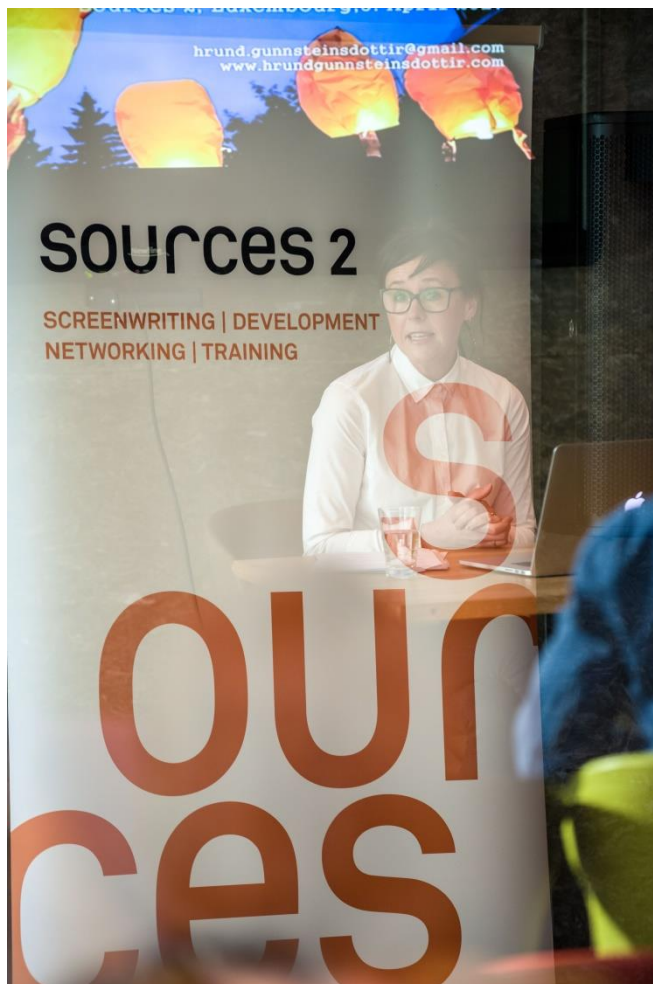


Hrund Gunnsteinsdóttir

The Greatest Weapon of Storytellers is not a 'Pink and Fluffy' Feeling

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HRUND GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR I just arrived yesterday, but so far it's been great to have nice conversations with some of you. I've read all of your synopses, and I think you're all doing an awesome job. I hope that I'll be able to say a few things that you maybe haven't thought about lately, or put other things in context that you may not have done yourself. I also have a lot to learn from you, so all the conversations we have I really welcome. I'm going to try to sit still while I talk. I'm not sure if I can, so if I stand up it's just the way I'm used to talking.



So the greatest weapon of storytellers is not just the pink and fluffy feeling. I want to tell you a little bit about my background, because where I come from is maybe not a conventional career. The things that I draw from are areas I've actually worked in, things that I've actually worked on or researched, etc. So in short, before I turned thirty, I had been the head of UNIFEM in Kosovo after the war. Shortly after that I got a permanent position with the UN, and started my career as a permanent professional with the UN, in Geneva. I had hit a wall or had a burnout, or whatever you want to call it, before I turned thirty. Before I turned thirty, I guess I was twenty-nine, I decided to retire from the permanent position with the UN in spite of the fact that most people told me that was totally insensible. But the reason I did it was partly because I really believe in the ideals of the UN. I wanted to make the world a better place, I was really moving up fast in the world of aid work and humanitarian assistance. But what I really felt was that we were serving a system instead of the system serving the people and the planet.

I've aged a little bit since I was twenty-nine; I turn forty-three this year.

What I decided to do after I resigned from the UN was to really- well, first of all I was a mess, physically and emotionally. I really needed to piece myself together. And I really had to ask myself a very adult question: What do I want to do with my life? How do I want to live it? And for whom am

I doing all this? Because I had been very occupied with fulfilling external demands on me. My CV looked amazing, all these things. But after this tough personal experience of hitting a wall, things changed. And after that, professionally I have a principle: to follow ideas, based on my ideals, in the forms that they want to take. So consciously I navigate different sectors and disciplines. So when people ask me what I do for a living, it's always going to be a very long answer or just a straight lie.

So today, for example, I am the chair of Iceland's biggest innovation and technological development fund. I occasionally work as a consultant for the UN, but only on projects that I really think can make a difference the way I see it. I've also worked as an entrepreneur. In the past I put together a university program, and now, for the next couple of years or so, I am hoping I will be working with a few universities on another education programme. And my goal is always to bring together people from different sectors, different disciplines to break down the barriers that we've created in our minds and in our systems. And I'm very keen to think about all possible issues from the perspective of creative and critical viewpoints. That's kind of what I stand for.

One of the ideas I had a few years ago, after I had started a university diploma program after the bank collapse in Iceland – that's one of the reasons Iceland is known today! We really royally collapsed when it comes to the financial system in 2008. For a few years at that time, I had been thinking about what kind of education I would like to have gotten. My conclusion was that I'd been brought up in a very rational, analytical, logical environment that was organised in silos. I was well-trained in that fashion, but I really, really missed the creative and critical and all that has to do with following your own voice. I didn't know the word for it at the time, but I was kind of thinking about that.

So the bank system collapses in Iceland, a lot of people lose their jobs, and I hook up with the Arts Academy and two other universities, and we put together an academic program called 'Prisma', which means prism in English. So just like you put the ray of the sun through a prism, and break it into the different colours. We wanted to do that with the students' inner world, refract it through different disciplines in order to sharpen their creative, critical and original thinking.

