

The Times Are Changing.

Professors and distinguished members of the Department!
Beloved Families and Friends of the lucky few!
Dear classmates and soon to be graduates!

It was the introductory lecture of our Master's Program. The Director of Studies stood in front of us, right over there at the main building. "This program will challenge you!" he said. "We expect a lot of you, and you can expect a lot of us!" Well, everybody in this beautiful church can tell a different story about our challenges.

For some, the challenge was to accept, that there is more about peace, than the absence of war. Some were challenged by stats and graphs and the nasty difference between causality and correlation. Others found their challenge in citation styles and many of at least the internationals had their individual challenge with skatteverket. Most of us, this honorable mention has to be made these days, found out about some deep incompatibilities between the human nature and studentportalen.

It is my honor and privilege to speak today not just following Peter Wallensteen, but most importantly to speak to this crowd of amazing people.

The Times they are a changing'!

*Come gather 'round people
Wherever you roam
And admit that the waters
Around you have grown
And accept it that soon
You'll be drenched to the bone
If your time to you is worth savin'
Then you better start swimmin' or you'll sink like a stone
For the times they are a-changin'*

Exactly 50 years ago, Bob Dylan released his song "The Times they are a changin'". It is a song, expressing the very spirit of an era. The spirit of a generation. That song became an icon of civil rights struggle and still is performed, both in protest camps as well as in the White House.

Imagine! 1964. It was a time when nobody knew how the world would turn. The second World War was only one childhood away and the world was separated into good and evil, a classification very much subject to change depending on the side of the window you stood.

Life was so simple. Life was so complicated.

And Dylan goes forth:

*Come writers and critics
Who prophesize with your pen
And keep your eyes wide
The chance won't come again*

*And don't speak too soon
For the wheel's still in spin
And there's no tellin' who that it's namin'
For the loser now will be later to win
For the times they are a-changin'*

Come writers and critics...

Dylan must have known the Peace and Conflict Research community. Descriptions and Analysis of wars and conflict are what made this extraordinary department famous. But what makes this department extraordinary are the writers and critics, the scholars, researchers and students who dig down in the most cruel and horrific moments of mankind, just to keep our eyes wide opened.

And when we look around. We find hope. Life is so simple. Life is so complicated.

And at the end, there is a Paper to publish.

*Come senators, congressmen
Please hear the call
Don't stand in the doorway
Don't block up the hall
For he that gets hurt
Will be he who has stalled
There's a battle outside and it is ragin'
It'll soon shake your windows and rattle your walls
For the times they are a-changin'*

Well, there are no Senators and Congressman among us yet. But there surely are those amongst us, who will shape policy and politics in future. Let us all keep in mind the amazing variety of truth we experienced in hundreds of discussions. Let us all keep in mind the creativity and passion we experienced when sitting together with the wonderful people of our class. And let us all keep in mind that the answers are so simple. And that the answers are so complicated.

The fourth verse in Dylan's song is about the parents who should not stay in the way of their children changing the world. Well, as we are all gathered here today, we surely have families and friends supporting us in our way to go for it. To go for the better in ourselves and to improve the world. Or at least to pay off our student loans.

*The line it is drawn
The curse it is cast
The slow one now
Will later be fast
As the present now
Will later be past
The order is rapidly fadin'
And the first one now will later be last
For the times they are a-changin'*

I am standing here today speaking on behalf of the lucky few to be active participants of research and peace work in the future. We don't know what our future will look like. We leave Uppsala, this cozy little research bubble of ours, with new skills, new experiences and new friends. Some of us will be an active part of the research community, some will work in the field, finding some actual applications for the theories we construct between hours of Fika and the fifth Beer at the Nation's Pub. And others will shape the agendas and policies around the world.

Yes, Uppsala has challenged most of us in a certain way. And yes, most of us have challenged Uppsala in one way or the other. But although life is complicated. Life is simple!

Whatever the challenges were, most of all our time being students here was not a challenge, but a pleasure. An intense time, united in the diversity of extraordinary hearts and minds.

And when some of you thought "oh, 1964, he is going for the old stuff", let me end with my most favorite ancient quote. Because the times were changing, even two and a half thousand years ago.

Tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis.

The times are changing and we change within it.

Congratulations and godspeed to the lucky few!

Thank you.

[This speech was given by David Ermes at the Graduation Ceremony in Holy Trinity Church Uppsala on June 5th, 2014 on behalf of the Class of 2014 at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University.]