

A week in the life of the world

1 October 2021

Merkel's long goodbye, Thunberg's activism and Franzen returns

It was billed as Angela Merkel's grand farewell. But while a narrow election win for the centre-left SPD is likely to lead -eventually - to Olaf Scholz becoming Germany's new chancellor, protracted coalition negotiations mean Merkel will be around for a few weeks yet. In our big story, Jan Werner-Müller reflects on the highs and lows of Merkelism, while Philip Oltermann unravels Germany's coalition possibilities after a tense election.

The big story [Page 10](#) →

Two blockbuster interviews fill our feature pages this week. Simon Hattenstone meets the inspirational Greta Thunberg, who outlines her powerful vision on how to tackle the climate crisis and opens up about the reality of being the world's most famous activist. Then Lisa Allardice catches up with the great American novelist Jonathan Franzen, who seems as ready as ever to speak his mind. And if that's enough heavyweight reading for you, we ponder the global phenomenon that is the Great British Bake Off, which has just begun its 12th series.

Being Greta Thunberg [Page 34](#) →

Franzen's return [Page 51](#) →

From this week you'll notice some new features in our Books, Lifestyle and Diversions pages, in line with some broader changes across the Guardian's other print products. On page 60 there's a belated Guardian Weekly debut for Annalisa Barbieri's respected family advice column, plus a regular spot for the brilliant Stephen Collins cartoon strip. On the Diversions pages we've freshened up our puzzles and reinstated more room for Country Diary, which readers consistently tell us they love to read. We hope you'll find the new elements both stimulating and thought-provoking.

Lifestyle and Diversions [From page 60](#) →



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On the cover

At the heart of Merkelism, writes Jan Werner-Müller, was a political survival method: "Observe carefully in which direction things are going, identify interests that might converge at one point, then occupy that point and claim that you were leading people there all along. She decided to be all things to all people."

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