That was the first introduction to the methodology. We ran this for two years, and the results were amazing and very rewarding. We could just see how many people lit up, and a lot of people started their own businesses or found what they really want to do with their life, which is very good. But for me, it was the start of something else too.

I wanted to explore these ideas that I will be explaining throughout this talk today in a more global context. So going out again into the world, I decided that instead of doing a Ph.D., I would do a documentary film. So the documentary film I did with a colleague of mine, Kristín Ólafsdóttir from Klikk Production, took about six years to think through, to sell, to actually create. We launched it last year. It had its world premiere in Berlin, and it's been traveling to different countries since then. I just heard that Netflix is going to buy it globally and translate it into many languages and show it all over the world, which is awesome for us because I guess it's the same for all of us: we want to do films, we want to put something out into the world, and we would like for as many people as possible to see it.

So we're not screening the film here, but it's available on iTunes in Switzerland, Austria, and Germany, and it will be on Netflix worldwide in mid-July.

So that's my very brief introduction, - or not. One thing to add: I am in an expert group with the World Economic Forum. The reason why I'm telling you this is because I'm going to be talking about things that come from that context later on.

For the next hour or so, I will be focusing on how intuition shapes our minds and consciousness, and the stories you tell. And I will be going back and forth a little bit from the very personal inner compass of the writer or filmmaker to the very big context of the world we live in, and possibly the future of humankind. So we're going to be a little bit adventurous because for me, these are all very, very interconnected things, and it's a very, very interesting lens through which to look at the world we live in today.

So if the purpose of films is to tell stories, then a screenwriter is the one who breathes initial life into the characters, worlds, and dramas unfolding on screen. In our big world of data, the world we live in today, overflow of information, distraction, rapid changes, and political polarisation, storytelling is taking centre stage. And I think it's taking centre stage in maybe a deeper way than maybe most of us understand. Stories, in this very broad sense of the word, help us relate, to make sense of the complexity that surrounds us. And stories have the ability to make what often feels like a fragmented world become more holistic and clear. But stories also enhance the sense of fragmentation, as I'm sure you've noticed, and disconnection and lack of overview through social media and all the different things going on.

There's this wonderful historian, Timothy Snyder, who just said: "Today I try to avoid TV and media online for my historical research because it goes like this: 'Putin is on his way to the meeting', and then I wait for four minutes. And then the reporter says: 'Putin is at the meeting right now.' And I know he's at the meeting; I'm really excited. Then I wait for another whole hour, and the reporter says: 'Putin has just left the meeting'. And the report is over.

This is a small example of how fragmented the ways in which we consume media and information are, and how they are shaping the way we understand things, and maybe shaping the ways that we are really interested in knowing more about the stories that we are being told.

So to tell good stories, writers need to rely on their creative and analytical skills. What I want to say at the start is we rely much more on our intuition than most of us think or care to think. Those of us interested in knowing more about this, I would recommend the Nobel Prize winner in economics, Daniel Kahneman, who is really doing an amazing job at telling people in business and corporations and policymaking to explain the extent to which we are so not rational or objective, even if we like to think we are. Most of the things that we think, decide, and act upon are based on our intuition. Our intuition is extremely flawed; it's full of biases. We have a huge negativity bias. If I tell you a negative thing such as a negative piece of news, I will need to replace it with 30-50 positive stories so that it will have the same value in your minds. That's our negativity bias.

So intuition is very flawed; it's not always correct. It doesn't always produce the best decisions when it comes to giving loans or something. But as artists and creative people, we also know that misunderstandings and the wrong direction are often extremely fruitful and wonderful for any creative endeavour. But intuition is key to our artistic vision, feeling for what can be, ideas and so on. They don't have to be 'correct' but they express something human, meaningful, a deeper understanding of life.

The Icelandic definition for intuition is *Innsæi*. That's the name of the film we made: *Innsæi - The Sea Within*, or *The Power of Intuition* as it is also called. That's what I refer to as the greatest weapon of storytellers. And I want to explain to you how and why from an individual perspective. But I also want to shed some kind of a light on how and why in the world that we live in today.

So to the basics: What is storytelling? What is storytelling to you?

AUDIENCE Sharing.

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR So sharing information?

AUDIENCE More than information.

AUDIENCE Telling what we cannot see.

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR So when you say sharing what we cannot see, you mean in terms of in films?

AUDIENCE Yes.

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR So the power of the visual story.

AUDIENCE It's like it's articulating emotional mass that is somehow shared by most people, and taking it out and making an archetype of it.

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR Very good. So it needs to have a strong resonance for people.

AUDIENCE It has to appeal to people. Of course, it is a personal story. It starts with a personal thing, but it has to go to something universal, otherwise it makes no sense.

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR Any other thoughts on storytelling?

AUDIENCE Conversation. It's a conversation.

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR So storytelling is about starting a conversation, igniting a conversation, or monitoring a conversation?

AUDIENCE Engaging all of the above.

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR Very good. These are all really valid and good points, and this is exactly what storytelling is.

I wanted to share with you a perspective on storytelling in a very broad context, which is shared in a book called *Sapiens*. I don't know if you know that book.

AUDIENCE It's quite well-known.

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR Have you read it.

AUDIENCE No, only the beginning, because I borrowed it from someone. I wanted to buy it.

