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discovering a well-hidden treasure

australia & new zealand

the invisible disease

amish rumspringa

bike trip into the sunset

prisoners of the penal institution in dresden

education - need for a reform?

using facts, fun and fake fur to reinvent the f-word

and more...

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No worries, mate! It's all good.

by Christine Bensch

In August of 2009 I was lucky to spend 5 months in Australia and another 2 months in New Zealand. Although I enjoyed my time in both countries there are some differences which I'd like to point out in this article. If you can't make up your mind where to spend your stay abroad, this text might not be the answer to all of your questions but it will give you an honest impression of a few little things that you might like... or not.

It's so annoying. Imagine, you are walking along the corridor of your faculty and there she is – the fellow student of your first semester with whom you shared time in boring seminars, your way to the Mensa and sympathy, after all. While your lips are phrasing the question “How have you been?” you imagine her being an aid worker in South Africa or at least something absolutely cool. But then you are hit by her surprising reply: “Well, I've been to Australia for one year. I did some Work and Travel over there. How cool is that?” As you feel the corner of your mouth sagging in disappointment, you ask yourself the question: “Why is everyone doing Work and Travel in Australia?” What I've got for





Sydney, Australia

you is firstly a possible answer to your question and secondly a suggestion of an alternative solution where to spend your stay abroad. Hold your hat!

Number 1:

So many people go to Australia because it's a fabulous country and a great experience to be there.

Number 2:

Why not go to New Zealand instead?

You love hanging around at the beach all day? You hate walking long distances to find a supermarket? You don't want to live in a country that partially smells like poo? You think sunburns are annoying? You would like to spend your time abroad at a place where people speak good English? If you can affirm all of these questions, then I'll advise you to go somewhere else. New Zealand is probably not the place that meets your expectations. Sure?

Well, we could argue about the first point. In fact, there are many beaches in New Zealand – lovely beaches with crystal blue water and soft golden sand. However, if this is what you are after in the first place, you had better think about going to Australia instead which is famous for heaps of dream beaches to hang around on or go surfing at. Most of New Zealand people or Kiwis, as they call themselves, are avowed outdoor fans. No matter whether it's climbing, hiking, canoeing, snorkelling or fishing, most Kiwis are active people!



Pancake Rocks, New Zealand

would like to take back what I've said about supermarkets. But unfortunately it's true. Many supermarkets are far out from the city centre. When you come back to Germany, I can assure you that you will welcome the opportunity to buy groceries on every corner. Don't be shocked when you look at the prices in the supermarket. Buying groceries is expensive in both countries, Australia und New Zealand. However, there is

one big advantage when going to New Zealand, which is the exchange rate. For one euro you will get approximately 2 NZ\$ but only 1.6 AU\$.



Mt Cook, New Zealand

You might be wondering why an awful malodour seems to be characteristic for some parts of New Zealand. And in fact there is just one little town named Rotorua (to be found on the South Island) that is



Tongariro Alpine Crossing, New Zealand

covered by the deterring smell of rotten eggs. But what you get in return are geysers and other fabulous and colourful phenomena of nature. Don't be shocked when you drive into the city for the first time. There are fumes everywhere!



Rotorua, New Zealand

For all of you (I'm especially talking to the "cool" guys among you) who are convinced that they won't need a hat or any sunscreen at all because they "get a tan anyway" – I can only advise you to change your attitude unless you want to go home with skin cancer or look like a crayfish on every photo. Trust me, you will pick up some colour anyway, whether you like it or not. The difference is, though, in Australia you can literally feel the sun burning down on you whereas in New Zealand you might get sunburned without even realising it. The weather in New Zealand is changeable. However this won't prevent you from being



Lake McKenzie, Fraser Island, Australia

shocked about your red face when having a look in the mirror.

It's not a big secret that Kiwis have their own form of English. A tent can easily become a tint and expressions like Kia Ora, Bro or Sweet As shouldn't be missing in your New Zealandish – English / English – New Zealandish dictionary. You might already be familiar with such expressions of serenity from Australian English, for instance when you think of No worries,

mate! This is more than just an array of words: it's the mentality of both Australians and Kiwis.

"A tent can easily become a tint..."

Do you feel well-informed now? Well, unfortunately I was not able to list all of the differences between Australia and New

Zealand, neither can I tell you which place is the one that suits your lifestyle. It feels a bit like a betrayal when I say that I liked New Zealand better since they are both wonderful places and each is worth seeing. So if you ever have the opportunity to visit both of them, don't miss the chance. But even if this article is the only thing you will ever hear or read about Australia or New Zealand, no worries mate! It's all good.



Discovering a Well-Hidden Treasure...

by Annemarie Jahn

Imagine sandy, white beaches, turquoise water and picturesque seaside villages... Thought of the Mediterranean? Well, you had better think again!

For these long quiet walks at the beach, a refreshing dip in the sea and fascinating unknown cultures, there is one spot you should definitely consider visiting. Touched by the Irish Sea and spoiled with sunny, mild weather, the Llyn Peninsula in North Wales makes a perfect destination for some relaxing and educating days out.

You would think that with 200 inches of rain in Snowdonia every year, North Wales was a particularly wet spot. But the Llyn stands out with only 36 inches and lots of sunny days to enjoy nearly 100 miles of coastline. More than 20 beaches worth mentioning in tourists guides can be found and there is enough room to discover the hidden spots, too. And we are not talking overrun, pebbly, Majorca-like beaches. North Wales treats its visitors to wide, sandy and lonely spots that make you feel like you are the only person on earth. To support this, with a population of around 20,000 people you are very likely to meet a few sheep before you talk to a human being. These people are mainly settled in the bigger towns and villages like Aberdaron and Pwllheli (pronounced Poolheli), which are definitely worth visiting.

One very special spot will tickle your cultural tastebuds in every season. Neighbouring Porthmadog, Portmeirion hides a treasure of an artist's revolutionary idea within a forest of man-high rhododendrons. It has been the stage to TV shows 'The Village' and 'The Prisoner' and had always fascinated people with its beauty.

Sir Clough Williams-Ellis designed and built Portmeirion between 1925 and 1975 with the aim of showing the beauty of a combination of architecture and nature. Having collected fragments of demolished buildings, he tried to arrange them as a homage to the Mediterranean, inspired by the strong impression the Italian village of Portofino made on him. Furthermore, he included an important collection of rhododendrons, which was started before his work.

Sir Williams-Ellis did not only work with architecture and landscaping. In Portmeirion a great collection of artistic details can be found. No matter where you go in this village, be sure to find some Asian figurine or proof of finest craftsmanship around the corner. But it does not end there, either. Walking around the Piazza the attentive visitor will notice changes in the houses' colours



"And we are not talking overrun, pebbly, Majorca-like beaches."

Portmeirion offers some beautiful

views with its green spots and hydrangea hedges.

But the surrounding beaches make the right setting for some great days out too.

and somewhat quirky-looking windows. The village was intended to look much bigger than it actually is. That is why most buildings are painted darker at the bottom and windows are shaped like a trapeze. Especially architects and art students will feel like they are in heaven. For visitors who do not have an eye for these things, the colours and shapes just add to the fairy taleish feeling. If you want to push it even further, come and visit Portmeirion in winter. There are no entrance fees between October and April and you will get the chance of being wrapped in heavy mist, wobbling slowly between the buildings. When going for a walk through the adjoining forest, you will feel as if you have just travelled into the Brothers Grimm world.

What has not been mentioned so far is that Portmeirion has always been intended to be lived in. Unfortunately, Sir Williams-Ellis' construction was only to be looked at. But after extensive refurbishments, the village is now a hotel area open for everyone from back-pack traveller to bridal couple. And even though life in Portmeirion will always remain a little British – shops close at five, politeness towards hotel guests has priority status and everyone wanders quietly through the forests – even though it rains much more than in Italy, Sir Williams-Ellis turned his dream into reality which still is an inspiration to all its visitors.



The Town Hall and the Band Stand dominate the view. There is much more to see though. Especially on the Central Piazza you should keep your eyes open for all the details influenced by cultures from all around the world.



FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:
[HTTP://WWW.PORTMEIRION-VILLAGE.COM/](http://www.portmeirion-village.com/)



PORTMEIRION IS
SITUATED IN TREMADOG
BAY JUST OFF
PORTHMADOG.
IT IS A 5-HOUR DRIVE
FROM LONDON OR A
2-HOUR DRIVE FROM
MANCHESTER.
HIRING A CAR IS
COMPULSORY.

WHAT TO DO THERE?

THERE ARE QUITE A FEW OTHER PLACES TO SEE AND MANY MORE THINGS TO DO.

IN PORTHMADOG YOU CAN GO ON THE RHEILFFORDD FFESTINIOG RAILWAY. TRY THE NEIGHBOURING VILLAGE TREMADOGH FOR A GOOD DINNER INCLUDING FRESH FISH. NEARBY IS MORFA BYCHAN, A LONG, SANDY BEACH SURROUNDED BY TWO VERY FAMOUS CASTLES: HARLECH AND CRICCIETH CASTLE. ABERSOCH AND ITS ROUGH COASTLINE ARE A PERFECT SETTING FOR SURFERS. THE BAY IS CALLED HELL'S MOUTH, WHICH GIVES YOU A GOOD IDEA OF THE QUALITY OF WAVES.

YOU COULD ALSO PAY ANGLESEY A VISIT WITH ITS ENDLESS BEACHES AND ITS RATHER-IGNORED CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL CENTRE BEAUMARIS. FURTHERMORE, PUFFIN ISLAND IS WORTH SEEING.

