

UNiA



HIDDEN DEPTHS

#44

eMAG

by students for students



WE ARE eMAG #44

eMAG is an independent non-profit magazine published twice a year, by students, for students. It is part of a University of Augsburg Language Center course. Everything related to the production of the magazine is conducted in English. The aim of eMAG is to entertain and inform the university community about international, intercultural and local topics in the English language. We regularly publish articles on our website emag-augsburg.de. The content of individual articles does not necessarily reflect the team's views and opinions.

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Table of Contents

Dear Reader	4	Keep it Local	23
Hidden Depths	5	Schön hier	24
Palm Oil	6	Fernweh for Home	25
Pipi Goes Political	7	“In Europa kennt uns keine Sau”	26
Speak of the Devil	8	Head, Heart and Hand	27
Showing Appreciation	9	Ingenious or a Dying Art?!	28
Wanted: Diabetes	10		
History to Touch	11	Mental Health	31
From Strangers to Family	12	Superpower Sleep	32
Rhythms of Routine	13	Pets & Children	33
		Unraveling the Butterfly Effect	34
Whole Wide World	15	Too Clingy and Too Distant at the Same Time	35
Female Empowerment	16	Watch / Read / Listen	37
Pura Vida	17	Last Page	38
Award Shows Suck	18		
Aloha, Hula and Pineapples	19		
A Timeless Call in a Modern World	20		

Dear Reader

When I first joined eMAG, I had no idea how much of an impact it would have on my life. What started out as just the ILS class Digicampus randomly sorted me into quickly became my favourite class, and so I stayed (and stayed and stayed...). Through our magazine, I discovered my passion for publishing. Even now, I find myself amazed at the vast range of subjects we've covered - just this term, we have articles on door knockers and priesthood and hopes of seeing the FCA compete at the European level once more.

My time with eMAG may be at its end, but I am so honoured I got to be a part of it. And though this is the last time I get to sign off on our little magazine, I know I will be checking back to see what the future has in store for it.

Happy reading!

Luce

Editor-in-Chief



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The image features a stylized iceberg. The visible tip above the water line is white and contains the word 'HIDDEN' in a vertical stack of letters. The submerged portion below the water line is a solid dark blue and contains the word 'DEPTHS' in a vertical stack of letters. A thin horizontal line represents the water surface. The entire graphic is set against a white background with a thin black border.

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Palm Oil

Hidden Truth about Palm Oil

Nowadays, palm oil is hidden in many everyday products, and it's probably impossible to imagine most of them without it. It's a versatile fat that is extracted from the flesh of the fruit of the oil palm, which is mainly grown in Indonesia and Malaysia. As palm oil is cheap to produce and very profitable, it's used commonly, but what are the downsides of this all-around product?

What is the issue with palm oil?

The cultivation of palm oil trees has a major impact on the environment and on the habitat of many animals. In order to plant the numerous trees and guarantee the continuous production of the oil, many forests and thus also the habitat of the animals and various communities are cleared and destroyed. In addition, the workers and farmers involved in palm oil production suffer from poor working conditions and low pay.

Deforestation is mostly carried out by slash-and-burn, which emits a large amount of carbon dioxide. In addition, oil palms store less CO₂ than other plants, which additionally drives global warming and climate change.

The rainforest is known for its biodiversity, but it's increasingly threatened by fire-clearing agriculture and the creation of a monoculture. Orangutans, elephants, tigers and rhinos are tragically losing their homes. If they don't lose their habitat due to deforestation, they're driven away by humans and, in the worst case, even killed. Many babies have been separated from their parents and the only hope left for them is to be taken in by one of the few rescue centers and brought to safety.

Animal species that are already endangered will only become even more endangered as a result. Deforestation also has consequences for plants and even humans. Although palm oil production creates jobs for many people, it also makes life difficult for many small farmers. The cultivation of oil palms is accompanied by human rights violations and there are frequent land conflicts and expulsions of indigenous peoples.

Why don't we just switch?

As I have already mentioned, palm oil is a very high-yielding product. If we wanted to produce the same amount of oil with an alternative such as soy or rapeseed, we would need 4 to 10 times more land. This would only exacerbate the problem. So what option do we have? There is no perfect solution. However, there is the RSPO (Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil). This is an organization of volunteers whose aim is to make the palm oil industry sustainable. They want to develop and implement global standards for sustainable palm oil, improve the living conditions of small farmers and end the exploitation of workers, to name just a few of their goals. When palm oil is produced according to RSPO standards, producers help protect the environment and support communities reliant on its cultivation. This helps ensure food security, boost economic development, and secure food supply chains.

We cannot completely do without the consumption of palm oil. However, we can take a careful look at the ingredients of a product when shopping or make sure we buy products certified by the RSPO. The seal preserves important jobs for people whose livelihoods depend on the cultivation of palm oil and also supports reforestation.