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR I recommend it. It's by the Israeli author [Yuval Noah] Harari. The way that he talks about storytelling is really interesting in the book. One of the ways is simply this:

"Storytelling is our speciality. It's the basis for everything that we do as a species. So if human beings did not tell stories, we would not be the species that we are today. It's that basic to our co-existence."

One of the things that I found interesting is that he says there are a couple of things that make us different from other animals on planet earth. One of the things apart from inventing fire and stuff like that is gossiping and telling stories. Gossiping is one of the key elements that make us who we are. And I found that a little bit amusing. It's not like you would pride yourself of being a big

gossiper, but it makes sense because we tell stories and we share them in different ways. I will talk a little more about that later. But referring to Harari, he says: "When we started to tell stories, we became able to share our imaginations." I just want to underline 'imagination'. "Sapiens has this unique ability not only to communicate about reality, but to create completely new realities like God, money and all kinds of fantasies. It is through the shared stories we tell each other," Harari says, "that Sapiens came to believe in religions, capitalism, nations, justice, and human rights. To trust money, books, and laws, and to be enslaved by bureaucracy, timetables, and consumerism. If you look at politics," and I continue to quote Harari, "if you look at the economy, it's all based on storytelling. Money doesn't have any value in itself. It's just a story we invented that these little pieces of paper are worth a certain number of loaves of bread. As long as everybody believes in the story, it works."

So I'm sure that right now if we think about the economy, politics, society, wherever we come from, whatever news we just read yesterday or today, we're probably thinking about a story that's been told and people believe in it, and we just think it's ridiculous, but it works. My thought is, for example, Trump and the elections in the US. He opened up a story that had just been closed. He mentioned a few words, he mentioned a context, and then all these people rose up that didn't have a voice before. So the power of stories is incredible, and it doesn't matter if they're true or not.

In Iceland, we have one Nobel Prize winner, and I just felt like I really needed to mention his name. No, not really, but I do really love this quote by Halldór Laxness: "The role of the writer is to sense the world, the tide of time, and share it with the reader." That's kind of the tone that I want to put on the conversation of intuition in the world and how it interacts with the world around us. As writers and as filmmakers, we are definitely sensing the tide of time. And the tide of time doesn't have to be in a globalised manner. It can just be in a small house somewhere in the countryside. But we're always sensing something that's going on, and then we want to project it into the world. But if you think about the tide of time now, if you think about this sentence – for you personally or in a bigger context – what comes to mind? What is the characteristic of the tide of time now, either in this room or in Luxemburg, Europe, the world?

AUDIENCE Too much information.

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR Too much information. Very good. Any other thoughts? Don't think about it too much. What comes to you when you think about the tide of time?

AUDIENCE Speed. It's faster.

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR Speed. Yeah, it's faster. Speed. Lots of information. Anything else?

AUDIENCE Connected.

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR Connected.

AUDIENCE More alienation.

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR More alienation.

AUDIENCE I would say more disconnection. Information is very scattered. It's the opposite of being whole.

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR Right. Very good. I agree that at the same time that we are becoming more interconnected and online, we can also feel more scattered, dispersed, fragmented, disconnected. Other thoughts?

AUDIENCE Artificial.

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR Yeah. What do you mean by that?

AUDIENCE We're really far from nature. We can go for weeks without seeing the sky.

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR That's a very good point as well. I spent last semester at Yale University in the US. Yale is one of the best universities in the States. There was this wonderful young student that I spent a day with. She was nineteen. She comes from a poor family that couldn't afford to pay her fees. So she's at Yale on a scholarship because she's so intelligent. And she really is. We spent a day in Washington. And when we went to lunch, there was this buffet with three big plates of the main meal. And she was standing beside me and asked: "What is this?" And I'm like: "This is chicken." "Oh, is this chicken? Really?" And then there was the next plate, and she asked: "What is this?" And I said: "This is salmon." And she'd never seen salmon before. And then there were vegetables, and she had never seen them like this before.

She explained to me that her dad is a truck driver, and all the food that she has eaten is frozen, and chicken nuggets and stuff like that. So it's wrapped in something to your point. I just thought it was amazing. What is education? What are schools for if we don't know what food is? But anyway, that was interesting.

This is great raw material to work with. Do you know John Baldessari, the visual artist? Yeah? So this is one of the images he made. [Shows Baldessari's *Pencil Story*]: "I had this old pencil on the dashboard of my car for a long time. Every time I saw it, I felt uncomfortable since its point was so dull and dirty. I always intended to sharpen it and finally couldn't bear it any longer and did sharpen it. I'm not sure, but I think that this is something to do with art." I've grown really fond of this image.

So he noticed this pencil, which is really not a big deal. But it was just lying around, and he couldn't stand it any longer. He had to go and amend it somehow, make it a little bit better, or do something with it. When I was introduced to this work of art in 2004, as I told you before, I was just a mess. I was trying to piece myself together. So the way I took this image was to say that, okay, I need to sharpen my pencil. So how do I do that? And all of a sudden, I became the pencil. Today, I would think about it a little bit differently. I would think: Okay, so this is a pencil. So what comes out of it are the stories that we tell and the power of stories. I just wanted to bring this image along because it's very, very simple. And I think in the complexity of everything and the things that I'm going to be talking, bear in mind that our attention is really our most valuable asset. And the way we pay attention is important. Things can be very simple to make a difference.

So we don't see things as they are; we see them as we are. And now I'm going to be talking a little bit about the things that you are experts in, and that has something to do with attention. But before that, I want to show you a picture. This is a familiar picture of an iPhone or a mobile phone. It has only one percent left of its energy, and we're probably panicking, and we want to re-charge it because otherwise we'll lose connection with the world around us. But I chose this picture because this is the way our mind works. We often talk about sub-consciousness and subliminal consciousness, but some cultures in the world don't divide consciousness into sub- and consciousness. It's all just consciousness.

