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Layout Sabrina Gralla
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Instructor: Keith Hollingsworth

HOST MUMMY AND HER DOCTOR IN AFRICA

When I came to Britain one rainy September night, my German host mom was waiting for me at the airport.

I had never seen a picture of her, so it was quite a surprise when I saw her standing there with my nameplate.



I admit, her face somehow reminded me of an eagle head.

Well ... there was definitely a similarity there ... small glittering eyes behind strong glasses, a hooked nose surrounded ...



... by a bony face and lovely thinning hair sticking out like feathers ...

Now I'm being mean ... for Jet about that!

But I believe I definitely should have turned on my heels already after the first conversation on our way home. I had hardly taken place on the left seat of her monstrous land rover when she started with her life story ...



Within minutes I learned of how she came to Britain with her husband, whom she would get divorced from ... TOMORROW the only reason why I had to refrain from my holidays and had to come 3 weeks earlier than planned.

I was told that he was a sick bastard who already had a new girlfriend and would make a decent living because there was no doubt that she would have to pay him alimony well ... as I later found out she earned a fortune as a dentist with her flourishing practice.





Furthermore she gave me a detailed summary of her **current sex life... which did not exist.**



But it soon would! She had met a hot looking **British doctor**, currently working in **Africa**. For hours they had talked on the phone of course, she had paid for the **tremendous mobile bills** and via internet. So she was pretty sure that he was to come to England and they would **live happily ever after** in her beautiful house in Britain. Even the **star signs** matched! it was Perfect!



There was only one small snag: She had never met the man from the worshipped picture in real life! And of course, all of her friends, who assumed he might actually be a **fraud** because it all sounded far too perfect, couldn't be right!



We had reached the house when she finally told me that my main task was to watch the children, go for a walk with the dog and do some housework and I thought it was to function as her **mental rubbish bin!**

Finally, she made absolutely clear that the fact, that her six-year-old son occasionally **wet his bed** was not to be put down to her failure as a mother or the imminent divorce.



The next day the divorce took place. And as it turned out, her husband got half of their old house, alimony and didn't have to pay one single penny for the children. Naturally, she was *furious!*

Nevertheless, she was perfectly able to pay for the:

PAYROLL

- cleaning woman
- the personal carpenter, who built her custom-made kitchen for her in 2 months
- the window cleaner
- the gardener
- the public school of her two kids
- the vocal coach and riding lessons of her daughter, own horse included
- the piano teacher of her son

...

and the au pair girl; that was me!



You see, no reason to worry at all!



One week later the mysterious doctor in Africa called my host mum and told her his laptop was broken.

So was his mobile, which didn't work from time to time. His hospital couldn't afford to pay him at the moment.



Since my host mum was a very generous person and he was so nice to her kids on the phone, she sent him her old laptop, a newly purchased mobile phone as well as some money.



After two weeks he planned to fly to Britain to see her and she was excited like a teenager.

Since he still hadn't received the money for his self-sacrificing work, she was the one who paid for his tickets.

Right on that day he was to come, my host mum received a call from a panic-stricken doctor, claiming that her lover-to-be had a terrible car accident on his way to the airport, was unconscious and needed treatment for which somebody had to pay for. That was the moment when she suddenly had a slight doubt whether this was still coincidence.



However, she suddenly got the crazy idea to take the next flight to Africa to see whether he was a fraud or not!



Blood rushed to my face: She couldn't be serious!

Thank God

she changed her mind and soon found out that he actually had been a fraud and the photograph of the handsome doctor had been downloaded from the internet.



PRO: She never talked about him again! To my disadvantage and therefore a

BIG CON: She was frustrated and constantly in a foul mood for the rest of my time there, a situation that only changed whenever she spotted a good looking guy to talk to...

Studying at the University of Exeter

by *Elisa Mätzig*

The University of Exeter is a university in the South West of England. Most of its institutions are also located within the city of Exeter, Devon. However, Exeter University contains of three campuses: Streatham, St. Luke's (both in Exeter) and Tremough in Cornwall. Exeter was the winner of the University of the Year award in 2007. In 2006 it was noted that, "Exeter's excellent record merits special recognition as runner-up this year. Students here are some of the most satisfied in the country, ranking it on the fringes of the top 10. High entry standards and low dropout rates further entrench its standing." (Sunday Times, 10 September 2006) The 2007 National Student Survey found out that 91% of the students at Exeter are satisfied with their experience compared to a national British average of 81 %. Following that, Exeter is 7th in the national universities and colleges satisfaction ranking and 4th in the list of traditional universities. Those are the basic facts about the University of Exeter. But what is it really like to be there, wholly integrated within the British educational system? I was studying in Exeter for about 6 months from October 2006 to April 2007. In the following I want to tell you something about my own private little adventure.

When I received the confirmation of the Dresden University of Technology to go to Exeter for 6 months with the help of the ERASMUS programme, I had mixed feelings. Of course, I was excited to go to the country I was only reading about for so long. I wanted to talk to people in order to improve my English and I was yearning to get to know more about the culture of the British people. Finally, I was interested in whether the prejudices against English food are really true. However, on the other hand, I was also quite skeptical about going to a foreign country all by myself leaving my boyfriend, my friends and my entire environment behind.

However, things had to get started. I had to organize a place in a student accommodation on the campus. There, the places were the cheapest and you have got better chances of having contact to students of your age and to get in contact with them. But nothing really worked. The disaster got perfect when I received an e-mail from the University only one day before I had to leave Germany in which they told me that I do not have a place in one of the student dormitories. In fact, I had no place to sleep. Having this feeling that this experience might become one of the worst in my life, I left Dresden the next day. I flew to the airport in Bristol where I also had to spend the entire night because all the hotels in Bristol were way too expensive for me. The next day the bus transfer brought me and some other students to Exeter. The accommodation office organized a bed in a rather expensive hotel for me but I was happy that I had a bed at all. What followed were days of uncertainty whether I would have a place at the dormitory or not. However, all my hopes were in vain. I received a place in a family of Exeter. They seemed to be nice old people from Portugal, having a nice little flat on the outskirts. With them was another student from Turkey, Ahmed, who was a horrible smoker which the resolute landlady hated. So I moved there into a room of an approximate size of 4 m² for which I had to pay 400 £ (I had to pay extra for internet and laundry)! Better than nothing, I thought.

The following weeks were dominated by university. The ERASMUS programme requires you to fulfill a certain number of courses with a certain number of credits. At Exeter I was studying in the department of history and so I attended courses that dealt with the "History of Britain in the 20th century" or "Sexuality in 19th century Britain". Due to the fact that the British system is structured according to the Bachelor studies (there it works perfectly in contrast to Germany!), I was free to choose what I wanted to study and the subjects I was allowed to take were by far more interesting and widespread than in Dresden. However, the university put me into Year 1 which meant that I was sitting in the classroom with students who just graduated from grammar school. It was rather strange to sit there and get informed about how to do research whereas in Germany I had already studied 6 semesters and had written a respectable number of Hausarbeiten. Nevertheless it was extremely interesting to see how the British look at the Germans and their history. Instead of being confronted with prejudices about Germany and Hitler, as I expected, the teachers and students were well-informed about the current affairs and they were asking me about issues they were interested in. Furthermore, I was astonished about the resources that the University offers to its students in the department of history. I was able to use the library 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. There were many computers available which were necessary because almost all the study affairs were dealt with via Internet.