FOR THOSE WHO PREFER COMPANY, BIGGER PLACES LIKE CAERNARFON, BANGOR, CONWY AND LLANDUDNO OFFER LOTS TO SEE AND DO. THEIR TOWN CENTRES ARE MAINLY BASED AROUND CASTLES WITH MANY SHOPS AND B&BS.

WHERE TO STAY?

ROOMS IN PORTHMADOG ARE DEFINITELY THE BEST CHOICE. THEY ARE AFFORDABLE AND QUITE COMFORTABLE. MANY SIGHTS AND GOOD RESTAURANTS ARE NEARBY.

FOR THOSE WHO ARE WILLING TO SPEND A BIT MORE, PORTMEIRION IS JUST THE PLACE TO GO. IN 2011 PRICES FOR TWO WILL START FROM £145. WHEN TRAVELLING AROUND, THE BEST OPTION IS CAMPING. GRAB A TENT AND GET COMFY ON ONE OF THE WELL-EQUIPPED CAMPSITES. BUT MAKE SURE TO BOOK IN ADVANCE!

My Tea and Me

by Annemarie Jahn

Having lived with an English tea fanatic, not only has my life changed, but my taste has, too. Especially when it comes to tea, I have always been different: black, two sugars, no milk. Of course, not being a fan of a good "proper builder's" I did not get very far in the UK. But what is it about the British and their tea?



They can come in all sorts of tastes and colours.

Germans are usually confused, if not disgusted, by the thought of pouring milk into their tea. No matter how little the shot would be, you simply cannot mix them. Milk is for coffee. Or is it not? For the British it is just the other way around. Tea has to have milk. Tea has to be drunk on every occasion. Tea is a very basic element of everyday life. Coffee is for Europeans. To help you understand, imagine the situation that changed my mind: One day I went out with a friend. We spent all day outside, having a walk around, and at night we took some pictures at the top of a windy, cold cliff. We then went to visit friends of mine and they said what they always say first thing: "Hiya. You ok? Want a cuppa?" Of course we did. What I forgot was to ask for one without milk. I thought I could put up with it for once and the next thing I remember is drinking the best tea I have ever drunk. Why was that? Well, the one thing tea is so much loved for happened. It warmed me up, it gave me comfort, I felt as if I had just come home. It was not only strong black tea to wake me up, it was silky-smooth comfort I drank.

On average, British use 2.0kg of tea per head per year to make the drink, which makes them number 2 worldwide - right after Turkey. The connection between

this western European country and the drink from the Far East grew remarkably strong when India became part of the British Empire. First green tea was imported but with the rising Indian influences after the country became part of the Empire in the late 18th century, black tea began to be more popular and turned into the Britons' favourite. Ever since then it has been considered to cure minor injuries and bridge embarrassing pauses in a conversation ("You want a top up? I'll put the kettle on!").



Grey with a little bit of milk, "dishwater-coloured". The more sugar added, the lower the class you are considered to belong to.

Loose tea is to be preferred for a good cuppa (even though most people use tea bags).
Black or herbal? As you like it! But make sure to not mess up the rules for having milk in your tea (in general: **no milk where there is fruit acid**).



Tea will always be an important feature of life in Britain. And looking at the effect it has, it is quite understandable. The many functions that have been put into it – a comfy warmer, a distraction within speech pauses, most injuries' remedy, a welcome work break, a class distinguisher – make it as crucial for British culture as the Queen or Marmite. It brings people together, makes them calm down and enjoy a moment of peace and relaxation. At the end of the day, this is what everyone wants. So there really is nothing wrong with putting the kettle on, sitting down for a moment and listening to nothing but the sound of a spoon stirring in a cup, is there?

What to have with it?

Basically you are free to have with your tea whatever you like. Here is some inspiration though:

Cucumber Sandwich

a simple sandwich made from white toast (no crust), butter and cucumber slices; try with mint or watercress

Victoria Sponge Cake

for the sweet tooth: soft, spongy cake with jam

Tea Bread or Scones

rather firm textured muffins or bread with mixed fruit in it, often served with clotted cream and jam

The high tea

High tea is not only a meal, it is more like a procedure. It takes place between 6.00 and 7.00 at night and a combination between afternoon tea and dinner is served. Typical things to be served are cold roast or chicken, cake or fruit. It is a very formal procedure and normally only carried out at the dining table when special guests are expected. Other, more modest forms are cream tea, reception tea and the classical afternoon tea. A proper business has been carried out from this significant cultural aspect. Tea rooms can be found all over the country and usually serve cream tea all day.

With the rise of popularity, tea grew into a major aspect of British culture, too. It is not only referred to as a drink, but it can also name a meal taken at a certain time of the day. The so-called cream tea was introduced to Queen Victoria as a light snack in the afternoon to overcome the gap between lunch and dinner and the "sinking feeling" that comes with it. Ever since the procedure has been well known: tea and milk, scones with jam and clotted cream. These days every other snack is also possible – but would certainly arouse attention. When travelling up to the northwest, you will find that "tea" is the name for what we know as dinner. If you hear someone speaking of "my tea" or, more extreme due to the lack of grammar, "me tea", you are most certainly speaking to a working-class person. As you can see already, the meaning of tea for the British society goes even further: It is seen as an

indicator of class and education. You can read in Kate Fox' Watching the English that working-class members drink their tea sweet and milky, the colour of bricks. By the way, the milk was added to make it healthier as in the beginning tea was considered unhealthy. However, the higher in class, the closer you come to the ultimate posh drink: unsweetened Earl

Try something new every day!

There are thousands of different types of tea, but these are the ones mainly drunk in Britain:

Assam

from the north-east of India; strong, malty taste; perfect in the morning

Darjeeling

from the Himalayan mountains; nutty, champagne taste; best with a meal and no milk

English Breakfast

blend of teas; strong taste and a classic with milk

Earl Grey

blend of teas from India and Ceylon; scented with bergamot oil; fresh, lemony taste; only to be drunk with small shots of milk

Something more fancy: **Lady Grey** same blend as Earl Grey but with lemony and orangy tastes; my tip is to try it with milk (it really carries out the taste of it)

Mazunte

by Benjamin Priebst

“I don’t think Mexico is the best place you should go, these days...” I heard him say. We were standing inside an overcrowded N° 61 bus on our way home from the campus to Dresden Neustadt, just as many times before. The guy talking to me was a fellow student of mine, whom I had just informed about my plans of travelling to that distant country in the very south of North America.

What exactly was he referring to? Swine Flu? The war on drugs? Gang shooting? Tourist kidnapping? Corruption?

It is true the reports on Mexico back then in early 2010 were indeed not encouraging for any plans of travelling to the land of Tacos, chillies, Tequila and Corona, but still, there must have been more to Mexico than just an extremely high homicide rate. So, what was it that made me scrape together all the money I had left from my two grannies’ X-Mas and birthday cash infusions and buy the cheapest ticket I could get hold of to make my way to *México, querido y lindo (Mexico, the beloved and beautiful)*?

The first time I crossed the pond was in early 2003, when Mafia wars were still in the movies rather than on the News of European broadcasters. I remember that listening to the very sound of the country’s name gave me thrills: “Me-hi-koh.” It took us long nights soaked with beer and Tequila, until my two future travel companions and I decided that it would not be Cuba where we should start our new lives.

“Man, Cuba is just an island! Food and accommodations are way too pricy there for strangers and, in the end, we will get bored after a month. But look at this place here!” (Georg was pointing at a spot on the world map, not too far from our first candidate.) “13,000 km of sandy beaches, and I mean BEACHES!!! Not the sad looking, freezing cold, pine tree lined, North Sea stile beaches you know. I mean REAL beaches! There are 700 km of Caribbean coastline, and God knows how long the Pacific coast is. Besides, they have deserts over HERE, mountains, jungle, Mayan and Aztec ruins over THERE, and did I mention the beaches? If we get bored,

we can still go on and hop over to Belize, Guatemala, Honduras and... anywhere else. And the best thing...” (Georg seemed amazingly well prepared) “...the best thing is that, if we’re lucky, we’ll get our tickets there for less than 700 euros each! Whatcha say?!!!!”

Well, as you might imagine, there was not really much Anna and I could counter. Mexico it was to be!

We had about 5 weeks left to get moving: Practising a bit of “Una cerveza y un trago de Tequila, por favor. Cómo te llamas? Tienes novio?” We bought super-light traveller’s hammocks, sun screen, mosquito repellent and, most importantly, HATS (!!!)..... and then off we went to conquer the New World!

First of all, the New World conquered us – with its zillions of germs, bugs and parasites. “Montezuma’s Revenge” got us. By the way: The name of the famous Aztec king, who was imprisoned and finally executed by Hernán Cortés and his people in the early 16th century, was Motécuhtzōma, which the Spaniards then transformed into Moctezuma. The rest of the story, his once more mispronounced name being used to describe a digestive sickness very common among European travellers in Central America, remains nebulous...

So, we all got sick, but it did not take us too long, however, until we left Mexico City for the cute little colonial town of *Oaxaca* (Wa`haka). There, we began to feel what was so Mexican about Mexico: Old grandmothers selling fruits, chillies and



vegetables, little boys offering chewing gum (“Chicleeeeee, Mexico: Old grandmothers selling fruits, chillies and vegetables, little boys offering chewing gum (“Chicleeeeee, chicleeeeee. Cómprame uno, pooooo favooooo!”), and all the street life happening at a much slower pace than we were used to. We stayed there for about 4 days and made our first acquaintances with other backpackers, and of course, our first massive Tequila hangover was part of the game, too.