So let's say consciousness is 100 percent, and this is our very focused mind: one percent. This is how awake we are in our heads throughout the day. So there's like millions of bits of information that we're taking in throughout the day through our senses, through our bodies, through all the different types of senses. Science today, for example, is pinning down how you and I can connect with brainwaves without necessarily knowing it. There are so many things going on around us that we don't really notice. So whether it's one percent or five or ten percent, as some research suggests, it doesn't really matter. But it's a very small proportion of our minds that is really focused and alert.

So you mentioned speed and you mentioned lots of information, so I want us to think a little bit about how we choose to use this one percent of our mind. Do we filter the information that comes in? And I'm sorry to use this word, but there's this guy who said to me once: "Have you ever realised that you're a trash can?" And I was like: "Ah, no. I haven't." But his point was if you walk around the world and you read stuff and look at stuff, you're taking in a lot of information. And if you don't filter that somehow, if you don't manage that somehow, you may as well just be a trash can. People just throw things at you, and you just fill yourself with it. If you think about me as a trash can, and you can see that the one percent at the top is based on the trash that's below it, that's the way that we shape our intuition. That's the way that our attention is so very important for the ways in which we tell stories and for the stories that we notice, and for the ways in which we choose to convey stories to other people because they are also trash cans. Today more than ever, we need to be so aware of this because we're fighting for the quality of our attention, which then again shapes our minds, our actions, our writing, everything.

So the "pink and fluffy feeling thing" in the title of my talk is taken from a guy called Iain McGilchrist, whom we interviewed in the documentary film that we launched last year. He's a psychiatrist, and he has also spent a big chunk of his life writing a book called *The Master and His Emissary*. He talks about the left and right brain. He talks about how very, very stuck we are in a very small part of our left brain, the logical, rational part of the brain. And he says: "Intuition is not just a pink and fluffy feeling." He says it with great passion. "It is the ability to sense the subtle things, the things that lie outside the focus of attention, subliminal things, the body language of people, the silences in between, the unsaid things, the intention that lies behind what people say."

So gossip, for example, and conversations – we all gossip in one way or another. And when we sit down and we decide to gossip, it doesn't always have to be negative. But it's a very strong evolutionary thing that humans do. And we do it to understand each other and because it nourishes us in some way or another. Sometimes it's quite mean, sometimes it's not. It just depends. But when we gossip, how do we gossip? If I ask you about somebody's divorce, am I asking because I'm really concerned that somebody got divorced? Or am I asking because I *really* want to know that somebody is suffering in their marriage apart from me? Or am I asking because I want to learn something about myself?

So when we think about gossip this way, it's such a beautiful way to enter the human mind because it's all based around intuition. It's all based around how people are trying to find resonance. If I have a meeting with somebody, and it's a meeting about the brain and neuroscience and what we're going to do in the policy of France or whatever, and then we go out for coffee, and that person puts down his or her guard and starts gossiping with me, it gives me a whole new perspective on that person. You know what I mean? And because I'm reading this book by Harari, I just wanted to talk a little bit about gossip because it's such a lovely way of understanding people and the world around us. When we are at work, we talk about dry, professional things. But when we are out of work, we talk about things that really lubricate our minds and emotions. That's the gossip part.

What we also do is we gossip in groups. I think that's also a wonderful way how he [Harari] explains how gossip has helped us to evolve. Take ants, for example. I've been to the Amazon rain forest. It's very interesting. So you will know that ants are really well organised. They have a very strong hierarchy. And the way they do things is so important for the whole ecosystem of the Amazon. But they don't gossip. I don't think they do because if they did, they would maybe tell someone: Well, I love this person, but he doesn't love me back. Or this one has all the power and I don't have any. Or I'm afraid to walk up this hill. I might lose the leaf, and that's going to destroy the whole chain. They don't gossip like that. But if ants start to gossip, maybe the Amazon rain forest would collapse. I don't know. It's that kind of a glue for us. Have you ever thought about gossip in this way? I haven't. I find it really interesting. In a film, people gossip about the revolutionary changes that the world is going through right now. I haven't done that yet, but let's talk about that a little bit later.

What happens is we create patterns and tapestry around gossip, which helps us understand the world we live in and how we find ourselves, the difference between how people see us and how we experience ourselves and all these different things. So again, taking gossip into the big picture of the tapestry of the mind, it's the whole foundation for how we build our intuition and decisions and decide what to do with our lives, decide what to write about, what is important and what is not.

So our attention is key here. I wanted to show you two short videos that have to do with our attention. Do we have sound?

[Gunnsteinsdottir shows a short video]

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR And one more test I just want to share because I just think this is fascinating.

[Gunnsteinsdottir shows another short video]

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR So that's refreshing, isn't it?

AUDIENCE May I ask a question? Everybody saw it [the moonwalking bear referred to in the video], but the question is did everybody see it in a certain way and will this image of a moonwalking bear be imprinted somewhere – even if we don't notice it – and will it affect us in some way later on?

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR That you have the moonwalking bear on your mind? You might have bad dreams. You might have nightmares. [audience laughter]

AUDIENCE Yes, of course. It's kind of silly, but do such things affect us? We're always seeing things we're not aware of, but do they affect us in some way?