My situation at the house of the Portuguese family, however, got worse. I found out, or better the landlady had let me know, that they were Jehovah's Witnesses. I was constantly talked to about religion and it seemed to me as if the old lady was deaf to my remarks that I am a convinced atheist. It was even more surreal that she was also trying to convince Ahmed, the Turkish student, who was a Muslim, to leave his own religion and to convert to her

congregation. He moved out of the house in December, partly because the family wanted him to leave because of his smoking in the house, partly because he could no longer stand them.

In the following weeks in Britain, I finished my courses at University which only lasted for about 3 months. In contrast to our German system, the British have got 3 terms, each consisting of about 3 to 4 months. As I was to leave Britain in the middle of the second term in April, I could only participate and attend some of the courses there from January on. During these weeks I was trying to explore the area around Exeter, the cathedral, Dartmoor and the seaside. That was really worth seeing.

When I left Britain to finally go home to Germany, I was once more asking myself what this experience was like. I now know that the food in England is really as horrible as people always claim. Pasties with smelly meat, bread that looked and tasted like cotton, all sorts of fast food restaurants and extremely expensive food that we Germans consider to be healthy (vegetable, fruits, milk...). Furthermore, the British are a very friendly people, outgoing and very hospitable. Nevertheless, there were also points where I thought of Germany and our, from my point of view, better conditions. The public transport system, may it be bus or train, does not really work well in Britain. It is expensive and the service is rather open to improvement. All in all, it was really a once in a lifetime experience realizing how difficult it can be when different cultures and religions have to live together. When you have to live in another country being the foreigner there, it is easier to put yourself into the shoes of people from other countries who live in Germany.

Work and Travel in New Zealand: Tips and Tricks

by Helenie Mende

Last year I spent six months working and travelling at the other end of the world, New Zealand. If you have decided, or will decide, to also spend a couple of months in The Land of the Long and White Cloud (that's the translation of the Maori name "Aotearoa" for New Zealand) you may find the following tips and suggestions helpful.

Visa

You can apply for your visa online at the homepage of New Zealand Immigration at [www.http://www.immigration.govt.nz/](http://www.immigration.govt.nz/). Download the form that you will need for your own purposes (e.g. working holiday scheme or visitor visa), fill it in online, pay by credit card, submit it and a few days later you will receive your visa via email. Now you only have to print it out and show it at the entry gate at the New Zealand airport.

People and Mentality

Now that you're in the country you should be aware that life in New Zealand is not as fast as in Europe. New Zealanders are renowned for being the most laid back people ever and are proud to be so. In NZ people seem to make the most of every minute rather than to rush from place to place or from appointment to appointment. For Europeans, especially Germans, it might take some time to get used to that life style, but once accustomed to it, it will enrich your life. So chill out!

Next lesson: Know how to use the term "kiwi" correctly! New Zealanders are called Kiwis. The delicious green vitamin bombs are called kiwi fruit and the funny looking non-flying, hedgehog-like animal with the long beak that is only to be found on the NZ isles is called kiwi bird. Never tell a kiwi that you are going to buy kiwis in the supermarket or that a kiwi is your favourite animal. You might get strange looks.

You might also spoil your chances of making kiwi friends by comparing them and their country to Australians or Australia. NZ and Aussie are like two brothers. They need and love each other but that doesn't go without the occasional rivalries. As the baby brother NZ always feels a little intimidated by his bigger brother and wants to step out of his shadow and therefore doesn't like to be compared to him.

Kiwis are very friendly people who are always willing to help you out when you're in trouble even if they don't know you. Me and my friend once got stuck in the driveway with our van, which a nice lady from the neighbourhood noticed. Without hesitating she called one of her friends who works in a garage. Five minutes later he arrived and pulled us out from the driveway with his car. I don't think anything like this could happen to foreign travellers in Germany. So thank you again Jenna and Steve!

Never forget to say "thank you" to the bus driver when you get off the bus. Politeness is important!

New Zealanders love rugby. If you don't want to seem like a foreigner, forget all about football and share their enthusiasm for tackles, drop kicks and crash balls.

Travelling and Backpacking

New Zealand is a very backpacker friendly country. It's a useful thing to become a member of the Budget Backpacker Hostels (BBH). For 45 NZ\$ (~23€) you get your membership card which entitles you to cheaper rates in all BBH hostels. The card also works as a phone card with already 20 NZ\$ pre-paid for international calls. No matter how small a town, you will always find a BBH hostel.

Travelling in New Zealand is pointless without a car. The best spots are only accessible by car so don't waste any money on bus tickets. Cars are relatively cheap in NZ and in hostels there are always notice boards with announcements of backpackers selling their car or van. Another good place to find a good ride is the web. On www.trademe.co.nz (an Australian and New Zealand equivalent of ebay) you can buy and sell whatever you like to and even look for a flat!

The sea is always very rough in NZ. So when overwhelmed by sea sickness on the ferry just put some tissue or cotton into one ear. You will no longer feel the need to air your belly.

When on the road watch out for picnic spot markers. They are never too far off the road and in lovely places. Equipped with benches and tables they offer you a great way of having a nice picnic amidst impressive New Zealand scenery.

Kiwi Lifestyle

If you're a vegan there's the chance that you might never leave the country. In nearly every café or restaurant there's at least one or several vegan and/or vegetarian options to order. You even get vegan chocolate cake and muffins!

Kiwis are even more environmentally-friendly and conscious than Germans. Don't dare leave your rubbish or they'll eat you alive.

Unexpectedly New Zealand is big on coffee. Seldom more expensive than 3,50NZ\$ it is always a recommendable treat.

Make yourself familiar with The Flight of the Conchords. This band from NZ's capital Wellington is the country's most popular band. To seem alternative, Kiwis will deny knowing them. The Flight of the Conchords combine acoustic-guitar music with wit and if you can't laugh about their lyrics you have a serious problem.

Knowledge that might come in handy

New Zealand Cadbury chocolate isn't as good as their English sister. Whittaker's tastes less like GDR chocolate.

If you're living on a low budget, check out the Warehouse. From birthday cards to gas-cookers to rubber boots, the Warehouse has everything imaginable for a reasonable price.

New Zealand currency has no 1, 2, or 5 cent coins. The amount you have to pay is always rounded up or down. So your purse will never again explode due to too many small coins.

"Choice" means "great" and if you're looking for new flip-flops ask for "jandals" otherwise you might end up going barefoot.

The cheapest supermarket is Pak'n Save. If you spend a certain amount of money, you'll get vouchers with which you can get fuel cheaper.

Enjoy your stay in New Zealand!

HOW I MET QUARKIE

One day I was in a
 very foul mood.
 It was the last month of
 my stay and a preceding
 series of mishaps had
 spoiled my already poor
 disposition.



