

DAVID BROOKS

The Courage Of Small Things

I thought I knew the basic life story of my friend Clemantine Wamariya. She was born in Rwanda 27 years ago. When she was 6 — though she didn't understand it — the genocide began and her world started shrinking. Her father stopped going to work after dark. Her family ate dinner with the lights off.

To escape the mass murder, Clemantine and her older sister, Claire, were moved from house to house. One night they were told to crawl through a sweet potato field and then walk away — not toward anything, just away.

They crossed the Akanyaru River (Clemantine thought the dead bodies floating in it were just sleeping) and into

After the genocide, the relationships.

Burundi. Living off fruit, all her toenails fell out. She spent the rest of her young girlhood in refugee camps in eight African nations.

Claire kept them on the move, in search of a normal life. Clemantine wrote her name in the dust at various stops, praying somehow a family member would see it. One day, they barely survived a six-hour boat ride across Lake Tanganyika fleeing into Tanzania. Their struggles in the camps, for water and much else, were almost perfectly designed to give a sense that life is arbitrary.

In 2000, Claire got them refugee status in the United States through the International Organization for Migration. Claire went to work as a hotel maid in Chicago. A few years later, Clemantine was one of 50 winners of Oprah Winfrey's high school essay contest.

In the middle of the 2006 show celebrating the winners, Oprah brought Clemantine and Claire on stage. Oprah asked when was the last time the girls had seen their parents. It had been 12 years. Then Oprah gave them a surprise: "Your family is here!" Her parents, brother and sister had been found in Africa, and now walked onstage. They all fell into one another's arms. Clemantine's knees gave out, but her mother held her up.

Clemantine's story, as I knew it then, has a comforting arc: separation, perseverance, reunion and joy. It's the kind of clean, inspiring story that many of us tell, in less dramatic form, about our own lives — with clearly marked moments of struggle and overcoming.

But Clemantine and Elizabeth Weil just wrote a more detailed version of her story for the online magazine *Matter*, and the reality is not so neat. For one thing, Clemantine never really reconciled with her family. After the Oprah taping they returned to Claire's apartment. "My father kept smiling, like someone he mistrusted was taking pictures of him. Claire remained catatonic; I thought she'd finally gone crazy, for real. I sat on Claire's couch, looking at my strange new siblings, the ones that had replaced me and Claire. I fell asleep crying." The rest of the family flew back home to Africa the following Monday.

At every stop along the way, the pat narrative of Clemantine's life is complicated by the gritty, mottled nature of human relationships. The refugee worker who married Claire and fathered her children turned out to be more a burden than a savior. The sisters' psyches were not unscathed. "Claire made a hard, subconscious calculus: She could survive, and maybe enable me to survive, too, but only if she cast off emotional responsibility, only if she refused to take on how anything or anybody felt."

Clemantine struggled to reconcile her old life with this one. A teacher she had at the Hotchkiss School gave a class a thought experiment. You're a ferry captain on a sinking boat. Do you toss overboard the old passenger or the young one? Clemantine lost it: "Do you want to know what that really like? This is an abstract question to you?"

At Yale, she couldn't understand her own behavior. "Why did I drink only tea, never cold water? Why did I cringe when the sun turned red?"

Clemantine is now an amazing young woman. Her superb and artful essay reminded me that while the genocide was horrific, the constant mystery of life is how loved ones get along with one another.

We work hard to cram our lives into legible narratives. But we live in the fog of reality. Whether you have survived a trauma or not, the psyche is still a dark forest of scars and tender spots. Each relationship is intricacy piled upon intricacy, fertile ground for misunderstanding and mistreatment.

When she was a young girl, Clemantine displayed the large courage to endure genocide. In this essay she displays the courage of small things: the courage to live with feelings wide open even after trauma; the maturity to accept unanswerable ambiguity; the tenacity to seek coherence after arbitrary cruelty; the ability to create tenacious bonds that have some give to them, to allow for the mistakes others make; the unwillingness to settle for the simple, fake story; and the capacity to look at life in all its ugly complexity. □

By Gib Brogan

BOSTON
NEW ENGLAND has long been synonymous with cod fishing. Since the 1600s, cod have been central to the region's development, even giving Massachusetts' famous cape its name. The fish were once so abundant, according to a local anecdote, that you could almost walk across the ocean on their backs.

Since then, Atlantic cod populations have plummeted, and fisheries managers have tried for years to rebuild the population. Attempts to make up for decades of mismanagement and overfishing have ranged from changes in quotas to closures of the fishery.

But measures like these take time, and the stock has not yet recovered. In the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank, recent estimates place cod at only 3 and 7 percent of their target levels, respectively. And even those targets are much lower than the populations' former abundance.