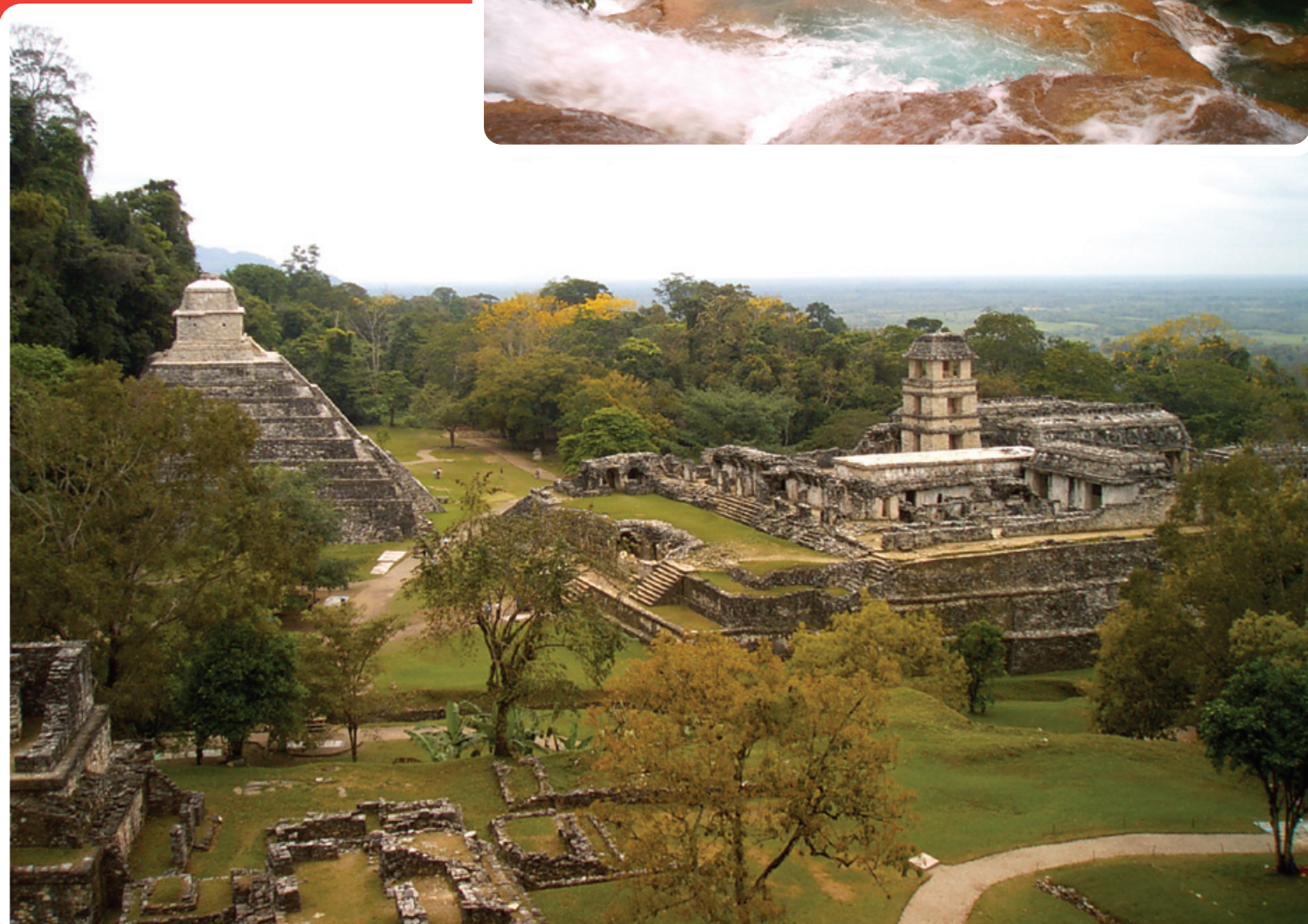
On we went to the beach! Yes! The BEACH! On the map the Pacific coast appeared no more than 200km away, it took us, however, nine hours on a small, run down and totally overcrowded chicken bus to get there. But then, there it was: A beautiful bay lined with coconut palm trees. Fine yellow sand and impressive waves of blue water. A crowd of hippie-ish looking people having fun with their Frisbee disks, body boards, volley balls, or just sitting around playing cards or staring at the sea. It was Heaven on Earth! The name of the place was **Mazunte** (Ma’sunteh) and it had been a village of turtle hunters until someone found out that there were hardly any turtles left, and thus, no money in hunting down the remaining five or ten. Instead, they built *El museo de la Tortuga* and dedicated their free time to organising guided turtle watch boat trips.

Mazunte was (and still is) a trap. In the morning, or rather at midday time, you wake up, and the first thing going through your head is “Great, this wasn’t a dream! I’m really here!” Then you get up, splash about in the warm waters until you feel like breakfast. Food is cheap and good in Mazunte! You can find fresh fish, seafood, but also pizza, pasta & Co everywhere, and you will not pay more than 60 pesos (3-4€) for each meal. For the rest of the day you can either go back to your hammock, or rent a boat to go turtle and dolphin watching or fishing or both, or you just take a walk along the beach to one of the neighbouring villages. Whatever you do, you will enjoy it and feel that time runs slowly in Mazunte. Without further notice, 5 weeks of our 4-month trip had already passed! There was still about 2,000km and almost 3 months to go until we would have to think about finding our way back to Mexico City.

Most of these remaining 100 days we spent in Chiapas, which is the southernmost part of Mexico and one of the poorest, too. It is divided into cool, mountainous regions and hot, sticky, but beautifully lush rain forests. We first stopped in **San Cristóbal de las Casas**, a beautiful colonial town up in the mountains. Here, it was the mix of ridiculously cheap prices and the great atmosphere that made us reshape our itinerary again. Together with a group of about 10 fellow travellers we

occupied the **La Casa Nuestra** hostel for almost three weeks until we all – that means the whole group – went on to visit the tropical paradise of **Agua Azul** (a set of amazing turquoise water cascades in the middle of the jungle) and the neighbouring famous Mayan ruins of **Palenque** (Pa’lenkeh).

Still, there were about two months left of this first visit to Mexico, and of course, we still were to get to know a large number of amazing places, but it was Mazunte, which I could not get out of my mind. Shorter and longer trips to Mexico were to follow in 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2010, and now, after eight



years, I know this little village on the Mexican Pacific coast better than most of the vacation sites I have ever visited in Europe. Was it the eternal summer, the delicious food, the warm-hearted people or just the adventure that always made me go back? I cannot tell. But today again, I am packing my suitcase for a longer internship in Guadalajara, Mexico, and guess where I am going, when my work is done...

ENGLISH DRESDEN?

by Daniel Frieß

Having spent some time in an English speaking country, surely changes your world. After you came back to your home town (here: Dresden), you might encounter the feeling of overwhelming nostalgia. You forgot about all the odds that made your life difficult in, say, Scotland. You pushed away the memories of frozen toes, caused by single-glazed windows, and a heating near to the doors, into the land of "never-ever-happend". You transformed of all the things you disliked, like Marmite, baked beans, deep-fried Mars bars, stale Ale and all the other obscurities, into a wonderful conglomerate of warm, cosy memories haunting you with their absence on a rainy Sunday afternoon. You might check the internet for cheap flight to this promised land or bother your friends, who are still there, to send you a package with all the things you missed. Well, do nae bother with that, anymore.

Dresden is on the edge of being Englified. You don't believe that? Well check out the facts: Apart from all the well-known American franchisers, our lovely, sleepy city is now in possession of various opportunities where you can satisfy you desire for the above mentioned. Let's take a short, imaginary walk from the university to the Neustadt, crossing Prager Straße. First and foremost, you'll find quite some Englishness in the faculty, but let them aside for a moment. Our first stop is TKMaxx and the beginning of the

Prager Straße. A haven for all the lovers of, predominantly, British fashion and brands. Though, shopping there is more like going on a treasure hunt, but you'll always find something that suits you, for a quite small price. So Take it to the Maxx. We proceed over the Neumarkt and passing the British Hotel. Well it's a bit pricey to spend the night in one of their rooms, but having a look at it won't cost anything.

Leaving aside all the so called Irish Pubs in the old town, we're now crossing the Augustusbrücke to arrive in the Neustadt, and stop right at the entrance of the Alaunstraße. Turning to your right, you'll find a small shop appearing a bit strange at first sight. There you'll find all the good stuff for a perfect, either Indian, Pakistani or British meal. They offer baked beans, tea in bags (and not these things with a string), HP sauce and various kinds of good, ready-made curry. Following down the Alaunstraße and turning left into Louisenstraße, you pass a small bar called Madness right next to Planwirtschaft. Here you have the chance to let your British (and after too many G&T also your Irish) out. Every Wednesday is Bingo day, and once a month you have the chance to take part in a traditional Pub Quiz. At the end of Louisenstraße, you find another Indian shop (www.indianshop-dresden.de). They offer you an even bigger variety of tea and good food. Turning back and heading towards Martin-Luther-Straße. Next to the well-known Bottom's up, you discover Dresden's novelty of British lifestyle. The England, England (englandengland.de) is a cosy, small café offering traditional food (Carrrrrott



cake!) and a nice, warm cuppa. Here you might come across some real Englishmen and -women. Mycroft's (www.mycrofts.de/duj_03_2006.htm), in the Rudolf-Leonhard-Straße, on the other hand, is yet another recommendable location of a similar kind. Here you'll find literature and tea at the same time. To surprise your friends with some British or American specialities of the more liquid kind, you want to hop into Beyond the Pond on the Rothenburger Straße (beyondtheponddresden.de). There you'll find the good, stale Ale and Ciders that you didn't drink during your stay on the Isle, but now miss heavily.

