is the seed. It is life.

Thank you,