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR Right. That's a very good question. Going back to intuition, the intuitive part, you can define intuition in so many different ways. It's part of being your inner voice, being connected to yourself. It's part of having a vision, and following it without knowing how it's going to end. It's about making judgments, about feeling that the house is burning down. It's so many different things. But intuition hardly ever screams at you. It's not very loud. It doesn't grab you by the neck. So the things that you are being bombarded with, the things that the environment around you will want you to notice, it's very likely that your attention will go there. The more that we are aware of how we use our attention, the more we are able to think outside the box or creatively or even critically about everything that's going on around us. I will go into this a little more later. If you still have that thought, then let's raise it again.

[Shows drawing]

This could be something that a kid scratches down. It could be a description of the cardiovascular system inside us. It could be so many different chaotic things. It really is an attempt to map traffic on the Internet over a day in November 2003. I usually always have this picture with me when I give talks because for me it's the best ever representation of the world that we live in today. This is how messy and complicated and complex it is on so many levels and on so many layers. It's almost like an ocean that's really turbulent. And rule number one is keep your head up or otherwise you'll drown. And then you need to decide how you're going to navigate that mess. Then you need to decide what is the best way for you to navigate that mess.

I just want to share with you one thing that you will see in my film: Today our attempts to map the world's oceans with all the technology that's available to us has given us five percent knowledge of the world's oceans. Hundreds of years ago, the Polynesian navigators travelled in canoes in the Pacific Ocean, and they used all their senses without any of today's technology. Their maps of the ocean were made of stick charts. They were totally different from ours today. And when they slept in the bottom of the canoe overnight, some of them were able to sense if they were going the wrong way in their sleep. So with primitive technology but a very strong sense of the context that they lived in, they were able to map almost one hundred percent of the Pacific Ocean. They are so far advanced from how we are today with all the technology that we have.

So how we navigate this is interesting. If you ask somebody what the world looks like today, nobody knows. Trust me, nobody knows. But a lot of us are trying to understand it. So what's the best way to navigate an ocean or a world like that? It's just a thought. My answer is at least partly that we desperately need to understand and master and know more about our intuition, which is making most of our decisions anyway. But we know far too little about it. The characteristics of the world we live in today have partly been mentioned before: acceleration of change, very rapid changes. Not only fast changes, but acceleration of changes. Political, social, and economic instability on top of that. Overflow of information, a lot of distractions and stimuli.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is what today's development of the world has been called. We've had industrial revolutions before, but the fourth one is characterised by technological changes and globalisation. One of the results of that is artificial intelligence, robots, automatic weapons and machines, and 3D printers, for example. You know we can print organs to save lives or we can print guns to kill each other. It's up to us. Everything is on the table now.

Last year we had a meeting at the foreign ministry in the United States. They were telling us about the technological advancements in waging war, how they could send machines to wage war now, which is better for soldiers and their families. I raised my hand and said: "Okay, so this is obviously a development, and this is happening whether we like it or not. But how do you make sure that the machine takes an ethical decision? Let's say it's flying over an area, and you think it's the place where terrorists are holding out, but it's actually a kindergarten. How do you make sure this doesn't happen? How do you make sure that the machines and computers are ethical or even humane?" And the answer was: "This is a very important question. We will definitely have to teach them ethics."

This is what we have now. Everything is on the table. It's easy to do everything, whether it's bad or good. At the same time, the landscape of ideas and systems is changing, and we are all going into the unknown. There is the World Policy Journal in the States which named one of its journals the year before last 'The Unknown'. I got really excited about it because there's one thing that nourishes the creative mind – the unknown. If you know exactly where you're going, you're not excited about the journey, right? You want to create something you haven't seen before. You want to go into the unknown. That's your oxygen. But the magazine was all about how nobody has any

skills for the unknown. We have no idea how to do it. Historians are always looking at the past, politicians are looking at the now, but who is thinking about the future? Nobody knows. And I thought: What about all the artists and the creative people, whether they're in science or whatever? At the same time that today is also tomorrow, the role of imagination has probably never been as important.

So to lighten up this discussion a little bit, I want to tell you a story about tourists. Iceland is very popular today. Lots of tourists are flocking to Iceland. I think there are 1.5 million tourists, and there are 340,000 of us there. So it's very popular. In October of last year, a group of young ladies came to Iceland, rented a car, and drove to the west, really excited. They probably had a little bit of snow. And when you drive in the countryside in Iceland, it's vast. There are not a whole lot of houses. The roads are very basic. They're driving on a road, and there's nothing around them, just empty space and beautiful nature. There's a bridge ahead. And the bridge crosses a river. And they're going to drive across the bridge. They also have a Google map, and the Google map says: No, you should go slightly to the right. And the driver is thinking: Should I follow my own eyes or the Google map? And she follows the Google map. [audience laughter] They were all wearing seat belts, fortunately, but they ended up in the river. Interesting.

At the same time, I was in Iceland for a few days to premiere the film about intuition and how either connected or disconnected we are to ourselves and our own senses in the world that we live in today. And I just thought this was a brilliant story to elaborate that. So what are we relying on?

To get back to the point that we mentioned before: Is technology making us more or less connected? [Shows images] This is an image that inspired one of the scenes in my film. I want to show you the scene. It's short, but to me in many ways this one scene could easily represent half of the messages in the film. So this is getting back to the power of visual storytelling. Before you listen to it, I just want to give you a little bit of context. At this place in the film, we're talking about the information that builds up our intuition and also that of kids. So we have computer games going around that are extremely violent, and kids are playing them. And kids can find more or less everything that they want online. Even if we parents think that they can't, they can. So the question is: How is this shaping their mindsets? It's still a question. Nobody really knows. And to be honest, it can be very hard for researchers to find out because the economic interests behind some of these games are really, really tough and massive. We needed to get a few lawyers to read over the part about *Grand Theft Auto*. It's the longest sentence I've ever said without fainting because I'm the storyteller. I needed to cram in all the different words to make sure we would not be sued by them. It's really like that. You need to be careful how you say things.