Apart from all the food, Dresden has quite some things to offer, when it comes to culture. I'm not referring to the Semperoper or the like. Small, but very involved groups of creative people meet up every now and then, to celebrate the English language (whatever your accent might be). You'll find regular theatre plays performed by the Dresden Dramatizers or the poetry reading, now being held every 3 months in England, England. So, you might want to check facebook (groups: England, England or Deutsch-Britische Gesellschaft) as well, to get all the updates.

Enjoy the dip into English nostalgia and get brought back by the taste of Marmite.





Bike trip into the sunset

by Daniel Frieß

Imagine it's summer, real summer, you met all your deadlines (or at least do not care about them). Imagine a perfect starting point for an adventure, something you wanted to do for a long time, but always found good excuse not to. Imagine riding into a sunset on your bike somewhere along a town canal in Holland on your way to the north sea. By then you've already spent some 7 days in the saddle. So let's start at the beginning.

Mid summer 2009, I just came back from an amazing year in Scotland, and still had some itchy feet that needed to be calmed down. But how? Booking a trip somewhere to the kingdom "far, far away"? Way too expensive and does not really stop the itch. Interrail? Same, same but different... and who wants to travel with DB these days, being fried alive in an ICE. Thanks, but no thanks. So I went looking for a reliable bike to use as my means of transport. Having found that, I was still in a bit of a conundrum about the destination of my keen adventure. Luckily, Germans love bikes and maps, so the route was quickly

found. It is called that R1 leading from Boulogne sur mer (France) to St. Petersburg (Russia) and crossing Belgium, Holland, Germany, and Poland. So I chose to go west and start in Dresden to go up north and join the R1 in Wittemberg (yeah, the town of Martin Luther). But before the

ride there is the packing. Having never done something like this before, I was quite naïve concerning the content of my two bike bags (clothing, washing utensils), one pack sack (tent, sleeping bag, mattress, pair of shoes), one crappy bar bag (repair utensils, maps) and bag pack (food, food, drink, food). Looking

"from
Boulogne sur mer (**France**)
to St. Petersburg (**Russia**)
and crossing
Belgium, Holland,
Germany,
and **Poland**"

back on this, I am very glad that I haven't really had any problems with my bike (air fork, disk brakes and some other Hightech parts), I would never have been able to repair any of this and bike shops are quite rare in the German country side. Anyhow, one lovely morning I started my tour, going up north along the banks of the Elbe. I already got lost after some 10km on the way to Meissen which, luckily, was a one off.

Racing against myself I arrived in Wittemberg (160km) after some 10h cycling, quite glad to find a Elbe near camp side invaded by Midgets. I held up this speed until Münster, where I overhauled nearly my entire gear. By now, I exceeded the costs for a trip to "far, far away". By now (4 days later) I passed the Harz and had some very nice Couchsurfing experiences (single mother with a crazy but lovely little daughter, hosting two guys; a couple providing the best couch I've ever slept on). On the edge of crossing the countries borders, I decided to stay a day in Münster just to relax and cure my sore knees. Still, I had to find another place to stay for the night. So, I consulted a outdoor shop (they surely knew what I was on about) and asked if anyone had some information about a camp side or the like, or was member of couchsurfing. Well, after some 10 minutes I had three places to crash, unfortunately, I chose the wrong one. The guy, living in the Ghettos of Münster, turned out to be a weed-devouring war aficionado (having served in Afghanistan himself) with a slight tendency to paranoia. Later on, I learned that he was not even a member of Couchsurfing.

But, every negative things has something good to it, so I was on the road again (by the way, Canned Heat "on the road again", great song for trips like these) at seven

in the morning making my way to the boarder. Great discovery in Holland small camp sides called "Minicamping". Farmers opened up a small space in their front garden where you can mount your tent, and take a shower. They even serve you beer for a Euro. Great! I really do love Holland, the people are so relaxed, which is not necessarily due to the shops where you can buy coffee in. From a bikers perspective, everything is so easy to find, perfect "Fietsen Routen" (cycle paths) with a map at every knot. It is brilliant, but a bit boring, because everything is so even. Towns you definitely have to visit are Arnhem, Utrecht (Mini-Amsterdam, much cosier than the big sister) and Den Haag (great youth hostel facing a Gracht).

"The guy turned out to be a weed-devouring war aficionado with a slight tendency to paranoia."

By now the mileometer clocked somewhat around 1000 km and the wristwatch showed day 8 after the departure. I arrived at the north sea. She greeted me with wind, storm, temperatures around 10 degrees, everything else than a warm welcome. So I decided not to continue until France (which was the original plan), but to see the Europoort in Rotterdam and then return. But, there was one funny but shocking incident yet to come. I paddled into a town called "Monster" which consisted entirely of greenhouses, the whole town was covered by milky white glass, containing our vegetable (when it says "made in Holland", when it says "made in Spain", same scenario but around the region of Almeria). I felt a bit sick and yet enlightened, by the knowledge why a red tomato can

conserve a yummy surface for over 2 weeks. Still having miserable weather, I decided to abort my journey here and now, and return home, by train.

The general outcome of this adventure, which it definitely was, can be described as a learning process. It is good to test your limits, bodily (I lost 7kg) and psychologically (being alone nearly every evening), to see how far you can go. The most important lesson I learned was that travelling alone is a race against yourself, and, more importantly, you have no-one to really share it with. The next journey of this kind will not be on my own again, I think I prefer to share the impressions directly when they happen.

COUCHSURFING BY JULIA WIELAND

LOOKING FOR A PLACE TO SLEEP IN ANOTHER CITY OR COUNTRY? YOU DO NOT WANT TO SPEND A FORTUNE AND WOULD LIKE TO CONNECT WITH THE LOCAL PEOPLE? THEN COUCHSURFING IS THE BEST WAY FOR YOU TO TRAVEL!

WHAT IS IT?

COUCHSURFING IS AN INTERNATIONAL HOSPITALITY SERVICE WHICH IS INTERNET-BASED AND HAS APPROXIMATELY 2.2 MILLION MEMBERS IN 237 COUNTRIES.

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YOU SUBSCRIBE TO THE WEBSITE WWW.COUCHSURFING.ORG, CREATE YOUR PROFILE, AND THEN YOU ARE ABLE TO COORDINATE ACCOMMODATIONS. THIS MEANS THAT YOU CONTACT OTHER PEOPLE WHO OFFER THEIR COUCH AND ASK THEM IF YOU CAN STAY WITH THEM. IN RETURN, YOU TELL THEM ABOUT YOUR TRIP AND YOU CAN OFFER YOUR OWN BED WHENEVER A COUCHSURFER COMES TO YOUR HOMETOWN.

THE SLEEPING PLACES VARY FROM SIMPLE COUCHES TO SINGLE BEDROOMS AND VERY MUCH DEPEND ON THE HOSTS. IF YOU DO NOT WANT TO OR CANNOT OFFER A BED, YOU CAN STILL VOLUNTEER TO GIVE A GUIDED TOUR OF YOUR CITY OR SIMPLY MEET FOR A COFFEE.

Forward into the Past – Travelling to Modernity and back: The Amish Rumspringa

by Bettina Pahl

Source: Schneider, Rüdiger H.H. Die Amish: Von Gewaltlosigkeit und Widerstand. Überleben in drei Jahrhunderten. Münster: Monsenstein und Vannerdat, 2007.

“Sex, drugs and rock ‘n’ roll” – not unusual for a youngster who is keen to experiment, you think? Have you ever had a better time in your life than the phase of finally getting to know how adults live? You were impatiently waiting for your first official glass of alcohol and by taking the first sip you suddenly felt all grown up because alcohol is the synonym of adulthood. Moreover, you knew that you were free to indulge whenever you wanted from now on.

Imagine you had never heard of the word “alcohol”, not to speak of its effects, before your 16th birthday. Imagine you had never worn jeans and T-Shirts but 18th century clothing instead. Imagine you had a maximum of five years to enjoy the luxuries of modern industrialized society... Well, thousands of young people know what these “Imagines...” feel like. A small part of North American society called Old Order Amish lead a simple, religious life without any technical aids. Yet, the strict codex allows youngsters to peep into the “outside”, i.e. modern world. Dive into the world of Rumspringa!!!

You have probably already guessed that “Rumspringa” in Pennsylvanian Dutch, the language of the Amish, means “running around” or rather “jumping around”. Since Pennsylvania Dutch derives from Palatine German, “rum” could also refer to the German “Raum”, meaning “running around outside the bounds”. But what is this running around all about?

“Rumspringa” is the name of the period of an Amish young person’s life when he or she is allowed to get into contact with the “outside” modern American world, i.e. with the civilization that is not Amish. Most young Amish therefore feverishly await their 16th birthday, which marks the starting point into the “real” world. “Rumspringa” may last only a few



CD review:

by Bettina Pahl

Emily Jane White -
"Ode to Sentience"

It was only by chance that I first discovered Emily Jane White on an online music streaming service. My attention having been caught immediately by her clear and soft, yet expressive voice, I just could not stop listening to her music. White's mainly melancholic songs go right through to the listener's heart. They feel like the slight touch of a feather, like an autumn breeze, which lingers on your skin for barely a few seconds. It is certainly difficult to categorize her musical style - some may describe it as piano pop with folk and blues tendencies, but in fact it is so much more extraordinary.