However, two new proposals by the New England Fishery Management Council, a government body responsible for the fisheries in the region, threaten to undo years of work to protect the Atlantic cod and other New England species. This one-two punch to the Georges Bank and Gulf of Maine cod stocks may be the knockout blow.

First, the council is preparing to drastically reduce the amount of protected habitat in New England waters, including by nearly 80 percent around the Georges Bank. The plan would allow for expansion of bottom trawling and dredging, two of the most destructive fishing methods, into protected habitats.

In addition to gutting habitat protections, the council wants to suspend a program that places observers on fishing ves-

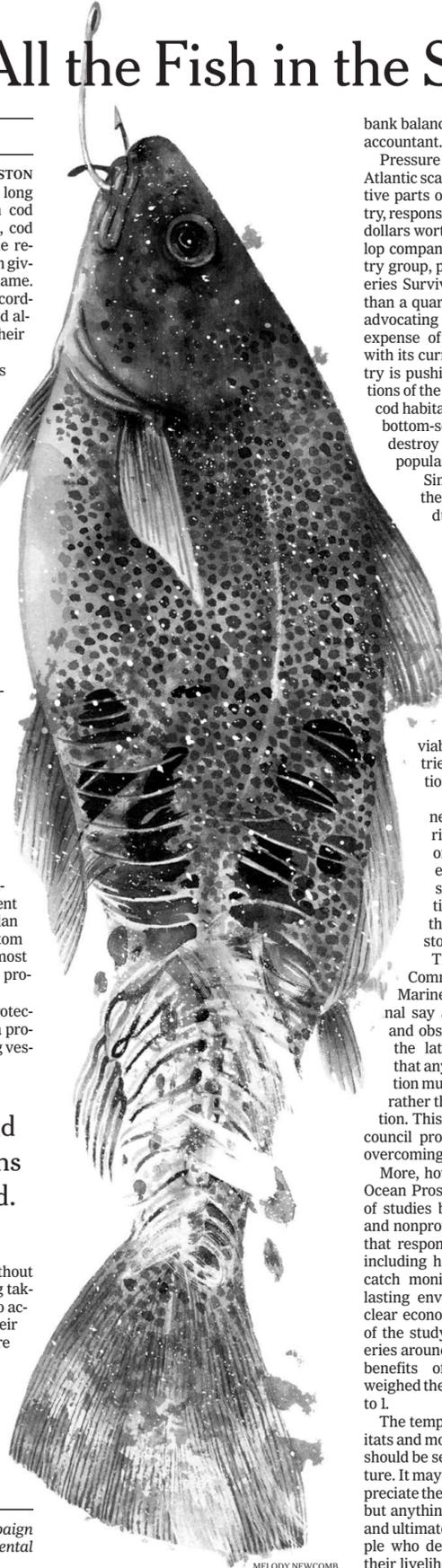
New proposals would gut habitat protections for New England cod.

sels to monitor compliance. But without monitoring the numbers of fish being taken out of the ocean, there is no way to accurately determine the health of their populations or ensure that quotas are respected.

The fishing industry had agreed to eventually pay for the monitoring. But as federal funds near expiration, later this year, the industry is trying to renege on its responsibilities by pressuring the council to eliminate the program. When the

Gib Brogan is the fisheries campaign manager at Oceana, an environmental advocacy group.

For All the Fish in the Sea



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bank balance is low, it isn't time to fire the accountant.

Pressure for even more change looms. Atlantic scallops are one of the most lucrative parts of the American fishing industry, responsible for hundreds of millions of dollars worth of shellfish every year. Scallop companies have a well-funded industry group, paradoxically named the Fisheries Survival Fund, which spends more than a quarter of a million dollars a year advocating for their interests, often at the expense of other fisheries. Dissatisfied with its current profits, the scallop industry is pushing the council to reopen portions of the most important New England cod habitat on Georges Bank, where the bottom-scraping scallop dredges would destroy any hope of rebuilding cod populations.

Similar pressure is coming from the cod, haddock and flounder industries, which are in a perpetual state of crisis as fishermen work with small catch limits that were set by managers trying to rebuild the populations. In the last two years, the New England fishery was declared a disaster and received more than \$30 million in relief funding from the federal government to help with the losses. To stay viable for another year, the industries claim that they need additional access to closed areas.

But as they try to stay in business in the short term, they are risking the long-term existence of their fishery. Closures, however painful, are vital for their survival. Weakening protections will undoubtedly continue the collapse of groundfish stocks, including Atlantic cod.

Thankfully, the Department of Commerce and the National Marine Fisheries Service have the final say about changes in protections and observer coverage. In particular, the latter has repeatedly stressed that any changes to habitat conservation must show that they will improve rather than degrade habitat conservation. This is a high bar that the current council proposal will have a hard time overcoming.