First I had
 smashed the lid
 of host mummy's favorite
 teaPot heY, it was verY
 filthy because she never
 had it cleaned and I
 honestly wanted to do her
 a favor - so I Purchased
 the verY same same
 teaPot on ebaY.



I had also managed to get her hair
 dryer go up in flames

I never touched it until that verY day
 and when I had Put it back in its Place it
 suddenly started to burn! - So I also
 bought a new hair dryer.



But that Particular evening, I swear
 to God, I was not to blame for the
 destroyed sewin9 machine...

I Just Practiced sewing with my host sister and how was I to know that the machine's motor, fixed by host mummy's father with a rubber tape as a Jo, would suddenly give off thick smoke when the girl was sitting in front of it?!

Well, I had a **crisis of self-confidence**, crocheting couldn't help here any more. Suddenly, a **skype chat window** popped up on my laptop screen. A **guy** from the town we were living near tried to chat me up.



I found the **perfect victim** to take my anger out on. His nickname was **Quarkie**, he was of **South American and Indian origin** what an exotic ancestry!.

To my surprise he was quite a capable listener. We met on the next day. Right from the start we were soul mates. He was a **big paunchy teddy bear** in his early thirties with his heart in the right place. His only fault was his incapacity to say 'no'. He had several degrees, three jobs leaving no leisure time and received a pittance for all of his work. His fiancée was a highly conservative, eccentric and stay-at-home woman who guarded him jealously like a pit bull terrier!.

From then on we met regularly three times a week in the Pub, having large Plates full of fast food and Pints of beer.



While he gave me all the details of his forced marriage and his inexhaustible work, I told him about my host mum's secret training courses in witchcraft on the weekends and her getting almost hysterical when she found my candleholder on her table!

She thought it must have been one of the two ghosts that haunted her house before she had cast them out.

We went hitchhiking and shopping, had uncountable cups of coffee and told each other every secret you can think of. Still he is a Great friend of mine...



By the way, I strongly recommend the South American "Mate tea" Quarkie used to drink from a wooden cup!

Reconstruction of Dresden's 'Frauenkirche': Intentions and Reception

by *Elke Vogel*

Walking through the inner city of Dresden, especially during summer or Christmas holidays, one can hardly fail to notice the masses of tourists gazing at the numerous beautiful buildings like the Zwinger, the Kreuzkirche, the Cathedral, the Castle ... all either in their original old shape or having been restored during the last years. Is the 'Frauenkirche' just one of them or maybe the most important one of these? What is the significance of Dresden's 'Frauenkirche' in comparison to other historical buildings, or is there none?

Dresden's 'Frauenkirche' has been rebuilt with the intention to build up a Christian "House of Peace" in Europe and a stone testimony of Christian faith, further to recreate an architectural masterpiece and an exceptional part of world culture, and to complete the restoration of Dresden's old skyline with the cupola of stone. These intentions are formulated in the "Call from Dresden," which was spread all over the world by the initiators of the 'Frauenkirche's reconstruction in February 1990, on the occasion of the 45th anniversary of the Dresden air raid on February 13, 1945, when the 'Frauenkirche' was destroyed by British bombers.

Ten years later to the day, the new Dome Cross was donated by the Dresden Trust as an act of reconciliation between Britain and Germany. This British organisation had been founded for "the advancement of religion by the restoration of the Church of Our Lady in Dresden and the commemoration of the victims of aerial bombardment in the two World Wars." Fascinatingly, the leader of the London smiths who built this cross was the son of a bomber pilot who had taken part in the Dresden bombing in 1945, which even strengthens the symbolism of this act. The Duke of Kent, royal patron of the Dresden Trust, sees the reconstruction of the 'Frauenkirche' as a sign of reconciliation between Great Britain and Germany and of the decidedness of both countries to chase away the wraiths of the past.

Again five years later, the Foundation 'Frauenkirche' Dresden published a book in which it described the 'Frauenkirche' as a place for different forms of church services and other church activities, as a memorial, as a concert room and as a tourist landmark. The main function should be to hold Lutheran services with sermons and sacraments. Furthermore, it is supposed to be an open church for everyone, those who just want to marvel at the architecture as well as those searching for peace and tranquillity. The tradition of peace remembrance at the ruins shall be continued, and the 'Frauenkirche' should serve as a place of sacred music. Apart from a centre of reconciliation and peace work, the reconstructed church is intended to be a place of living lessons of history and religion.

On the evening of October 30 in 2005, Colin Bennetts, Bishop of Coventry, held a sermon in German during the ecumenical service in the reconstructed and just reconsecrated 'Frauenkirche' Dresden. This in itself was a highly symbolic act, since St. Michael's Cathedral in Coventry had been destroyed by German bombers in World War Two, as Dresden's 'Frauenkirche' had been by British, and had as well been reconstructed. In this sermon he described the reconstruction as of particular international and ecumenical importance in the light of the special relation between Dresden and Coventry. One year before, the 'Frauenkirche' had been affiliated in the Community of the Cross of Nails of Coventry Cathedral, a worldwide network in service of reconciliation and peace. Bennetts sees the 'Frauenkirche' as a house of God in which a praying parish will find its home to live in the emulation of Jesus Christ and to cross old borders. According to him, such a parish would have the strength to change many things radically and to become a place of true peace from God.

As can be seen, the reconstruction of the 'Frauenkirche' Dresden has very different meanings to different people in Britain and Germany. While the initiators and the Duke of Kent emphasised its function as a centre of peace and reconciliation between peoples, Bishop Bennett wants it to serve mainly as a house of God, where Christians pray for true peace from God rather than mere worldly peace. For many visitors of the church who signed the visitors' book of the 'Frauenkirche' website or elsewhere, it is the architectural and cultural worth that counts rather than the symbolic meaning for peace. Thus, one cannot claim the 'Frauenkirche' is more important than other historical buildings in Dresden's inner city in a general sense. Concerning war remembrance and the work on peace and reconciliation between former war enemies, however, its reconstruction is of overriding significance.

Hollywood, Bollywood, Tempelwood - Berlin goes Movies

by Jenny Förster and Claudia Biehl

The first big movie-making industry was Hollywood. A few decades later, “Bollywood”, a synonym for the Hindi-film industry, developed and gained enormous success in the 1970s in Asia. Will Europe follow now??

The capital of Germany, Berlin, is planning a grand project called the “Filmhafen Tempelhof” or “Movieport Tempelhof”. Tempelhof was a former city airport of Berlin which became famous during the time of the “Luftbrücke” (airlift) in 1948/49. Today, Tempelhof may become the new location for Europe’s movie industry. After the final closure of the airport last year, different companies and organizations, such as the allied museum have expressed their interest for the subsequent use. In 2006, the Babelsberg film industry had already presented their project to the Berlin senate.

Their plan is to make Berlin an international place for movies, media, and culture. The concept of the Babelsberg film studios combines film production, a publicly available center of venue, an office as well as apartments for the film- and media producers.