Her latest album - "Ode to Sentience" - only came out on 8th November 2010. The music being marked by classical instruments like piano, guitar, cello and violin perfectly fits White's seemingly fragile voice. Her enigmatic and poetic lyrics revolve around hurt love, the silent destructiveness of death and the vulnerability of the soul. There is definitely no hope in Emily Jane White's music, but it is sublimely beautiful nevertheless. The perfect soundtrack of a depressive winter day.

>>> <http://emilyjanewhite.com> <<<

threat of extinction? Without a doubt, the church takes great risks in letting the potential future members gain an insight into the "real" world, but this is exactly the purpose of Rumspringa: By experiencing and learning about the "evils" of American lifestyle, young people are supposed to choose a pure and innocent life within the Amish community. Moreover, the supposed choice between joining the church and living outside the community in fact only appears to be one because the Amish youth is predefined by religious values, family constructs, the social embedding in the Amish community and by the language. Also imagine the emotional, intellectual and psychological overtaking - up to their 16th birthday, Amish children have never come across damaging temptations in their sheltered nest.

In addition, the lack of intellectual curiosity and higher education makes it difficult for adolescents to find a job "outside"

Thus, over 80% of young people decide to return to the Amish world after Rumspringa is over, and by getting baptized adapt themselves to the church.

At least they have once experienced a less rigid way of life and know what they will miss in their future lives.

Or what they can do without with a good conscience.



months or up to the 21st birthday, the decisive date: The young Amish person has to decide between leaving his or her community forever or getting baptized and thus returning to the historical way of life.

Smoking, getting drunk, having first sexual experience - what seems natural to German adolescents, for example, will remain unique for most Amish young people as these temptations are confined to Rumspringa. Once Amish youths have decided to stay with the Amish community, i.e. with their baptism, they are supposed to lead a pure life free from drugs of any kind.

While the girls are usually rather hesitant, boys make the most of their liberty: They create "gangs" consisting of 50 to 150 members and temporarily becoming the most important social reference points. Boys tend to drive cars (!), to wear American clothing, no hat and styled hair, whereas girls experiment less by keeping their Amish clothes, but only try cosmetics. Furthermore, both sexes equally indulge in alcohol and drugs. First and foremost, however, Rumspringa is connected to the phase of dating called "courting" among the Amish. The whole passes off secretly and only among the Amish young people as the church does not allow marriages with Non-Amish individuals.

Contrary to the strict principles of Amish education, parents tend to be surprisingly liberal with their children during Rumspringa. This tolerance, and also partly ignorance, towards their children's excesses may be due to the fact that the Amish community is convinced that the temptations of the outside world will deter rather than attract young people from leading a future life as a Non-Amish. The liberal attitude is reflected in the Amish description of Rumspringa as "sowing one's wild oats" eventually indicating that the young Amish will have their time of experimentation and will finally safely return to the Amish fold.

But why does the Amish community, which comprises a mere 250,000 people worldwide, allow this freedom which represents a

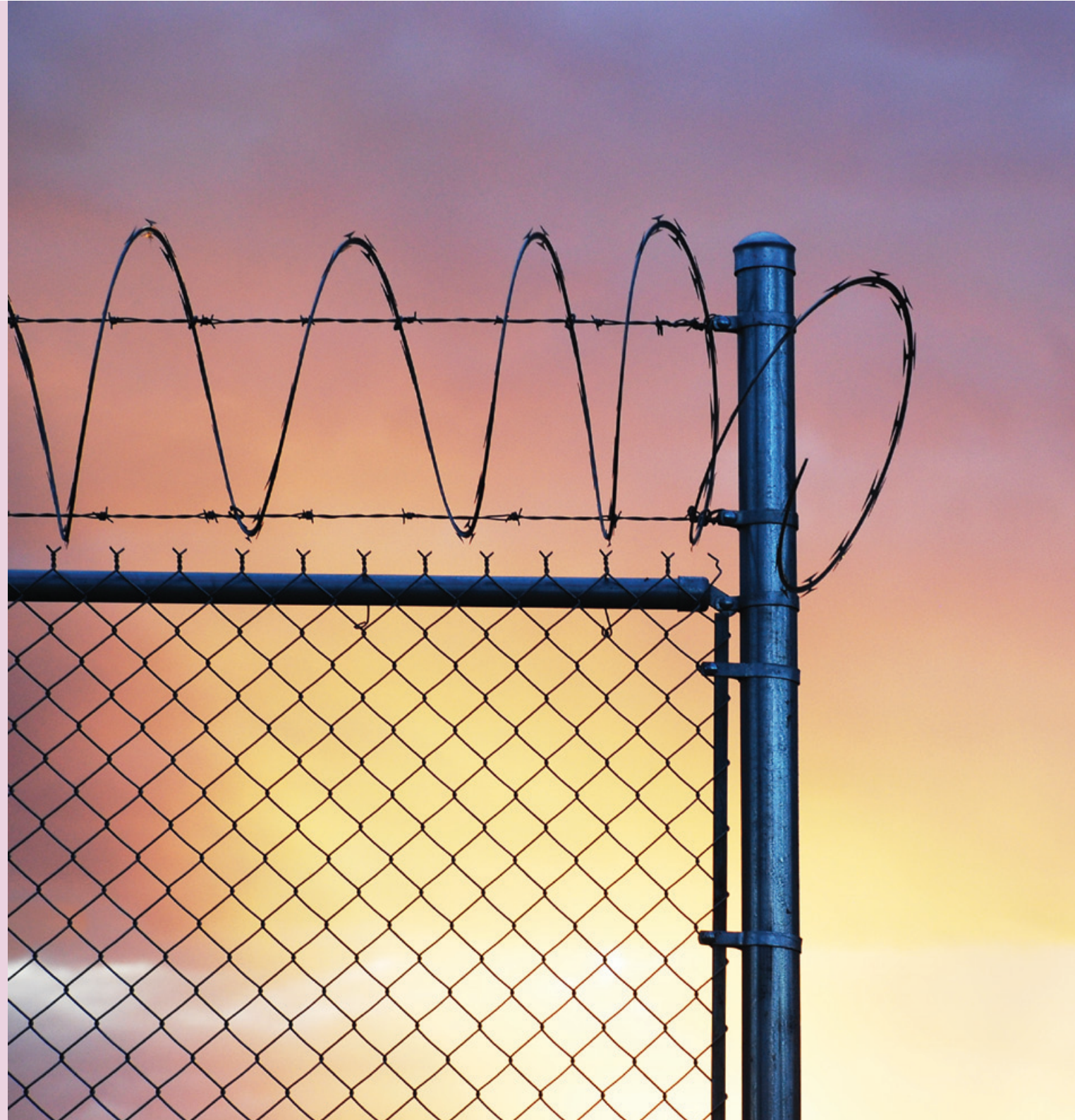
A trip home

by Julia Wieland

Prisoners of the penal institution in Dresden (JVA) perform their trip home with the play "The return of Odysseus"

When I arrived at the JVA Dresden I had to lock away my wallet and all personal items. Then I entered a huge gate and left my passport. They checked my name. For security reasons I had called in advance and given my name. I queued up together with all the other people who had come to benefit from the unusual chance of seeing a theatre play behind prison walls. We were led into a kind of lock and the enormous door behind us closes. "Well, no escape from here," I thought to myself. Then another door in front of us opened and we were directed across the prison yard right to the gym. I was almost disappointed: no prisoners clunking against the iron bars in front of their windows were in sight. The gymnasium was very modern and new like the rest of the penitentiary's buildings. We were the last group which was let in and my friend Katrin and I took seats between two men in striped T-Shirts. "I am sitting sit next to a prisoner"-whispered Katrin. There was no time to answer back, the following hour I was totally fascinated with the prisoners' impressive performance. They told the famous saga of the eventful return of Odysseus and his crew after the ten-year Trojan War. Odysseus' journey home served as an allegory of the prisoners' own final home trip and their anxieties and hopes involved with it. The story was interwoven with the actors' very intimate and personal approaches concerning going back home.

One actor explained: "Perhaps somebody took my place. I know that the world outside has gone on with life. How will I adjust to that?"



Another performer told the audience: "Maybe my friends and family think that I am the same as before. But I have changed, too."

A third prisoner described a worst case scenario: "When I came back, my wife's new boyfriend was sitting in our kitchen, wearing my bathrobe. Can you imagine? In my bathrobe, just like in a bad movie!"

A very touching sequence was a dance scene where all the male and female actors were floating in the light of blue and white waves. To soft, but energetic music, they danced like fishes in the depths of water, on their way home.

But the most moving moment took place after the play. The audience gave the lined-up actors thundering applause and one of them called out for her grandmother, who was sitting on the first bench, and dragged her over to the other actors. The old lady with tears in her eyes hugged her young granddaughter and I was not far from weeping as well. "Family reunion in prison", I thought.

The play "Die Rückkehr des Odysseus"

was shown within the framework of the festival "Land in Sicht" - theatre days of the Saxon prison authorities from November 17. -20.2010.

I interviewed Alfred Haberkorn, art therapist and organiser of the festival.

Since when have theatre-projects existed in Saxon prisons?

In fact, for a long time, but often more accidentally and rarely frequented by "outsiders". This project has only existed for eight years.

Who finances the projects?

Normally the ministry of justice within the financing of the overall activities in prison

Do any success rates exist? Can you say that prisoners who participate in theatre projects are less prone to lapsing back into crime?

No reliable statistics exist. But it is for sure that these projects have a lasting impact on the people involved. Whenever I meet "former actors" in the "Neustadt", they mention these projects in a very positive way. Furthermore, they consider them to be very important and helpful for their personal development. People who want to change use these theatre workshops to gather new perspectives.