More, however, needs to be done. The Ocean Prosperity Roadmap, a recent set of studies by a consortium of academic and nonprofit researchers, demonstrated that responsible management practices, including habitat protection, quotas and catch monitoring would have not only lasting environmental benefits but also clear economic advantages. The authors of the study analyzed thousands of fisheries around the world and found that the benefits of sustainable policies outweighed the costs by an average ratio of 10 to 1.

The temporary price of protecting habitats and monitoring and enforcing quotas should be seen as an investment in the future. It may take years to begin to fully appreciate the returns on these investments, but anything less would be irresponsible, and ultimately far more painful to the people who depend on a healthy ocean for their livelihoods. □

Greece: How to Undo the Damage

By Gikas Hardouvelis

ATHENS
GREECE'S banks have been closed for more than a week, and the economy is rapidly deteriorating. An infusion of cash is desperately needed from the European Central Bank to resuscitate the banking system and revive the economy.

The overwhelming "no" vote in Sunday's referendum has increased the probability of a Greek exit from the European monetary union.

Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras seems to believe that the referendum's result will give the government additional negotiating power and has dismissed the possibility of an exit from the eurozone. But based on the experience of recent months, it is hard to see how Greece's negotiating power will increase; its options are severely constrained.

What could not be achieved in the past five months must now be achieved in only a few days — and in an environment of mistrust and acrimony. And hard-liners among the lenders have been emboldened by the fact that Greece's crisis has not led to contagion in the rest of Europe.

How did we reach this point? Back in November, the economy was finally starting to show signs of growth, after six years of depression.

Greece had secured a credit line from its euro-area partners for 2015. At the Eurogroup meeting of Dec. 8, 2014, the European Union commissioner for economic affairs, Pierre Moscovici, stated that Greece had done more than was required to fulfill the obligations for completing the so-called fifth review of the second adjustment program. Doing so would have unlocked 7.2 billion euros of funding, or 4 percent of Greece's gross domestic product.

But in late summer 2014, the previous government, in which I served, became excessively anxious to have one of the lenders, the International Monetary Fund, cease its program at the end of 2014, more than a year earlier than had been previously planned. Since European lend-

Gikas Hardouvelis, a professor at the University of Piraeus, was Greece's finance minister from June 2014 to January 2015.

ing programs were also ending, this would have allowed the government to claim it had finished with austerity and lenders' strict rules. But this anxiety prompted a reaction by the I.M.F., which became tougher in its demands.

A presidential election was scheduled for early 2015. At that time, polls were showing that the left-wing coalition Syriza, led by Mr. Tsipras, would win. I believe that this prospect led the I.M.F. to prevent cash from flowing into the Greek government's coffers, to ensure there was enough leverage on the side of the lenders to force a potentially new and untested government to behave rationally.

At the Eurogroup meeting in December, the I.M.F. and the European Central Bank decided that Greece had not done enough to receive the next stage of funding and halted the program. This, in my view, was a blunder.

The negative consequences of that decision remain with us today. It hurt the pre-

The referendum is over. Tsipras and the creditors need to talk in good faith.

vious government's image during the January elections, because we were not able to claim success in ending the program on time and improving relations with Europe. And the lack of cash flowing into the Greek economy wiped out all signs of growth.

First, the new government, led by Syriza, was animated by a grudge against the lenders. Instead of worrying about the economy, the new government focused on the issue of debt.

Second, Mr. Tsipras's government behaved as though the flow of cash into the economy didn't matter. His new finance minister, Yanis Varoufakis (who resigned on Monday), went so far as to say, "We do not need the cash inflow of the 7.2 billion euros."

Third, Mr. Tsipras's government ignored Greece's private sector and let it drift in anxiety. Worse still, many ministers attempted to renege on reforms that had passed with great difficulty during the

previous five years. As a result, uncertainty reigned, business contracts were postponed, and people began withdrawing their savings from banks.

Finally, Mr. Tsipras's government misread the lenders. Based on my experience negotiating with them, European officials tend to work by building consensus and in small steps. They dislike extreme solutions. Being lenient on Greece was seen as extreme, because it created a "moral hazard" that might allow future copycats to disobey established rules. Being extremely strict toward Greece and letting it leave the euro was also seen as extreme, as it might create a precedent that could unravel the European monetary union during any future crisis.

The Syriza government forgot the moral hazard issue and overplayed fears about the unraveling of the euro area. As a result, it alienated almost all its potential friends and became isolated. Instead of trying to extract the maximum flexibility from the lenders, it pushed its own point of view that the eurozone couldn't survive without it.