The networking of all these features in only one complex would bring enormous advantages. First of all, it would save a lot of time. Since the workers would live in the apartments right by the film studios they would have a very short travel to work. Moreover, production as well as post production would be carried out in the “Filmhafen Tempelhof” which would definitely save money as well as time.

The project also includes the use of two hangars as exhibition and museum space to satisfy the public interest in the place.

“Business to business” is the project’s slogan which emphasizes the combination of production and commercial usage of the Tempelhof space.

How are the chances that the planned project will be turned into reality? Optimistically seen, Berlin is an internationally acknowledged metropolis with good conditions. In comparison to other cities, the living costs in Berlin are rather low. For this and other reasons, the capital has already attracted some movie makers from Hollywood. They recently filmed movies such as “The Reader”, “Speed Racer”, or “Valkyrie” (Operation Walküre).

Moreover, the usage of airplane hangars for the movie sets has proved to be very advantageous. Examples here fore are settings in Prague (Czech Republic), Sophia (Bulgaria) as well as Leavsdon (UK).

Another positive effect is that it would create many new jobs. Carl Wobcken, the head of the Babelsberg film studios, estimates that a few hundred new jobs will be provided.

Furthermore, the location of the Tempelhof is perfect. It is situated in the center of Berlin which would be a considerable benefit for workers and producers. The whole collection of costumes, which is considered the largest in Europe, would then be right in the center of Berlin and therefore easily accessible for other film industries or producers in Germany or even in Europe.

Tempelhof was once the biggest building complex in the world and therefore has the potential to make Berlin an internationally regarded film location with a new, even bigger building project.

The Berlin senate has to make the decision about the future of the Tempelhof space. The Babelsberg film studios presented a great project and are now hoping for a positive decision by the end of January 2009.

Käthe Kollwitz - woman - female artist - wife - mother

by Nicole Otte

“I would like to exert influence in these times when human beings are so perplexed and in need of help”, that is what the German artist Käthe Kollwitz said in 1922 when she was 55 years old. At that time she had already experienced times of great success with her art but also times of great loss. Her son Peter had been killed in the first World War and that personal tragedy had influenced her art and her feelings. Germany had faced great challenges

with the struggle of the proletariat for better working and living conditions and the political changes that were caused by the development of a German empire into a German republic were still to be felt. Käthe Kollwitz' numerous drawings, engravings, woodcuts and prints showed ordinary working class people, women with children and people in need for help. However, she never wanted to be called a "social" artist, in contrast, she wanted to show life as it was for the people from the working class.

Born in 1867 in Königsberg (today: Kaliningrad), she was raised in a tolerant family. Her father discovered her drawing talent and so she had the opportunity of getting early drawing lessons by a painter and a copperplate engraver. During her artistic training she got into contact with such famous artists like Max Klinger and Emil Neide, by whose works her own art was influenced to a great extend.

During the time of her studies at the Women's Academy Munich she got engaged to the medical student Karl Kollwitz, a school friend of her brother Konrad, whom she married in 1891 and who opened a surgery for patients insured under the public health scheme in the Prenzlauer Berg quarter in what is now the Kollwitzstraße. The marriage was happy and she gave birth to the sons Hans in 1892 and Peter in 1896. Under the impression of the premiere of the play "The Weavers" by Gerhart Hauptmann based on the famine-induced revolt of Silesian weavers in 1844, Käthe Kollwitz began her first cycle of prints entitled "A Weavers' Revolt" in 1893. In 1897 she successfully finishes the work on the cycle which should be her breakthrough as an artist.

Being faced with the social tragedy and struggle of the working class people that she saw in the surgery of her husband day by day, her art had started tending towards the depiction of the life and the needs of those people. Later in her life, Käthe Kollwitz wrote into her diary that "While I drew, and wept along with the terrified children I was drawing, I really felt the burden I am bearing. I felt that I have no right to withdraw from the responsibility of being an advocate. It is my duty to voice the suffering of men, the never-ending sufferings heaped mountain-high".

With all her power and strength she managed to be a female artist in a time when artistic genius was still exclusively attributed to male artists and simultaneously she managed to be a good wife and mother in a time when women were not believed to be good wives and mothers when they were working at the same time. Tragically, that very characteristic was put to the test when her younger son Peter wanted to join the army in 1914. Having her son let gone into war, her motherly feelings were brutally destroyed when he died only few weeks after World War One had broke out. That drastic experience influenced her art dramatically and she started depicting the sufferings of war and death. In the following years Käthe Kollwitz engaged herself by means of her graphic artworks against war and post-war distress. Therefore she finished the woodcut sequence "War" in 1918 and the portfolio of drawings "Farewell And Death" in 1923. In 1924 she created one of her most famous posters entitled "Never Again War" for the Central German Youth Conference of the Socialist Workers Movement .

In the years to follow the artist received various prices and honours for her works, for example the job as director of the master studio for graphic art at the Prussian Academy of Arts in Berlin from 1928 to 1932 after she had already been the first woman to become a member of the Prussian Academy of Arts and was at the same time appointed professor in 1919. In 1926 the work on her memorial "The Mourning Parents" for her dead son Peter was completed and she had started to portray herself in various drawings and sculptures. During her life the artist constantly mirrored herself in her diary and in her self-portraits. She was full of self-doubts and always tried to view her own artistic work in a self-critical way, even to the extend that she was not able to continue her works from time to time at all.

During her marriage Käthe and Karl Kollwitz continued to fight against war, injustice and for freedom and equality. When the Nazis came to power in 1933, Käthe and Karl Kollwitz and Heinrich Mann still supported the urgent appeal for a merger of the leftwing parties on the occasion of the last free elections on 5 March. Käthe Kollwitz and Heinrich Mann were then forced by the Nationalist Socialists to leave the Prussian Academy of Arts. In 1935 the unofficial ban on exhibiting Käthe's work began, one year later she even was threatened with imprisonment in a concentration camp.

In 1940 Karl Kollwitz dies and Käthe comes to terms with the loss of her husband in the small sculpture "Farewell". One year later the lithograph "Seed for sowing should not be milled" is created as the artist's legacy. In 1943 Käthe Kollwitz' apartment and her son's house in Berlin are destroyed in air raids and Käthe accepts an invitation by Prince Henry of Saxony to come to Moritzburg in 1944 where she spends the last months of her life. On 22 April 1945, a few days before the end of the war Käthe Kollwitz dies at Moritzburg.