Where did the idea concerning theatre in prison come from?

The idea came to me when I was working with therapeutic role plays with adolescent delinquents. They liked it and wanted to continue with it.

In which Saxon jails do the prisoners have the chance to perform plays?

Currently in Dresden, Chemnitz, Waldheim, Zeithain and Regis.

Where can we find out about future performances?

In the future you can check this homepage: www.kunstimgefaengnis.de

Is the festival planned for next year in November again?

Definitely not. It is too much work to do it every year. There will be at least a 5-year break.



The Invisible Disease

The stigma that is attached to depression still causes far too many people to suffer in silence when their condition is perfectly treatable.

by Stefanie Kruszyk

When internationally famous footballer Robert Enke committed suicide in November 2009, it caused an outcry in the German media. The clinically depressed man should have received more help; the world of football should be more tolerant of people suffering from mental illnesses; more should be done to remove the stigma from depression so it would be easier for people to have the courage to seek treatment. The media swamped us with articles about depression, trying to raise awareness.

Only one professional footballer, Andreas Biermann, actually spoke up after Enke's death. He openly talked about his own illness and his hospitalization, encouraging his teammates to ask him anything. Nobody asked, his contract with FC St. Pauli was not extended and now, a year later, he says that he would advise aspiring professionals to keep quiet about their mental issues. After all the fuss and all the talk about help, tolerance and awareness, nothing has changed.

What seems to be an almost inhuman cruelty in the world of professional football also holds true for other areas of life. Depression is still seen as an overreaction, an imaginary condition that wouldn't exist if the people affected were less whiny and more able to pull themselves together. Also, they seem untrustworthy: Who knows what they can handle? What if they cannot deal with this situation? Can I really trust them with this task? What do I do if they start crying, poor weak souls? Do I really want to have that responsibility?

Over the last year we have been made 'aware' of the existence of mental illness to the point where it almost has got annoying, and yet the attitude towards the problem remains the same. We've seen the rising numbers, and it seems that nowadays everybody has some kind of mental issue. Now, how does this work? How can we be 'aware' of the dimension of this illness and still be unable to accept depression as such?

People with mental illnesses often appear to be mystical, strange beings. The way they talk and behave is different from the way healthy people act. Mentally ill people don't

stick to the rules; their behaviour is unpredictable, alienating and sometimes just plain 'wrong'. They don't react the way they should, they don't think the way they should, and this unpredictability puts people off. Trying to make sense of something that lacks logic, the confused healthy mind jumps to conclusions: They must be overreacting. They must be trying to get attention. Because the healthy mind cannot imagine working differently from the way it does, it comes up with excuses that make sense, and reacts accordingly:

"Pull yourself together."

"Get over yourself; you're just trying to get attention."

"Other people have it just as bad/worse than you, what do you have to moan about?"

This kind of attitude causes feelings of shame and guilt in the people affected. Succumbing to one's own mood feels like failure, like being too weak to get out of 'a rut' on one's own. As a result of this, far too many people are afraid of seeking help and afraid of admitting to anyone that they have a problem. This is where it gets dangerous: An untreated depression only gets worse, in some cases up to the point where the person affected can see no other way to end their suffering than to end their life. This is what happened to Robert Enke and this is what happens to many other people.

"Depression is such a cruel punishment.

There are no fevers, no rashes, no blood tests to send people scurrying in concern. Just the slow erosion of the self, as insidious as any cancer. And, like cancer, it is essentially a solitary experience. A room in hell with only your name on the door."

Martha Manning

Of all mental illnesses, depression is one of the most common and one of the most treatable ones. Statistically speaking, one in six adults will develop a depression that will require treatment over the course of their lives. Who gets it depends on many factors that work together, like general vulnerability – this includes one's upbringing as well as possible genetic predisposition; stress, for example, a high workload, illness or a difficult relationship; and acute events like sudden job loss, death of a loved one or even seemingly positive events such as a marriage or childbirth. The combination of these factors can trigger a depression in anyone; just because some people might be more likely to get depressed does not mean that it cannot happen to you or someone you know.



Depression is caused by a neurochemical imbalance in the brain; there has been extensive research on how this imbalance influences not only our mood, but other areas of our body as well. Depression is known as a possible cause of pain, insomnia, and weight fluctuation, just to mention a few. A recent study by the University of Freiburg has shown that patients with major depression react differently to visual stimulation than healthy people: They have reduced sensitivity to contrast, which means that their world indeed is more 'grey and drab'.

However, with the great majority of these symptoms being invisible to others, depression is a very lonely experience. We are used to illnesses being visible. If someone is in bed with the flu, burning with fever and coughing as if it's going out of fashion, nobody who sees them will ask them why they're not at work. If someone is in bed because they simply cannot, no matter how hard they try, get up, they will very likely be asked why they don't get a grip and go to work. To a depressed mind, tasks as mundane as making a call can appear as hard and impossible as walking up Mt. Everest on your hands, yet you are expected to just "get over it" and do it. Scared of being labeled as weak and incompetent, you will not dare to speak up and you will do whatever it takes to either get the job done or avoid it as long as possible, and if you have to fake a physical illness, like a stomach virus. In the first draft of the last sentence I wrote "real illness" before I changed it to "physical". This says a lot: Mental illness still gets so little recognition, it might just as well be imaginary.

The major problem is that it is incredibly hard for a healthy person to understand what depression feels like. It is equally hard to explain it, and not only because the illness has many different faces. Very often, what goes on in one's head makes so little sense that it seems impossible to sufficiently describe in words what it feels like.

"The merest schoolgirl, when she falls in love, has Shakespeare, Donne, Keats to speak her mind for her; but let a sufferer try to describe a pain in his head to a doctor and language at once runs dry. There is nothing ready made for him."

**Virginia Woolf,
On Being Ill (1926)**

This is a problem that finally needs to be overcome. Communication, no matter how hard it is, is the only way to remove the stigma. Affected people need to be willing to talk, and healthy people need to be willing to listen. It doesn't stop at knowing the numbers, and it doesn't stop at recognising the fact that "lots of people" have mental health issues. That is only the start. Depression is an illness that can be treated very successfully by a combination of psychotherapy and medication. The earlier this treatment starts, the better the chances are to be cured. The less people feel stigmatised, the readier they will be to seek help. This treatment saves lives.



Talk to each other, and go and get help.

For more information, visit:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/emotional_health/mental_health/disorders_depression.shtml

A BBC info site about depression

<http://www.kompetenznetz-depression.de>

A German website that provides information and important addresses

EDUCATION

Need For A Reform?

by Lysann Seifert

Nobody can avoid this topic nowadays as it is omnipresent in bookshops and even on TV. But do we get useful suggestions from the media?

Surely every parent likes to have a well-behaved, polite and patient child. But what if the kid turns out not to be any of this? Looking at a shouting, pushing and spitting toddler might throw up some questions. What went wrong? How could it get that far? Maybe the child just has some kind of defect and I have got nothing to do with it? I assume that asking such questions is a good sign and shows that these parents at least have an interest in solving the situation, but where can one get the proper answers?

Books on education are flooding the book market, giving advice ranging from how to treat a baby to how to cope with an adolescent. Whereas with

babies the central topic seems to be the parents wish for uninterrupted nights, it is puberty which gives parents a hard time later on. There are also several TV formats which provide guidance to survive the difficult years of parenthood. Reaching millions of desperate mums and dads, this might be the most effective way to get one's ideas on education across to those who really need them.

Last Wednesday, I was sitting on my couch, channel-hopping, not knowing what misery could await me on RTL. The channel was broadcasting "Die Super Nanny", a programme which shows a qualified social education-
alist, Katja Saalfrank, visiting families and working with them on their problems. At the beginning, the family is being introduced. In this case, it is a single mother with her four children. There is the eight-year-old girl trying to do everything she can to give her mum a rest while she herself is totally unnoticed by her overchallenged mother, twins at the age of two who seem to be the main source of all the problems, at least according to their mother, and there also is a baby boy of only four weeks not being given the attention he needs.

Before Mrs.Saalfrank starts to give advice, she observes

the family for a certain time, not giving any comment. This part, together with several other parts, was really challenging for me as I saw children being verbally and physically harmed. As a mother, I cannot understand how one can stand there watching, and even film scenes like that, without interrupting. Is that really necessary? Of course it is. TV has to keep the audience watching, doesn't it? And it seems to work. On that last Wednesday 3.79 million people watched the programme. But did these people really find the answers to their questions? I do not think that the "Super Nanny" can do a lot for all those mistreated children because the family situation is always a different one and therefore parents cannot blindly adopt the methods being used. But what I really hope is that this programme reaches at least some other over-challenged parents, showing them that beating, screaming and verbal denunciation are not going to make anything better but that these reactions are the reason for their children's behaviour.

The first thing we should do is to set new goals. What is meant by a well-behaved, polite and patient



child? Are these really the characteristics we want to achieve, maybe resulting in a shy, reserved adult without any self-assertion? What I want my child to be is an independent, self-confident, happy adult being able to set his own goals and being eager to achieve them, being well-behaved of course meaning not to hurt anybody else's feelings.

"I love my parents and I know they did their best but education was different those days..."