So we are on our way to talking about what kids are shaping their minds with at this point in the film. And after this scene, we talk about a rape which happened in Richmond. A young girl was raped by a group of boys. A group of youth watched by for two and a half hours without doing anything. I don't know if you remember this, but it's a scene that we talk about in the film. Yesterday, I saw on the news that there's been a case of group rape in the US, which was streamed on Facebook. So this is something we all need to be very concerned about, so this scene draws a little bit on that.

[Shows clip from *InnSaei - The Sea Within*]

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR [shows slide] The Fourth Industrial Revolution. You see these four different categorisations? I've mentioned before what the characteristics are of all this technology that's taking place, and how it's taking place in a very intangible way. The point that I want to make now is to simply look at the image because it's not visible to such a great extent. There are so many things that are going on. The human body is merging with machines. We can create kids in the

laboratory. We can decide which gender it is. There are all these things going on. But the thing is, the world today is developing in a way that's very invisible in so many ways, and it's difficult to put one's finger on it all the time, which is very similar to the way creativity and intuition function. Because of my background, I'm really concerned that we're going to be relying on and trusting more the things that we can touch like Google Maps instead of taking control of our own intuition and our own intelligence. This is real. I think it was J.P. Morgan who was the first to use a machine called 'Coin'. In a few seconds, that machine was able to do the work that lawyers and experts in calculating loans would need 360,000 hours to do.

People are also talking about who needs human beings to create art or write scripts. We can use artificial intelligence. I'm really concerned about that because it doesn't only mean that we rely more on machines but that we simply become disconnected from ourselves and the world around us. But there has to be something that we need to guard as human beings in the rapid changes that are happening in our world today.

So there are so many ways of defining intuition, and later on we can talk about those different definitions. I'm not sure if they're that interesting in our context, but I do want to share with you Gerd Gigerenzer, psychologist and director of the Max-Planck-Institut for Educational Research in Germany. He's written a few books on intuition, and he says this: "Gut feelings are tools for an uncertain world. Such intuitions are not sixth sense or the voice of God. (For some they are, and that's totally fine with me.) They are based on a lot of experience, unconscious intelligence." In a recent Forbes magazine interview with Gerd, he says, "The highest form of intelligence is intuition, but always when you use it in a balance with the knowledge that you have."

So this group here should be experts in doing exactly that. I'm not sure if you're always conscious of the fact that you're using your intuition. I would be very interested to know because in my experience, we are usually not that aware of it. But as soon as we start to try to map it down somehow without taking the magic away, then it becomes very valuable because it also becomes easier for us to argue why we do things the way we do, and to explain to others why it's important for human beings to do creative stuff and build and follow their intuition against the odds.

I also brought these images in because I want to make the point that our minds are like this – it's tapestry. We are constantly re-wiring our brains and thought processes. Our brains are always changing. Around thirty years ago, we didn't think that the brain changed after the age of five, but now we know. And just imagine how much that has changed the work market and the way we learn, adult learning, and everything that we look up. But this is the tapestry. I don't know what the tapestry of your mind looks like, but it would be interesting to think about it. Is it colourful? Is it black and white? Is it very organised? Probably not. How do you visualise that?

I'm going to go back to Harari a little bit now that we've talked about the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the human mind. "But now the end is near. For some time in the next thousand years, homo sapiens as we know it will become extinct. Actually, I would give it another hundred, two hundred years at most. It's not that there will be an apocalypse of destruction. What is much more likely is that sapiens will upgrade itself into another kind of being using either genetic engineering or direct brain-computer interfaces. This is actually happening already. We're creating technology to be able to read other people's minds and control their thoughts. Who's going to own that? Or by creating a complete consciousness and intelligence inside computers. We are starting to do it today, and it's very likely with the pace at which things are happening now that within a couple of centuries at most, earth will be populated by beings who are different from us in their cognitive and physical abilities. In the meantime," says Harari, "we have to decide what we really desire."

All kinds of deep philosophical questions that people have been thinking about for thousands of years are becoming practical questions because of technology. And that's very interesting, because people like me – and I know there are lots of us out there – think we are slowly putting aside the big philosophical questions of the meaning of life and creativity and arts and school. This is a really important point to make the more we rely on quantifiable truths and science and statistics and technology, and when we forget that they are only means to an end; they're not an end in themselves. This becomes a very practical thing to think about.

"We now have the ability to re-shape the human body, the human psyche, and even human desires, so a philosophical question – What do we want to want? – becomes a practical question. And those who are not spooked by that question probably haven't given it enough thought," he says.

So attention is a scarce resource. Have you ever thought about attention in that way? Yeah? It's a resource and it's scarce, and we need to be very careful what we do with it. For those of you interested in learning more about that, there's a book called *The World Beyond Your Head* [by Matthew B. Crawford]. It's awesome reading.

"In the process of living in a very loud, rapidly changing society, very consumerist-based, we've sacrificed silence, the condition of not being addressed. And just as clean air makes it possible to breathe, silence makes it possible to think." Has the speed influenced the way we make films, for example? Are we cutting them faster? Or does film allow us to experience the space and silence to reflect? As filmmakers, do we get time to reflect, contemplate, sit in silence, think about the world, and life, and the topics that we're writing about? Do we create that time ourselves or does somebody tell us: "I will pay you just to be in silence and think on top of a mountain or in your room"?