Sources:

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Contemporary India – Caught Between Bollywood and Terrorism?

by *Andrea-Diana Frick and Mareike Neeb*

Luring pictures of India, of sari-clad women starring in Bollywood flicks with glitz and glamour galore have finally come to us via television (particularly broadcast on RTL II). There is the middle-aged woman, who happens to be the mum of a mutual friend, dying to meet Shahrukh Khan personally, singing with the Hindi lyrics of her adored movies while preparing the meals. Fear of flying prevents her from visiting India herself, but the India she would actually see is certainly very different from what Bollywood movies might promise. Though some Bollywood movies deal with social conflicts facing modern India, for instance *Laaga Chunari Mein Daag* or *Journey of A Woman* which is about two sisters growing up in Benares (also Varanasi, the spiritual center of Hinduism situated on the Ganges). The eldest sister Badki leaves for Mumbai (also Bombay, the financial capital of India) to save her family from financial breakdown by secretly working as the exclusive call-girl Natasha. Similar to Western culture, prostitution is a taboo, and even more in traditional Indian circles where female chastity is still highly valued. In the ending, however, Badki reunites with her family, turning her back to decadent Mumbai, saving her folks by marrying a rich entrepreneur whom she has fallen in love with in Mumbai – and of course the last scenes depict the cheesy wedding bash. Though *Journey of A Woman* is a family movie, it is not as pure-bred as many other Bollywood productions although it received criticism for its old-fashioned story line. To what extent old-fashioned the story line might be – the good girl temporarily gone bad -, it portrays some changes undergoing in contemporary India. Indian culture is often accused for becoming westernized by traditional hardliners, and in *Laaga Chunari Mein Daag*, Badki is forgiven her sins, leading a more traditional life in her family's fold. Interestingly, Badki's love marriage is not an issue (the majority of Indian marriages are arranged by the couples' parents) – but that must be the usual dream factory part then?

But lately, India has made a very different appearance on our television screens – the Mumbai terror attacks of November 26, 2008 gained high media coverage, perhaps because Westerners were among the hostages held. This act of terror, being the latest one in a long line of past attacks that spread across the Indian subcontinent, reveals the other side: ethnic, political, and religious conflicts rooted in India's diversity and history. It is the old story: Muslim versus Hindu, Pakistan versus India. Here, Shahrukh Khan comes in again. Khan is Muslim, as his family name already indicates, and very popular throughout India and Pakistan. The saying "it happens only in India" underlines the sometimes bizarre ambiguity inherent in the Indian mind. It is a ray of hope as well, in the part of India that does not shine, that contrasts the flourishing service sector which blesses India's economy with high growth rates. Terrorism is a threat to the Indian economy since it prevents companies and tourists from investing and visiting the country. Finding a resolution concerning terrorism certainly is a major topic on the agendas of both India and Pakistan. India might be the world's largest democracy, but at the same time corruption is a problem, as well as population growth and poverty. The list is long, and the future path of India will remain interesting.

If you want to inform yourself about India and its diversity, we recommend:

The White Tiger by Aravind Adiga. Winner of the Man Booker Prize, offers an "evocative and unflattering" insight into of modern India.

Maximum City. Bombay Lost and Found by Suketu Mehta. A profound portray of Mumbai's transforming mega city.

<http://nosianai.blog.de/> (German) - Daniela, living in Mumbai and married to an Indian, blogs about her Indian experience.

<http://marrichan.wordpress.com/> (German) – Mareike's blog about her term at the English and Foreign Languages University in Hyderabad, from August 2007 to March 2008. Sometimes blunt, but always real ;)

Route 61

by Anne Süß

A situation probably most of the students at the TU, and accidentally some non-TU members, who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, have experienced the same misery: trying to get from point A (perhaps Nürnberger Platz) to point B (maybe August-Bebel-Straße) at let's say at 9.00 o'clock in the morning. At least every Löbtau-student knows the yawning gulf between aspiration and reality.

Having studied in Dresden for about four years now, I can surely affirm that Dresden has a well organized local transport system. Still, living in the area of Löbtau, I have to face a cruel scenario several times a week. Up to about 200 students can gather at the bus stop "Tharandter Straße" on cold Monday mornings; everybody trying to reach university on time. One single trip, which normally would take not longer than ten minutes, can last forty long and unkind minutes. Therefore, I find it absolutely necessary to give a little guideline of how to make the life of students and all bus passengers easier and a lot more comfortable. These tips are results of experiences my friends and I have had in the last couple of years.

The Ultimate Guideline

cut it, save it, gift it, pin it on the notice boards of the TU, or tape it on bus doors

1. The first question you should consider before even approaching a bus stop is whether you really need to go by bus. Why not walk one or two stops, or especially in the spring and summer time go by bike?! This way you get fresh air and exercise without spending too much money at the gym. The most annoying bus passenger is the one who squeezes into a completely overloaded bus and actually leaves at the next stop.

2. In the winter months I completely understand, though, not going by bike. At this time of the year preferring a cozy and dry bus to a freezing and wet outside is totally understandable. However, please adjust the second step, which is about reaching the bus, to the season. I know it is frustrating to see your bus leaving when you are just across the street, but please leave it at that. Watching students trying to reach their bus is sometimes better than watching Bruce Willis trying to save the world. Students are transforming into action heroes when sprinting miles, or clearing the most dangerous hurdles such as fast cars or slow and old grannies. Please do not overestimate your abilities, or at least that of the drivers, who especially in the dark winter days might not see those "Speedy Gonzaleses" who are after the bus.

3. Ok, if you made it to the bus- I know you are in a rush- but let me tell you, you won't be saving time if you try to be the first one in the bus. Some people are so agitated to finally get into the bus that they cannot wait for others to leave the bus first. Just keep one single rule of thumb in mind: First out then (!) in.

4. In case you are the lucky one who is the last to squeeze into an extremely stuffed bus, don't be too happy. There is still one last iniquitous and tricky gadget that might hinder you from taking that trip. An invisible sensor thwarts the door from closing. People have to clear those doors. If they don't, bus drivers try to close the door about 7 times, which takes about 10 minutes. After that, they either scream annoyed into their microphones, or they calmly get off the bus and close the doors manually, which takes another 5 minutes. All in all, next time you wonder- please get off the bus and take the next one- just for the sake of time saving.

5. Another important fact while finding your place in the bus is to walk through to the middle of the bus and don't stop right in front of the door. I wonder why this goes wrong so often; in fact, it is simple and pure logic: The more people want to get in, the more people have to get towards the center of the bus.

6. At rush hour a bus holds up to 80 people. Students click together like magnets. If you miss physical contact in your life, simply take the "61" going to the TU at 9 o'clock in the morning. The other side of the coin: I cannot guarantee whom you actually have to share your body warmth with. Therefore, please be considerate with your fellow students: no garlic and beans the night before.

7. This leads directly to another point that goes with intimacy. In case you are on that "61"- journey with

your boyfriend and you stick to each other like magnets because of space deficiency: good for you! At least it is not a stranger. Nevertheless, this should not lead to any additional intimate physical contact because the third person that is stuck to you might feel a little uncomfortable and has no way to move away.

8. On the windows of a bus you can see pictograms telling you, for example, that cell phones are prohibited in the bus. Why? Disturbing the driver can be dangerous. Additionally, no one else in the bus is interested in your grandmother's warts.

9. In order to give everybody more room to breath, or whatever they want to do in a bus, students need to try to reduce the stuff they bring along at rush hour. Students who show their vagabondage spirit and wear backpacks that take the size of a fully-grown rhinoceros- have to take their heavy load off. Moreover, architects may think about transporting their sensitive and delicate models at calmer hours.