Now I knew what I wanted for my child but not how I could achieve it. I love my parents and I know they did their best but education was different those days and I knew I wanted to bring up my son in a different way. I found the answers to my questions in the book "Das kompetente Kind" by Jesper Juul which has been a constant companion for me since then. The title already provides the main idea of the author. Children, as Juul describes them, are born as social characters, being well aware of their personal needs and boundaries competent enough to express these. An example might be a situation most people know well from their childhood - having dinner with the whole family but not being hungry. This probably happened to every one of us sometime during our youth. Parents are likely to think they know better what the child needs. Phrases like "You must be hungry!", "At least eat half of it." or even "If you do not eat that, you will go straight to bed!" are often used by helpless adults. Of course, in most cases they only want what is best for their child. They do not want their adolescents to starve but the truth is the child knows best. He or she can take responsibility for at least some areas of life such as senses, feelings or personal needs. Why should anyone else know better what tastes good or bad for the child, or if he or she feels warm and comfortable, if he or she feels love or anger or if the child is hungry or tired? Nobody can, and ignoring the child's demands arouses a feeling of frustration within the child and leads to a lack of confidence formulating one's own decisions.

Children do not need an authority to tell them how they have to feel. They need parents who show a real interest in what the child actually needs.

This does not mean that the adolescents can do whatever they want, but that the parents recognize them as partner. This is what Juul points out in his book. We have to get away from seeing children as unfinished beings that have to be obedient to their parents. All members of a family have to be equal. Of course, parents need to make decisions for their children. They have to evaluate pros and cons and they are the ones who have to take responsibility for their final decisions, but it is important to take the children into account, talk with them and show them that one is really interested in what they think.

Some people argue that it is important to set boundaries for the children to orientate themselves and I think that is right, but it is crucial not to show them their boundaries but one's own boundaries. Everyone has his or her own opinion when something is enough and has to stop. Take the teenager listening to music in his or her room so loud that the parents and probably every single neighbour can hear it quite clearly too. The music is obviously not too loud for the teenager, but the mother wants it to be turned down. The mother sets her boundaries, telling her son or daughter that the music is too loud for her but her other son might say that he likes the volume. This shows that boundaries are quite individual, which makes it important to talk to each other.

Jesper Juul also explains that children clearly indicate problems to their parents, either verbally or non-verbally. That means that children always can be seen as a mirror reflecting their parents problems and mistakes. To solve the problem, parents need to observe their children to get to know exactly in which situation they show a certain behaviour and then figure out why and what the parents can change to make it easier for all of them.

Juul's book really made me reconsider my own

upbringing and convinced me to change some things which made it possible to reach a concept of education which my family can feel comfortable with.



Glitter and Doom: Surviving February with a little help from Tom Waits

by Sophie Spieler

Christmas season with all its peaks and its downsides is (finally?) over, most of us have survived New Year's without any major repercussions, and now January is stretched out in front of us, cold and grey, like a fat dead pigeon. We've dutifully made our resolutions – same procedure as last year? Same procedure as every year: We are going to be that much smarter and more disciplined, we're going to eat healthy and finish our schoolwork on time. However, if we're honest with ourselves, we already know that come February, we'll be staying at home watching TV instead of going to the gym; and even though we really wanted to go to the theater/opera/quaint little jazz bar in order to finally bring some culture into our lives, what are we doing tonight? Watching "Two and a half men" for the bazillionth time, knowing all the while it wasn't really that funny to begin with. So by the first week of February, we'll be frustrated and disappointed in ourselves because we've reverted to being the exact same slobbs we were last year. What do we do now?

We buy Tom Waits' live album, *Glitter and Doom* (2009) and a bottle of our alcoholic beverage of choice, sit down in our dark room, and listen to this amazing piece of musical ingenuity. We start out with the slower songs and really think about ourselves and our goals one more time. We're being hard but fair and we come to the conclusion that February isn't really a good month to fundamentally change one's character anyway. We continue with the more upbeat songs and decide that it would be a much better plan to start our personal transformation in late April or even May because it's always easier to do something important when the weather is good. We listen to the whole album once more and stop thinking about ourselves: We simply enjoy the music, the atmosphere, and Tom Waits' stunning and uniquely weird voice, described by music critic Daniel Durchholz as sounding "like it was soaked in a vat of bourbon, left hanging in the smokehouse for a few months, and then taken outside and run over with a car." After that, we're really feeling much better and almost ready to face the last weeks of February, the most dismal month of all.

Using Facts, Fun and Fake Fur to Reinvent the F-Word

by Sophie Spieler

In 1985, the Museum of Modern Art in New York opened its doors for an exhibition entitled *An International Survey of Painting and Sculpture*. The title itself sounded promising enough, suggesting diversity and heterogeneity. However, it turned out that a more appropriate heading would have been **A Narrow-minded Survey of Painting and Sculpture done by White Men Only**: Of 169 artists chosen, only 13 were women and all were white, mostly from Europe or the US. What had happened here? The 1970s had been a decade full of noisy activism and progress for women and people of color. Was it all to be undone by the careerism and neon-clad complacency of the '80s? A group of woman artists, after visiting the exhibition at the MoMA, decided to do something about it.

This was the founding moment of the Guerrilla Girls, a group of female activists fighting against sexism and discrimination. Their main medium is posters and stickers, which are a well-known part of the urban landscapes

of cities like New York and LA, but they also give speeches and offer workshops in colleges. It is the enticing mixture of hard facts and humor that makes the Guerrilla Girls' activism so effective. Being artists themselves, they chose the art world as their primary battleground, but over the years, they have targeted other issues as well, for instance abortion, rape and contraception. The Guerrilla Girls operate anonymously and use the names of dead female artists as pseudonyms. Georgia O'Keeffe, Frida Kahlo and Meta Fuller, among others, also use their outward appearance to confound stereotypes: They combine short skirts, high heels and fishnet stockings with gorilla masks – "it gave us our mask-ularity," Käthe Kollwitz argues half-jokingly.

The Guerrilla Girls have been active for 25 years, irritating and challenging the white, male-dominated world in the US. But do we still need them? Are

THE ADVANTAGES OF BEING A WOMAN ARTIST:

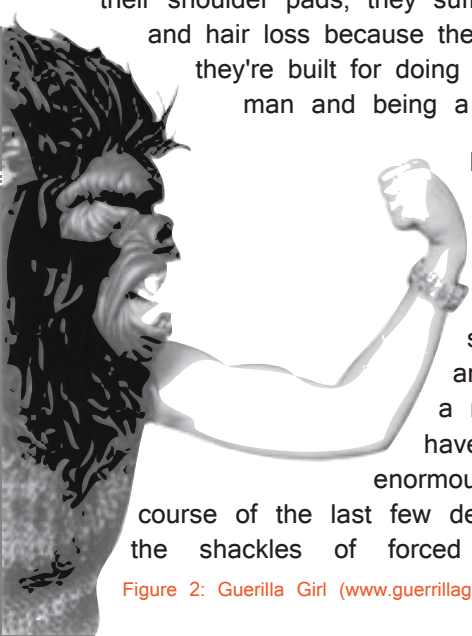
- Working without the pressure of success
- Not having to be in shows with men
- Having an escape from the art world in your 4 free-lance jobs
- Knowing your career might pick up after you're eighty
- Being reassured that whatever kind of art you make it will be labeled feminine
- Not being stuck in a tenured teaching position
- Seeing your ideas live on in the work of others
- Having the opportunity to choose between career and motherhood
- Not having to choke on those big cigars or paint in Italian suits
- Having more time to work when your mate dumps you for someone younger
- Being included in revised versions of art history
- Not having to undergo the embarrassment of being called a genius
- Getting your picture in the art magazines wearing a gorilla suit

A PUBLIC SERVICE MESSAGE FROM **GUERRILLA GIRLS** CONSCIENCE OF THE ART WORLD
WWW.GUERRILLAGIRLS.COM

Figure 1: Advantages of Being a Woman Artist, 1995
([www.http://www.guerrillagirls.com/posters](http://www.guerrillagirls.com/posters))

they still relevant? Younger generations in particular might ask themselves what feminists in the 21st century rebel against: "Feminism?! Ew. Didn't we, like, achieve equality in the '90s?!" Mainstream media seems to agree and periodically celebrates the death of feminism (finally! No more hairy legs, lesbianism and man-hating): The feminist experiment was either successful enough to render itself obsolete, or, by failing to achieve its basic goals, stripped itself of its right to exist.

The first argument is a treacherous "anything goes" attitude that denies any kind of oppression on the grounds that nowadays, women are officially and legally free to make their own decisions: If you "decide" against an education, become a stay-at-home-mom AND buy that fabulous pink nail polish - bravo! You're doing the feminist thing by exercising your right to choose. The other argument comes from an essentialist, quasi-biological background and claims that feminism was doomed to fail because it went against human, that is, female nature. Woman, as a generic entity, just doesn't have what it takes to succeed in a man's world. Look at these career women, the argument goes, aren't they unhappy? Pulled down by the weight of their shoulder pads, they suffer from depression and hair loss because they're not doing what they're built for doing - marrying the right man and being a wife and mother.



But do these voices have a point? Is feminism a thing of yesteryear, sexism a myth and gender equality a reality? Women have certainly made enormous strides in the course of the last few decades. Freed from the shackles of forced domesticity, they

Figure 2: Guerilla Girl (www.guerrillagirls.com)

have entered the workplace, the academy, the government, and the military. At first glance, it thus might seem that all is well in our allegedly gender-blind society. After all, even Barbie became an astronaut in 1965, a surgeon in 1973, a United States Army officer in 1989 and a presidential candidate in 1992. What more could we possibly want?