"So the benefits of silence are difficult to quantify. They are not measured in the gross domestic product, yet the availability of silence surely contributes to creativity and innovation." Do you agree with that?

AUDIENCE As far as I know, the president of the United States has on his agenda every day one hour or more of this. I'm not sure about the current president. [audience laughter] So he had an hour to think. I'm not sure which of the presidents.

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR Probably Obama. More likely than Bush.

AUDIENCE I'm not sure.

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR Obama also gave a wonderful interview just before he left office in which he talked about stories and storytelling and the importance of books. It's a beautiful interview because he's really saying we need to remember that literature teaches us how to engage with people and understand other people and put ourselves in other people's shoes, which is something we really need, I think, today. I would bet it was him who took an hour to contemplate, but not Trump.

AUDIENCE No, not Trump. [audience laughter]

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR So *Bird by Bird* by Anne Lamott is a wonderful book on storytelling and writing, in case you're interested. "An author makes you notice, makes you pay attention. And this is a great gift." I just wanted to slide it in because that's what you guys are doing. We are drawing

people's attention to stuff. What is the stuff that we are drawing people's attention to? And awareness is learning to keep yourself company.

I'm thinking how far to go now. So this is the name of the film we launched last year, *InnSæi*. The way that we approached intuition in the film is first of all to say it's "the sea within". The reason we did this is because the Icelandic word is very poetic. We started doing the film in 2010; this is all done in English. The production company is in the UK, and we talked to people in English because our network is all over the world. So it's not an Icelandic film, as such, it is global. I'm speaking in English, and I'm calling different people and experts, and I'm saying: "We want to do a documentary film about intuition." And people would either say: "Oh, is this some new age stuff?" Or they would say: "But intuition, that's something very, very specific, isn't it?" And as time passed, I realised that a lot of people will understand intuition as an irrational impulse, which is very interesting. And I got very offended because I felt like it had been hijacked by a discipline that says you should always double check your intuition with research and objective information. It makes sense. Like when you go to the shop and you buy a Mars bar. You can either pay a hundred bucks for it or two dollars. So it's good in taking decisions like these to check your intuition with analysis and logic. You can follow your emotions of being very hungry or greedy. You just want chocolate, and you don't care about the cost. But you can actually get it for two bucks. Do you know what I mean? I understand that. But there's something about human nature that is much more than just an irrational impulse or a buyer's choice.

So we realised that we wanted to use the original working title *InnSæi* because it's more poetic. So *InnSæi - The Sea Within* implies movement, dynamics. It's something that's constantly moving. If you put it into a box, it ceases to flow. It doesn't move anymore; it doesn't fit into a box. But we keep putting everything into boxes and silos. So that's one thing.

Another meaning of *InnSæi* is "to see within". So you see inside yourself in a way that you understand your own feelings. We went into a school in the film and watched eight- and nine-year-old kids being taught how to be mindful, how their brain works, and how to understand themselves and their own emotions. The reason they put on this program is that they're finding it difficult to make friends. They're finding it difficult to focus at school. And some of them were becoming violent. So they started this program called 'MindUp', and it's integrated into different education programs. But to me, what was even more interesting is that we live in a world where we need to teach kids to be with themselves, to understand their emotions that they're going through. They just can't cope because things are probably too stressful. There's too much stimuli. It's interesting.

So to know yourself is important to build a strong 'innsæi'. And then the third meaning of the word is 'to see from the inside out'. That is all about being able to put yourself into other people's shoes. I think for artists and writers, this is something we do all the time. And the more that we are willing to recognise our own vulnerabilities and things that we are ashamed of thinking or doing, or showing our weaker spots, the more we are able to do that in our characters, and the more they will resonate with viewers. Right? I don't know how you feel about this and if you're feeling like: "Duh! Of course. This is the way it is." But for a lot of people, it isn't. It's really something that is worth respecting. If it's really something that we feel like we work with, and we handle, and we understand, then share it, as you're doing in your films, obviously. But also as writers, your contribution is that we're giving stewardship to all the changes that all of us are going through right now.

I wanted to share with you some practical steps. I'll go through them quickly. [Shows slides] This is a methodology that we use a lot in the education modules I mentioned before. It's more or less what you do already, but sometimes I find it useful just to have these steps in front of me when I get stuck somewhere, and also when I want to get out of the loop that I find myself in. When I try to

look for information, for example, it's very easy to find the information coming to you. You know how algorithms provide us with different streams of information.

So just to go through this quickly: The first step is to see more. It's not just about seeing with your eyes; it's about understanding that you sense the world with all your senses, and you also do it through your dreams, and you also do it through your fears, and you also do it through your prejudices. My students, some of them come from the creative world, some of them don't. If you go to the theatre, you see a film or listen to a song and you get goose bumps. Do you ever think about that as important information? So if you try to go through the day and just take in information with everything but your very focused mind, it's a really, really fun and useful exercise to open up your senses a little bit, and to break out of that little loop that we sometimes find ourselves in.

To put things in reverse is to make the familiar unfamiliar, and vice versa, to look at things that you're used to looking at, but look at them with a totally fresh eye. I know that you probably do that a lot of the time. Then it's about putting it into context. To me, I think it's the most important thing that we use when we want to cross borders between disciplines and sectors and stuff, because we are so well disciplined not to talk about things that we are not experts in. And we tend to be so disciplined in trusting the expertise of people, and not to mix things together that have not been thoroughly thought through as we mix them together, which is the reality for a lot of people. But as writers, you probably do that a lot. But it's still something that we need to be very aware of because the way that the world is going today, we really need desperately to cross borders and mix things, sometimes very carelessly together, in a different way.