10. At the end a classic: This has been taught to us since we were little, and even if not, we should always remember: politeness. Offer your seat to the old and ill.

SLUB is a four-letter word

by Franziska Sender

Students belong to the species of human being and, therefore, are characterised by the main constitutive characteristics that are applied to all humans: ignorance, selfishness and bigotry. Apparently the function of these characteristics is to make people give each other a hard time and this works great. Usually students do not appear as a big homogenous group but live among all other people. Therefore, the distinctiveness of their ignorance, selfishness and bigotry is difficult to perceive. Still, there is a place where this distinctiveness reveals itself in its purest form that can be found in real life: the library. To students in Dresden the library is known as "Sächsische Landes- und Universitätsbibliothek", the more appropriate meaning of SLUB would be "Students' Lounge for Unbearable Behaviour". Anyway, SLUB is a four-letter word for mainly one reason:

The probably most apparent vice here is the never-ending noise students are able to produce. Though supposed to be knowledgeable hardly any of them seem to know that the term "library" derives from the Latin expression for "Shut your mouth and be quiet!" There are myriads of groups and couples that seem to have not seen each other in ages. Consequently, they have to talk to each other about everything that has happened in their lives since the last time they met. And, of course, they do not meet in a bar, a cafe or at home where people are even invited to tattle. Students have no time for that, they have to study and, therefore, are in the library anyway. Thus, the verbal interaction takes place in a place that is supposed to be quiet. Thanks for that.

This is, of course, not the only phenomenon of producing noise that can be watched, or better, heard in the Students' Lounge. There is always at least one girl oscillating between two or three shelves wearing these incredible sexy high heels diffusing the sound of clic-clac-clic-clac. (If she is not one of the few who are really capable of walking in such shoes, the sound is probably even more annoying: clic-clic-clac-clocclac). Has she never noticed that this sound has the potential to be used as a torture method? Can she not imagine what a pain it is to read a sentence again and again without getting its sense because this repetitive noise blocks any ability to reason? I know it is highly important to look good in a library since potential cohabitees can be found here – but let me tell you: plunging necklines work just as well!

Then there is always the nerd with his laptop who seems to have made a pact with the devil that forces him to delete a sentence in his writing by pushing the delete key once for each single letter. So on average he pushes the key forty times to erase a simple sentence. Let us not talk about compound ones. The effect is basically the same as in the example before. The perpetuating clicking kills all the thoughts in the adjacent areas.

The list of noise producing behavioural patterns of students is an endless one but I have to close it know. The guy who took me (for whatever reason) has just been awakened by someone who could not stand his snoring nap any longer. So, I will be put back to my shelf where I will enjoy the tranquillity of the closed library in some minutes. And, as every night, I am going to dream about a shelf in a private household...

Go Vegan and Nobody Gets Hurt!

by Jasmin Küster and Sabine Burkhardt

The word vegan was originally derived from “vegetarian” in 1944 when Elsie Shrigley and Donald Watson, frustrated that the term “vegetarianism” had come to include the eating of dairy products, founded the Vegan Society. Veganism is a diet and lifestyle that seeks to exclude the use of animals for food, clothing, or other purposes.

In the following interview, I have asked a fellow student about her vegan lifestyle.

Jasmin: Sabine! I heard you have become vegan. How come?

Sabine: Well, last summer I began to become more aware of how I live and especially of what I eat. Veganism was the logical consequence of my ponderings.

J: All right, but I remember you were a passionate meat eater once. How did you come across the idea? Did you have a vegetarian phase in between?

S: I have met some people who are vegan and started to read about that lifestyle. Seeing the movie *Earthlings* was the trigger: I realized that the human species is exploiting nature to an incredible extent, and that I do not want to be part of this anymore. We are buying “packaged” salami, nicely cut up meat at the supermarket, and we do not think about where it comes from, what’s in it and how it got there. I actually went straight from eating meat to leaving out all animal products. I understand that it sounds very radical, but after engaging myself with the issue, I saw no other option.

J: I agree with the vegetarian point of view, but how come you also have to exclude dairy products from your diet? What is wrong with eggs and milk?

S: I am now very conscious of my nutrition. First of all, being vegan does not mean I have to limit my diet to fruits and vegetables only; now that I have to come to think about what I may or may not eat, I have discovered numerous aliments that I had subconsciously excluded from my diet all my life. For example, the basis of my food plan are leafy greens, such as spinach, mangold, mustard greens etc. Also, I have discovered the importance of nuts and seeds for a balanced nutrition. It is simply important to take advantage of the broad variety of foods nature has to offer.

J: Have you had any problems after changing your diet? Do you feel better, physiologically and mentally?

S: I actually feel great. Mentally, because I am more aware of nature. Physically, because I feel much more energetic, vital and focused. In fact, it is now obvious to me that humans are not designed to eat meat. Our digestive tract and our jaw, for example, have difficulties digesting animal products, meaning that our bodies need much more time and effort to digest our intake, and that our teeth are not those of regular carnivore species. A meal that includes meat takes 4 to 6 hours to get fully digested, whereas I myself as a vegan don’t feel the usual fatigue after a big meal.

J: I can see that. But isn’t it very hard to keep up a vegan diet? Do you have to spend more money?

S: I do have to make an effort in preparing food for myself. It’s especially hard during long days at university, because our “mensa” and cafeterias do not offer special vegan meals. I usually bring my own fruit and vegetable shakes, salads, and sandwiches, which I prepare at home. My lifestyle is not necessarily more expensive than others. The money I save on meat and dairy products I am now able to spend on healthier food. Thereby I am trying to be as organic as possible, and buy at local farmer’s markets and food cooperatives.

J: I imagine that it isn’t easy to defend your new lifestyle in front of your family and friends. How did people react?

S: That is a bit of a problem indeed for I did experience a lot of resentment. After all, our society seems to be very critical of those who decide to break with traditions. The consumption of meat and dairy products are deeply rooted in our culture, so it is very hard for most of the people to imagine that those foods are certainly dispensable and might even be the causes of many diseases our society is struggling with. Think of obesity, high cholesterol, diabetes, osteoporosis, and coronal dysfunctions! Most industries, like the dairy, meat, and pharmaceutical industry, simply follow their monetary interest by promoting their products. In fact, research has shown that consuming the mother milk of other species is actually not suited for us since it is designed for their own breed. Think about it: a baby calf needs three times more protein than a human baby; therefore cow's milk obviously contains too much protein and its consumption results in allergies and lactose intolerance. Certain lobbies hold those studies back, and people are even paid to propagate the contrary.

J: I recently read about the connection between cattle and global warming due to the emission of methane gases. How do you feel about that?

S: I am glad you mention that because environmental issues play a major role in veganism. Along with the methane gas problem, the intensive agriculture required to breed cattle and pigs wastes a huge amount of energy that could be used effectively. Livestock eat a large percentage of our grain crops, they require millions of litres of water and give off waste that pollutes rivers, groundwater and soil. The earth's livestock population is more than three and a half times its human population. Raising livestock takes up more than two-thirds of our agricultural land, and one-third of the total land area. We just don't have enough land to feed everyone on an animal-based diet. My point is that 840 million people don't have enough food. But we continue to waste two-thirds of our agricultural land to raise livestock when we could be growing food to feed the world instead.