Pippi goes Political

The Life and Works of Astrid Lindgren

Most of you will probably know Astrid Lindgren from childhood memories, but some of you might only remember her world-famous characters like Pippi Longstocking, Emil of Lönneberga, Karlsson-on-the-Roof, Ronia the Robber's daughter, and possibly others. Very few recall Astrid Lindgren's political engagement. She was much more than a simple children's author.

In her lifetime, she lobbied for human, especially children's, and animal rights and won renowned prizes like the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade in 1978 and the Right Livelihood Award in 1994. Not surprisingly, her publications portray strong-minded and fierce characters and overall reflect her political attitudes.

Nowadays her books are often used as reference in a political context. However, not all innuendos are in alliance with Lindgren's philosophy. Her book "The Children of Noisy Village", published in 1947, is told from the perspective of seven-year-old Lisa, who lives with her parents and her two brothers in an idyllic, three-farm-big village named Bullerby. Over time Bullerby transformed into a metaphor for a carefree world in which children play in nature all day long. Right-winged political parties take advantage of the Bullerby metaphor by molding it into an ideal for Sweden with blonde-haired and blue-eyed kids who play with each other instead of a country with immigration. Gustav Kasselstrand, advocate for the Alternative for Sweden, gave a speech in which he stated, "I defend Sweden, the Swedish people, and I stand by the fact that I want Bullerby back."

Astrid's war diaries, published decades later in 2015, are another example of her interest in politics. Her journal entries commence September 1st, 1939 and end six

years later. In her diary she meticulously reports current blood-curdling world events and gives insight into the Swedish neutrality agreement, which she often calls "bought independence", the German transit traffic from Sweden to Norway, the Swedish export of ball bearings to Germany, the war-crimes against Jews and the "euthanasia" for the "terminally and mentally ill". Although in parts highly controversial, public opinion agrees that her multi-faceted and year-long documentation is a testimony to post-second world-war civilization.

Particularly exciting is one of her entries in March 1944. In it she comments on her daughter Karin's sickness and mentions Pippi Longstocking for the first time. Apparently, Karin came up with the name which now immediately brings to mind a strong, lively red-head who defies human-, to be more specific adult-, stupidity and violence and who we all love and admire. Attentive readers might recognize scenes in Pippi Longstocking where Astrid's political attitude is reflected in the way the female character behaves. A perfect example would be the chapter where Pippi visits a circus and defeats "Adolf", the strongest man on earth.

There is much to learn from these children's books. If not from the characters themselves, then at least from the author Astrid Lindgren.



Speak of the Devil

The Legend of the Rakotzbrücke

I'm sure every single one of us has read a fantasy book or watched a movie. At one point in the story, there always seems to be a bridge. This bridge is usually long and arched and some sort of spell might lie on it. It could be in a forest surrounded by fairies and trolls, or it could be the bridge that leads to the dark and deadly side of the story. Either way, a bridge is often used to symbolize a new chapter or new surroundings with different stories. I have always wondered if these types of bridges are based on some real mystical bridge.

As it turns out, there are several such bridges that have been embedded into folklore. One of these bridges is the Rakotzbrücke, in Saxony in Germany. It might be one of the most prototypical of fairytale bridges. The high arch led people to believe that the devil himself had to be involved in this construction. Which mortal human would be capable of such an architectural miracle? The arch of this bridge is so high that when the lake beneath it is perfectly still, the reflection and the bridge create a perfect circle. Must be the entrance to hell, right?

As for the origins of the bridge, legend has it that a woman lost her cow during the day and found it on the other side of the lake. How the cow could possibly have

gotten to the other side was a mystery, but somehow the woman had to get her cow back. When she approached the bank of the lake, the devil appeared. He eagerly offered his services to the woman and made her strike a deal; he would help her to create a bridge on the promise that he would gain the first soul to cross the bridge. The woman agreed. Lucifer swung his arms and created a beautiful but haunted bridge. The woman did not want to give her soul to him, so she sent her dog across the bridge to fetch the cow. This action infuriated the devil, so he cast an evil spell on the bridge: whoever should pass this bridge will lose their soul to him.

In reality, the 19.8-meter-long bridge was built between 1866 and 1875. It is said that the construction cost 50,000 coins and one human life. A local builder was killed during its construction when wooden support structures were removed and part of the bridge collapsed onto him. There is still a memorial plaque to commemorate his death. In the end the Rakotz bridge still claimed a life, which could mean that the devil did in fact help construct this bridge and that this poor soul had to pay for it.

Showing Appreciation

Paying Special Attention to the People Around Us

In our digital era, we pay so much attention to the online world that we sometimes overlook what is happening around us in the tangible world. We overlook people right beside us on the bus, the train, in the streets. And just like we are oblivious, others are, too. The feeling of being unseen is known by many. The feeling of loneliness even more. When we feel lonely, we don't feel as powerful. When we feel overlooked by others, we feel like we don't matter as much.