So I wanted to take you through a very quick exercise just to make these points before I end today. It's about attention. It's about shedding light a little bit on how we pay attention in different ways. It's getting late, and you're all getting really excited about your dinner and drinks and everything. So this is just to shake things up a little bit. It's not about right answers as we know; it's just about having fun and shedding light on the ways in which we pay attention differently, and the fact that even if attention is such a basic thing, it's actually the greatest resource that we have as creative individuals.

So do you have a piece of paper and a pen? I'm going to show you eight photos. Please write the numbers one to eight vertically on a piece of paper. Are you done? I'm going to show you each picture for approximately four seconds, and you're going to write down the first thing that comes to mind. Only the first thing that comes to mind. Please don't try to be right or something, just the first thing that comes to mind. It really doesn't matter what it is. Are you ready?

[Shows series of photos to the group]

Done. Time out. Okay, so what came to mind when you saw this picture number one?

AUDIENCE Waterfall. Blood. Chaos. Lava. Psychedelic.

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR Psychedelic? This is fun. Something else?

AUDIENCE Volcano. Fire. Jellyfish.

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR Jellyfish. Ah! Okay. This picture?

AUDIENCE Love. Friendship. Hug. Warmth. Gay.

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR It's actually my brother and his son. I'm going to tell him that! [audience laughter]

AUDIENCE Making up.

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR Making up? Beautiful. What about this one?

AUDIENCE the film Misery. [audience laughter]

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR You see how knowledge, the familiar, blocks us?

AUDIENCE Face. Lost. Sick. Disgust.

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR Beautiful. This one?

AUDIENCE Flowers. Fantasy. Chaos. Bees. Break up. Iceland. [audience laughter] Sand. Mountains. Destruction. Desert. Flower desert. War. Crazy. Cars.

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR Very practical. These are cars. [audience laughter] Anything more abstract than cars?

AUDIENCE Scary. Boring. Crazy. War.

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR This one?

AUDIENCE Eyes. Photoshop. [audience laughter] Child. Blue. Face. Cold. Beauty. Skin.

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR Very practical. This is skin. Did somebody come up with something wild?

AUDIENCE Fear. Flash.

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR I just wanted to share this with you because it might be useful sometime, and it's fun. You can see how we pay attention differently. Okay, skin is basic. I'm not going to use that picture ever again. Everybody said 'skin'. But a picture raises a lot of things in different heads. We all know that. And this is wonderful research for the ways in which we can think about how people see our characters or scenes differently. What I've also done in the past is I've asked people to keep journals only based on their attention. So it's not like: "I woke up on Saturday, and I had toast with cheese. And then I went out for a walk." Not like that, but attention like: "I went into the store, and I could feel this smell, this unpleasant smell." Or: "I saw this guy, and I totally wanted to sleep with him." And then the person is like: "Oh, I can't believe I wrote that!" It's always about writing whatever comes down and not judging it. Just watch it as raw material.

Then they would write: "Flags in five colours" because they just paid attention to it. "Sound of wind", "footsteps on a floor". Just stuff like that, moments like that. Then they write it down for a week. They do lots of other stuff at the same time. They continue with their lives. But I really recommend this exercise.

So you write down this attention for five or six days. On the seventh day, or the sixth day or whatever, you go over your writing, and you randomly choose 10 words. Don't use your logical brain. Just randomly choose whatever you find. Then put these words on a piece of paper like you've just written down now. I prefer to put them in the centre with space in between and no numbers in front. Just watch the words until they tell you what they want. And don't you dare try to

control it. [audience laughter] This is the hardest thing for human beings to do. This is so hard. But trust me, try to do it. It's amazing. Just allow the raw material to speak to you, because what you will realise is that behind every word you have a whole universe. You don't realise it when you put it down. You just think: this is some random thing that you find. But if you look at the words, and they start talking together and communicating together on the piece of paper, you will have something that comes to you, and you will realise that it's a great idea. It's a little bit cheap of me to tell you this will be amazing, but I don't have the time to do it now. I will have left the country when you try it. But please try it. It's amazing. It's really magic. And it's trusting in intuition, which you do all the time. And it's trusting in the constellation of things that come together because you paid attention to them. It's really a powerful way.

Okay, I think I'm more or less done with what I wanted to say. I probably had some amazing speed at the end, but I think I want to stop here. And I want to thank you for listening. I hope that you will have a little bit more expanded, refreshed idea of the pink and fluffy feeling that's really the basis of everything that we are, everything that we do. As the person that I am and in the capacity that I do at work and with the World Economic Forum and my idealistic mindset to want to make the world a better place, I would say that you have an amazing responsibility and influence being storytellers. Honestly, I really think so. And I hope that you will take that to heart today as any other day, and just think about these things. The things that we put out there are going to be the world that we are going to live in. It's either going to help us to be critical or passionate or not care or more knowledgeable about the human spirit or whatever it is that you're all doing. Like I said before, I read all of your synopses, and they're really truly amazing and inspiring. Thank you for your work.

AUDIENCE One question: Your movie is it about intuition or about what?

GUNNSTEINSDOTTIR Yes. The film asks: Does it matter if we connect with our inner world in the world that we live in today? Is the speed and distraction causing us to be less able to connect to the world inside us? And if so, what are the consequences?

APPLAUSE