A lot, as a brief look at the Global Gender Gap Index 2009 quickly reveals. Out of 134 surveyed countries, the United States is currently ranked 31st, losing four places since 2008. Surprising as it may sound, the nation that made democracy fashionable and still proclaims that anybody can be anything is lagging behind countries such as Mongolia, Ecuador and Mozambique in terms of battling gender inequalities. The United States' individual country profile shows that while huge successes have been achieved with regard to education (Rank 1), there is still a long way to go when it comes to political empowerment (Rank 61), health and survival (Rank 40) and economic participation and opportunity (Rank 17).

In 2009, the ratio of women's to men's average weekly earnings was 80.2:100. Studies show that a full-time female worker may lose \$434,000 in a 40-year period for no other reason than being a woman. The better educated a woman is, the more money she is likely to lose; thus women with a bachelor's degree lose a median amount of \$713,000, while women who did not complete high school "only" lose \$270,000.

Apart from economic participation and opportunity, politics is another area that leaves much to be desired in terms of gender equality. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), only 18.9% of parliamentary seats worldwide were held by women in early 2010. While some countries, such as Rwanda (56.3%), Sweden (46.4%), and South Africa (44.5%), have achieved, or are close to achieving, gender equality, the United States is ranked 73rd with a mere 16.8% of female politicians in parliament.

However, the most glaring gender-related injustice in the US occurs with regard to maternity leave, or, more specifically, the complete and utter lack thereof. Out of 173 countries studied, 169 countries offer guaranteed leave with income to women in connection with childbirth. The US guarantees no paid leave for mothers in any segment of the work force. This leaves America, one of the largest and most powerful economies worldwide, in the somewhat questionable company of three other nations: Liberia, Swaziland, and Papua New Guinea - nations in which the majority of the population lives off less than \$1.25 a day.

Thus, despite Barbie's 2010 career in computer engineering, it is more than obvious that we still have 'miles to go.' Coming back to the question of whether groups like the Guerrilla Girls are still relevant, the answer has to be yes, and very much so. They are not only important because of what they do, but because of how they do it. As Heather Skovos puts it: "Sometimes, battling sexism in the normal way just won't do. Sometimes, you must don a gorilla mask, adopt the name of a dead female artist and send estrogen pills to the White House." The Guerrilla Girls show that feminism can be fun; that it is not about man-hating or not shaving one's legs, but about thinking, acting, arguing, laughing and challenging the status quo together - in short, their goal is to reinvent the f-word.



Figure 3: Do Women Have to be Naked?
(<http://www.guerrillagirls.com/posters>)

16 years later...Has anything changed? On September 1, 2004, we did a recount. We were sure things had improved. Surprise! Only 3% of the artists in the Modern and Contemporary sections were women (5% in 1989), and 83% of the nudes were female (85% in 1989). Guess we can't put our masks away yet!

TOO DUMB TO LIVE

- A plea for enlightenment -

by Dirk Hauschild

"All else being equal, not many people would prefer to destroy the world. Therefore I suggest that if the world is destroyed, it will probably be by mistake." (Eliezer Yudkowsky)

Let's face it, as sentient species go, humanity is not exactly the sharpest knife in the drawer. If anything, we are a few times short of a spork. Make no mistake, where knowledge and ability are concerned we *are* rather impressive; our brightest minds are unraveling the secrets of time and space, deciphering the code of life. We have sent members of our species to the deepest depths of the earth and far, far beyond the highest heights. As a matter of fact, our astronauts have taken up permanent residency in space. And we can unleash the power of suns, which so far has mostly been used to make stuff go boom, but you've got to start *somewhere*, right?

We should have just blown up the world in 1962

Yet, despite our miraculous technology and our prodigious knowledge, the pressing problems of our time remain unsolved. We have the means and the supplies to feed every last human being on Earth, yet over 900 million people are living in a constant state of hunger. To put it differently, every seventh human being is suffering from serious malnutrition, with lasting consequences for their physical and mental health. Almost as many, one in eight, do not have access to safe drinking water. They are permanently exposed to infections and contaminants, even though purification methods like solar water disinfection cost virtually nothing to implement. A quarter of the world lives in absolute poverty, there are several dozen wars and armed conflicts happening right now,

and every day thousands of people, most of them female and/or under age, are sold into slavery.

This list could be continued indefinitely, but lest we think we are content with systematically messing up our own species we should take a look at what we are doing to our precious biosphere. You know, the one we kind of depend on for our continued survival. Starting with the letter A we have acid rain and air pollution. B is for bottom trawling and blast fishing. Coral bleaching, cyanide leaching, someone should really write a song about this. The letter D gives us two big ones: deforestation and desertification. Did you know that a solid *fourth* of all arable land is in danger of being rendered infertile due to soil erosion, salination and contamination? Or that since the dawn of industrialization we have managed to wipe out over half of the 15 million square kilometers of tropical rain forest, along with countless unique and irreplaceable species? Speaking of which, habitat destruction, genetic pollution and general human encroachment are constant threats to biodiversity and global ecological stability. Factor in the flagrant over-exploitation of just about any kind of resource and it becomes rather astonishing that the ecosystem has not yet collapsed under the strain we put on it.

Can somebody please fix this?

The issues above are more than well documented and publicly known, and almost anyone will agree that *more should be done* about them. Why then *aren't* we doing more? One could answer that on a personal level we are already taking an active role in the salvation of the planet. After all, we ride the bus to work, use energy efficient light bulbs, and consume only organic and fair trade products. It's just that big corporations have rigged the global economic system to maintain the status quo, exploiting the poor and destroying the environment for fun and profit. They are supported in their shenanigans by incompetent, corrupt politicians, manipulative media and the insatiable consumerism of the ignorant masses. We could further attest that states like China, the US and Russia are abusing their position of power to

violate just about any environmental treaty, without fear of repercussions from the remaining global community.

Needless to say, these 'explanations' grossly oversimplify the intricate links between global politics, economy and the environment, but they do reflect the general thrust of arguments brought to bear in discussions like this. *We*, the enlightened minority, are fighting for the good of the world, but are powerless against the barbaric hordes running rampant on our beautiful blue planet. Note that this line of reasoning conveniently absolves us of any responsibility, while also highlighting our own virtuousness in contrast to *them*.

The underlying mental process is an interesting variation of the bystander effect. Our modern civilized society calls for its members to be responsible citizens. When we recycle our waste and spend some money on charitable causes, we comply with that social convention, and we observe the majority of our fellow citizens adhering to exactly the same standards. Thus we are assured that we are indeed members of a progressive and conscientious community, doing our part to make the world a better place. Our righteousness is further affirmed by the abundance of negative examples, America and their big cars, their mountains of waste, China and their totalitarianism, their megalomaniac construction projects, Iran and their religious fanaticism, their brutal oppression of women, to name only a few. Consequently, we see little need to raise our level of activism beyond the bare minimum proscribed by society, because the current level already allows us to be perceived as eco-friendly and virtuous by ourselves and others.

With regards to the actual state of the world, this is akin to building a crooked house with a leaky roof and saying, "Well, at least it's not on fire!" It may indeed be better to drive a hybrid than a truck, but will that stop the polar ice caps from melting? Will the Great

Pacific Garbage Patch go away, just because we switch to reusable shopping bags? Does a donation to Amnesty International put a permanent end to torture? Hardly. If we truly want to make a change for the better, we have to accept that we live in a world where hunger, pain, destruction and stupidity are virtually boundless, and that our actions, however well intended, are paltry and laughable compared to the enormity of the problems facing us.

Change ourselves - change the world?

Right now we are only capable of addressing a scant few of the countless environmental and humanitarian dilemmas, and still, any significant contribution is most likely far beyond our meager power. Something else, however, is well within reach: self-improvement. No matter how weak and ignorant we are right now, we can always strive to do better. First of all, we can educate ourselves about the world, about decades of exploitation and mismanagement, about globalization and poverty, about sustainable and unsustainable economy. To do so, we have to remind ourselves that there is no such thing as an objective source of information. Politicians, interest groups and lobbies distort facts to suit their specific agendas more or less openly, news editors have to pick and choose their angles in accordance with their target audiences, and even the most diligent researchers bias their work by the mere act of selecting information. So long as we factor that in, there is nothing preventing us from obtaining a clearer picture of the world, especially now that alternate viewpoints, comments and reviews on any given topic have never been easier to come by. This is the information age after all.

Nevertheless, the most complete knowledge is useless if it does not translate into action. We claim we *know* about carbon dioxide and climate change, yet this fails to move us to anything more significant than the purchase energy-saving appliances. It is difficult to believe that we would be as

complacent if we actually anticipated our houses being swept away by a flash flood, or crushed by a hurricane. Fettered by our own deficiencies, we fail to realize that these events are becoming more and more likely as sea levels rise and atmospheric balances shift. It is imperative that we learn how cognitive biases, social conditioning and primitive fears are impeding our rational judgment. If we do not weaken the influence of these mental limitations on our decisions, we will not be able to react to global threats efficiently, or at all for that matter.

Once we have learned to change our mind, to be a bit *Less wrong*, we can help others to do the same, not by preaching and moralizing, but by challenging them to think. None of the big problems of our time can be solved by one person alone, so we have to take all the help we can get and start looking for a way out of this mess. The age of enlightenment taught us the values of freedom, tolerance and reason. If we want to give our grandchildren the chance to save the world, to succeed where we failed, I strongly suggest we start learning again.

“Never attribute to malice that which is adequately explained by stupidity.”
Hanlon’s Razor

Where to start?

www.theglobaleducationproject.org

A graphic look at the state of the world.

www.fao.org

The Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations.

www.un.org/rights

Human rights portal of the U.N.

www.lesswrong.com/sequences

A community project on recognizing and
overcoming flaws in human reasoning.



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