J: Can you give those who are interested suggestions for further enquiry ?

S: I recommend movies such as *Earthlings* (available online for free!!!), *We Feed the World*, *Our daily bread*. And websites like www.peta.com, www.milch-den-kuehen.de.

J: Could you sum up the positive effects of your new lifestyle?

S: Besides having learned about the ethical and nutritious side of veganism, it has also opened my eyes to the fact that we all (animals, plants & humans alike) live on this earth TOGETHER and therefore we cannot treat it as if we owned it ALONE. So the best thing is basically that I have become much more of the fact that living the vegan way implies that nobody gets hurt: nature and all of its inhabitants.

Behind the Scenes

by Jana Weber

Murmuring in the back of a lecture hall in Gerber-Bau. Students walking, whispering, practising. Some are nervous, some excited, and some are just concentrating. More and more other students are coming into the room, taking their seats in one of the rows. Mulled wine is brought to the sitting students (since it's only a few days before Christmas, mulled wine has to be served!) And finally it starts ... Mrs. Park's Theatre Course presents "It's a studyful life" – 23 short Christmas sketches. The students in the back get ready to entertain the audience.

Every semester, one of the GLC-Courses is the theatre workshop led by Laura Park. At the end of the semester the students perform their sketches for the audience. I want to take you with me for a look behind the scenes.

First, I have to admit that it can be a really hard fight to get into the course. So many students want to do it, partly because of the course itself, partly because of Mrs. Park. So if you managed to get in, you have taken the first hurdle. (If you are male you stand a better chance, as men are always rare, and therefore highly needed.) Yet, for some students here is the point where trouble only starts. Within one week we had to set our creativity free, and write a sketch that was funny (!). When meeting the next week we all had written our sketches – more or less ready, more or less good, and more or less funny.

After this we formed groups with those people we wanted to perform our sketches with. Furthermore, Mrs. Park read our sketches, and gave us hints concerning language, grammar and plot. And then it was our turn. We had

to meet, and play the sketches, see if they worked, and change them if they didn't. I assume there has been no single sketch that hasn't been changed at least two or three times. I stopped counting how often we changed our sketches. We also discovered that on paper all the sketches looked nice and good to perform – but you have to see them acted. Only then does one really see if they work. So we acted them, rewrote lines, and recasted roles. Don't think this only happened in class! You have to meet at least one hour extra every week, otherwise you won't have enough time. Weeks will pass until you have the "final" version of your sketch. (Whereby "final" doesn't mean that you can't change it even one week before the performance.) When you have decided on the "final" version during periods of hard work and discussion, you have to start acting it. Here is a short introduction in how to act (directed by Laura Park):

1. Be big!

The most striking thing for all the students was to make "big gestures" – the bigger the better. This seemed so strange and exaggerated to us. But only overdone gestures made it possible for the audience to deduce meaning from our body language. So one of Mrs. Park's favourite sentences was "You have to be much bigger." Whenever you thought you were already grossly exaggerating and overdoing every little thing, you could be bigger.

2. Do something!

Very hard was finding something to do. The first lesson to learn here was: waving your arms is not doing anything. We all were shaking our arms up and down, trying to say something with them, but it didn't show any feelings. "Clear and big gestures" was something we heard very often (and here we are at point 1 again ;-)) One important thing to pay attention to is that you don't stand too close to each other – this gives you room for your acting. But let me tell you that this is not easy - until the very end we had passages where we had not found something to do, and were simply shaking our arms.

3. Voice!

This was one of the striking things to do – raise your voice. Mrs. Park worked with us on how to breathe, and how to speak loudly and clearly. For some this was a problem they couldn't solve until the performance. What we found out was that the lower the voice is, the better you are understood. High voices were only hardly understood in the last rows of the lecture hall. (This is also what you are told in *Sprecherziehung*: Speak with a low voice, it carries better, and it is healthier for your voice.) So what we practised a lot was: Take a deep breath, and then speak loudly, clearly and deeply.

If you train all this, playing can be fun. From a certain point you get used to overacting, making precise gestures and "screaming". You do your sketches again and again, still meeting once a week extra to get them really good. And now you use more and more props. Just pretending isn't enough anymore. It's important to know what to wear, where to put your stuff on the stage and so on. So you carry bags full of props to the lessons to work on your sketches.

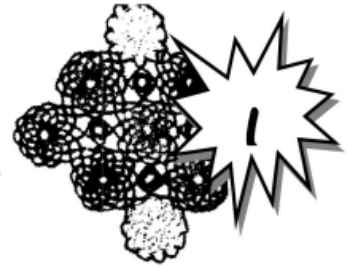
As every student had to write a sketch we had 33 of them. Therefore Laura Park told us it would be good, if we could cancel some of them. The reason was simply that we had one and a half hours from the beginning of the presentation until the doors of Gerber-Bau were closed. If we wanted to get out of university that night we had to finish within this time frame – which was just not possible with 33 sketches. Sometimes it was easy to decide which sketches to drop, but in some cases it was really hard, as we liked all of them somehow, and we knew they had potential. Nevertheless we managed to burry some sketches and 26 of them remained (three more had to be dropped at the day of the performance due to illness).

During the last three weeks we often practiced in the lecture hall in Gerber-Bau to get used to the stage, the room we had, and the way of getting on and off stage. All this practising, the line-knowledge test we had to pass, and all the other little things finally led to THE day. The audience had to pay 1 € to watch the sketches, but also got a mulled wine for this money. The performance was really exciting, and the audience enjoyed it. And despite their nervousness most of the actors enjoyed their sketches, too. The most surprising thing was that the audience really laughed about the scenes. We didn't reckon this. When we were watching the sketches we were hardly laughing about any of them since we had seen them so often. The audience on the other hand seemed to like our funny sketches.

In the end one can say that playing theatre is not only useful for having a nice time. You learn to stand on stage, present yourself strong and self-conscious, and speak loudly. Especially for future teachers it is very important not to be too shy and too small in front of your pupils - and for all the others this is helpful, too.

So if you need a course in how to perform strongly in front of an audience (or class), and if you want to have fun, then take this course. If this is not what you want to do, then come to the performance as a member of the audience, and let the students entertain you.

HOW I UNDERWENT A CROCHET THERAPY

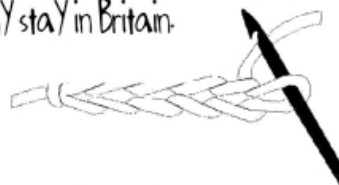


I should mention that, for the **first two months**, the entire house was **under construction** because my host mum had just moved in.

Everywhere boxes, tools, wood or paint were lying around.



Besides reading I was able to crochet, a craft I perfected near completion during my stay in Britain.



Each and every morning we had breakfast next to the carpenter sawing wood or fixing things. It was the perfect place for relaxation, I can tell you! But soon I was to find a stress releasing remedy: **crocheting**.