The next few days will be crucial. What's needed is a deal that Mr. Tsipras can sell as a success and that European lenders can accept. The creditors, can, among other measures, offer to extend loan-maturity deadlines and convert floating-rate debt into fixed-rate debt. In exchange, Greece should agree to structural reforms to reduce bureaucracy, weaken oligopolies and open closed professions. This would be a win-win solution for both Greece and Europe.

Mr. Tsipras has called for a united front, and he seems to have sidelined ministers, like Mr. Varoufakis, who took extreme positions. This is a good start that provides hope that an agreement can be reached before it is too late.

Exiting the euro and issuing a new currency would unleash inflation, destroy institutions and worsen poverty. The Greek government has gambled with the livelihood of future generations. It must stop, and work constructively with Europe. □

ONLINE: ROOM FOR DEBATE

↗ *Is change more accepted and lasting when it comes from elected officials rather than the Supreme Court?*

nytimes.com/roomfordebate

JOE NOCERA

The Good Jobs Strategy

At the Aspen Ideas Festival — an annual summer gabfest that presents all sorts of interesting ideas, from the improbable to the important — one of the big themes this year was jobs. How will America close the skills gap? Where will the good middle-class jobs of the future come from? I heard pleas for infrastructure spending as a job strategy, and creating jobs by unleashing our energy resources. There were speakers who believed that innovation would bring good jobs, and speakers who feared that some of those innovations — in robotics, for instance — would destroy good jobs.

And then there was Zeynep Ton.

A 40-year-old adjunct associate professor at the Sloan School of Management at M.I.T., Ton brought one of the most radical, and yet one of the most sensible, ideas to Aspen this year. Her big idea is that companies that provide employees a decent living, which includes not just pay but also a sense of purpose and empowerment at work, can be every bit as profitable as companies that strive to keep their labor costs low by paying the minimum wage with no benefits. Maybe even more profitable. Getting there requires companies to adopt what Ton calls "human-centered operations strategies," which she acknowledges is "neither quick nor easy." But it's worth it, she says, both for the companies and for the country. Surely, she's right.

As Ton explained to me last week in Aspen — and as she has written in a book she published last year titled "The Good Jobs Strategy" — her thesis comes out of research she did early in her academic career on supply chain management in the retail industry, focused especially on inventory management. What she and her fellow researchers discovered is that while most companies were very good at getting products from, say, China to their stores, it was a different story once the merchandise arrived. Sometimes a product stayed in the back room instead of making it to a shelf where a customer could buy it. Or it was in the wrong place. Special in-store promotions weren't being executed a surprisingly high percentage of the time. She saw this pattern in company after company.

As she took a closer look, Ton says, she realized that the problem was that these companies viewed their employees "as a cost that they tried to minimize." Workers were not just poorly paid, but poorly trained. They often didn't know their schedule until the last moment. Morale was low and turnover was high. Customer service was largely nonexistent.

Yet when she asked executives at these companies why they put up with this pattern, she was told that the only way they could guarantee low prices was to operate with employees who were paid as little as possible, because labor was such a big part of their overhead. The problems that resulted were an unavoidable by-product of a low-price business model.

Unconvinced that this was the only approach, Ton decided to search for retail companies — the same kind of companies that needed low prices to succeed — that did things differently. Sure enough, she found some.

The two companies she talks about most frequently in this regard are a Spanish grocery chain called Mercadona and QuikTrip, a Tulsa, Okla.-based chain

Can companies offer both low prices and good jobs? Yes.

of convenience store/gas stations that competes with the likes of the 7-Eleven chain.

What first struck her about Mercadona is that the annual turnover was an almost unheard-of 4 percent. Why do employees stay? "They get decent salaries, four weeks of training that costs the company \$5,000, stable schedules . . . and the opportunity to thrive in front of their customers every day," Ton said in a speech she forwarded to me. The grocery business is low margin, where every penny counts. If Mercadona couldn't keep prices low with this strategy, it would have abandoned it long ago.

QuikTrip, an \$11 billion company with 722 stores, is a prime example of what Ton means by "human-centered operations strategies." Paying employees middle-class wages allows the company to get the most out of them. Employees are cross-trained so they can do different jobs. They can solve problems by themselves. They make merchandising decisions for their own stores. The ultimate result of the higher wages QuikTrip pays is that costs everywhere else in the operation go down. At QuikTrip, says Ton, products don't remain in the back room, and in-store promotions always take place, as they're supposed to.

Ton's interest in the good jobs strategy is more than academic now; she has become a proselytizer, trying to spread the word that every company would be better served by this approach. "The assumed trade-off between low prices and good jobs is a fallacy," she says. As we worry about where middle-class jobs are going to come from, Ton's is a message that needs to be heard not just in Aspen but all across America. □