It all started on a rainy day in October when my host sister asked me if I could teach her how to crochet.

Well, since we lived in a tiny little village with the next town being 35 minutes away and buses not operating after ten o'clock anymore, I was forced to find some hobbies.



Whether the dog ran away
in the pouring rain...



... left
- sick with **diarrhea** -
his fluid Poo in my room or in
front of my shower...



...bit the Piglets that had
escaped their Pen or Pulled me
along the village-



... I was as calm as I could be - thanks to the crocheted
scarves I was working on!
Even the nerve-racking game
"find the diarrhetic Poo in the house before host mummy
does it" was child's play.



While my host sister was reaching Puberty, crying and
weeping on a daily basis because of boys, homework or
mean teachers, I was relaxed. Whereas the boy tested my
Patience each and every day, I took it easy and
crocheted hats.

Even when my host mum ruined all my light clothes by washing them with new black trousers I was cool as a cucumber. Same is true for the next time when she managed the unmanageable and ruined my favorite PJs!



Soon I crocheted cuddly toys for the boy and clothes for the girl, sitting next to grannies on market square benches exchanging expert knowledge.



Even on the toilet I crocheted this and that, finally I could also motivate my host mum to do so as well.



I can assure you, crocheting is the best self-imposed stress-relieving therapy I can recommend!



A Law for Nothing

by *Elke Vogel*

Bureaucracy – Is there any German citizen who has never had any troubles with it and who does not react with a shake of the head on hearing this word? A few weeks ago, an article I read gave me more evidence of the strange occurrences in German jurisdiction: A law has been changed, which is not surprising in itself, but the funny thing is: Nobody knows exactly why this law was changed, because in practice it will probably have no effect at all. I am talking about the “Personenstandsgesetz” – the marital status law.

Until the end of year 2008, the paragraphs 67 and 67a of the marital status law declared that a church wedding was only possible after the couple had been married in a registry office. This rule had existed in Germany for more than 130 years. A church wedding has no legal, but only canonical consequences for the couple and hitherto demanded a previous civil wedding, which suited both the state’s and the church’s intentions. At the end of year 2006, however, the coalition government agreed on an alteration in this law, which from January 1 of the current year has allowed couples to get married in church without a marriage certificate from the registry office. Hearing this, one might first assume that this is a concession to the church because they gain more independence from the state and can marry whomsoever they want to. The church, conversely, is not interested in this new law at all and even intends to keep their rule of requiring a marriage certificate from the registry office before they marry a couple and give them God’s blessings, since the church wedding, at least in the Protestant Church, is not seen as a wedding as such but as a blessing of a previously married couple. Consequently, the church has already declared that the change of the marital status law will have no effect on their practice of marrying.

The question remains why this law was changed in the first place. Neither reverends or priests nor believers had a problem with the law as it was. Neither of them demanded a change and neither will benefit from it. Even the politicians responsible for this alteration could not explain how and why it came into being. The only ones who might gain from the new regulation are widows and widowers who want to keep their widow’s pension after a re-marriage. Until last year they had to go to Austria to achieve this goal. Now this is also allowed in Germany, only the problem might be finding a reverend who will do it.

Has Change Come to America?

by *Tobias Schumann*

A Hollywood actor, a Hollywood movie, a former presidential candidate and the new United States President have one thing in common: they all have climate change on their agenda. Detour impossible.

A sigh of relief was heaved when the world found out that the Democratic candidate, Barack Obama, had won last year’s election. Referred to as the black John F. Kennedy, Obama represents hope and change not only for the U.S. citizens but also for the global community.

Among others, the following four issues come to the foreground when considering the U.S. awareness that Change is the essence of today’s society to handle the environmental challenges of our time.

Firstly, Hollywood superstar Leonardo DiCaprio used his documentary, “The 11th Hour,” pointing out that “industrial civilization” has caused damage which mankind cannot ignore anymore. He highlights the ignorance of political and corporate leaders who consistently disregarded the “overwhelming scientific evidence.” A “convergence of crises” endangers planet Earth, the actor continues to say. Nevertheless, he underlines the fact that there is light at the end of the tunnel. Introducing Change in our society to save the planet, DiCaprio emphasizes us as the “pivotal generation” in creating a “sustainable world.”

Secondly, a Hollywood movie today does the same thing the DiCaprio did before. Keanu Reeves starring in “The Day the Earth Stood Still,” performs as an alien being sent from outer space to planet Earth to tell the human race that the Earth is not our planet. The visitors from far far away have come to the conclusion that the Earth is too valuable to let humans destroy it. The message of the movie is that the human race needs to be sacrificed and therefore terminated in order to stop human demolition and to save planet Earth. But once again, human hindsight at the end of the movie stops the alien destruction of our beloved planet. The movie’s New York citizen promise of, “We can change,” is what makes the aliens change their minds. Alien destruction is postponed and it is up to us, the human race, to save the planet.

Thirdly, the former Presidential candidate, Al Gore, was the archetype of a politically encouraged wake-up

call. After being prevented from becoming the next president of the United States of America, Gore withdrew from the political arena and began a career as a spokesman for protecting the climate on planet Earth. He traveled the U.S. with a multi-media slide show about climate change. Using every available resource, he described the destructive effects the increasing warming of our planet had had and could continue to have in the future. In 2007, Gore received an Oscar for his documentary, "An Inconvenient Truth," which emerged as an upgrade of his earlier slide show. The Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Gore shortly thereafter might be seen as an indirect criticism of the acting President, George W. Bush. Protecting the climate is the greatest challenge of our day and Gore definitely helped to point that out.

Fourthly, United States President, Barack Obama, said in a speech in November 2008 that change had come to America. Being the strong leader he is assured to be, Obama has the ability to make a difference in dealing with climate change and therefore saving planet Earth. He is willing to join Democrats and Republicans in order to pass major environmental laws. He is willing to invest in alternative and renewable energy sources. He wants to put plug-in Hybrid cars, getting up to 150 miles per gallon, on the road. He wants to ensure that our electricity comes from renewable sources. He wants to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in a major way till 2050. He wants to repair the damage done to the U.S. national parks and national forests to ensure the existence of healthy communities. Furthermore, he wants to improve the quality of the U.S. lakes, rivers, and drinking water. The nine-page-long Obama-Biden environmental plan published on the Internet resembles Change. Change for a better future. Nevertheless, a drastic turnaround is needed to prevent Judgment Day from happening. But with Obama's efforts we might have a healthy future ahead of ourselves on planet Earth.

With the election of Barack Obama the United States citizens have not only elected the first African American to the highest political position, but they have also given Obama the chance to keep his promises. Now it is up to him to deliver. Electing Obama is a step in the right direction, but in order to prevent a global environmental crisis from happening, Change has to seize power over the entire human race. Let us all hope that Change will not only come to America, but also to the entire global community. Only by working together can we save our blue planet and therefore ensure Change.

For more information on Obama's overall energy plan see:
<http://my.barackobama.com/page/content/newenergy>

For more information on Obama's environmental plan see:
<http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/issues/EnvironmentFactSheet.pdf>