Everyday interactions offer many possibilities to let others know they are being seen. When we go shopping and don't use a self-check-out, we encounter the cashier, say "hello", and "goodbye". Walking through a door is another situation where many look out for others. Sometimes holding the door open for someone with full hands, other times holding the door just a little longer for others to pass through right behind us. When the bus is full, we make room, taking our bag off the free seat next to us. Little effort for us and still showing others that we recognise their presence and appreciate them as a person.

Saying "thank you"

Perceiving the presence of others and letting them know it is a good start. Showing appreciation can be simple and of small effort, too. After a lecture at Uni, we knock on the tables in front of us, as a way of saying "thanks" to the lecturer. Pupils of Australian schools say "thank you" to the teacher before leaving the room and in Paris they say "merci" to the driver, before getting off. These two described forms of seeing and appreciating others are probably the easiest to do. They don't depend on the person you're talking to.

Individual appreciation

The most challenging, but also the most satisfying and effective method to show appreciation is more individual. It's about telling people what we like about them as a person. This mostly happens between people we're closer to because the relationship is more personal. We can tell our friend that they are a great listener and that this is a quality we really appreciate about them. We can tell our partner that we're really thankful for their support. I want to go a step further and encourage you to show individual appreciation to a broader range of people. For example, if another student at Uni explains their opinion and gives you the chance to understand a relatively complex issue, you could tell them their comment helped you to look at the topic from another perspective.

Paying closer attention to other people and showing more appreciation would help raise contentment in our society. Hearing a "thank you" from someone at work, knowing a friend thinks you are a good listener, or getting complimented on an insightful argumentation by a fellow student does feel good. The feeling of being overlooked will fade away and we will feel less lonely.

WANTED: DIABETES

The Thief of Student's Cognitive Ability

Diabetes mellitus is the most common metabolic disease in Germany, causing various organs to become damaged, dysfunctional, or to fail. There are different types of the disease. Both type 1 and type 2 diabetes result from the body's inability to produce or use insulin. The main difference between the two types of diabetes is that type 1 diabetes occurs when the immune system destroys the insulin-producing cells of the pancreas, while type 2 diabetes is due to insufficient insulin action. The consequences of high blood glucose levels remain the same, even though the causes of the disease vary. Many people only know that this disease has something to do with blood sugar but are less aware that it can have a massive impact on students' lives, both academically and socially.

Impaired Memory and Attention Span:

High blood sugar levels pose a significant risk to brain health as they can cause damage to blood vessels and nerves in the brain. This damage, in turn, impairs memory formation and information retrieval, affecting both short-term and long-term memory. As a result, people with elevated blood sugar levels may have difficulty retaining new information and remembering past events. Fluctuations in blood sugar levels can impair the brain's ability to concentrate, making it difficult to focus on a task. Diabetes can affect blood flow to the brain and contribute to inflammation and oxidative stress. Additionally, diabetes-related vascular changes can increase the risk of small vessel disease in the brain, which can further reduce the cognitive ability. Students find it particularly difficult to concentrate during lectures, which require constant attention over an extended period of time.

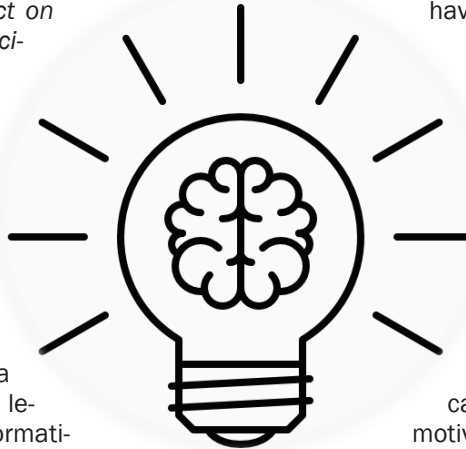
Reduced Processing Speed:

When cognitive processing speed slows, students might hit a snag in tasks that need quick thinking, problem-solving, and getting stuff done. Whether it's in school, work, or just everyday life, slower processing can hinder productivity and how well things get done. Diabetes-related complications such as retinopathy (damage to the retina) can have an indirect effect on processing speed by impairing the vision required for cognitive tasks. Unfortunately, this visual impairment often cannot be corrected with glasses and, in the worst case, can lead to blindness. To visualize this, imagine you always have a black spot of ink in your field of vision.

Mood Disorders:

Diabetes is also likely to result in an increased risk of depression and anxiety. Some symptoms of depression like fatigue, changes in appetite, and sleep disturbances, can mimic symptoms of diabetes or affect how individuals manage their condition. These negative feelings inhibit students' ability to study. Major obstacles to effective learning can arise as concentration becomes clouded, motivation weakens, and cognitive flexibility is reduced. It is also important to mention that young people are often overwhelmed by the disease and the constant blood glucose monitoring and insulin injections.

Raising awareness of the cognitive impairments of the metabolic disease in particular is important, as it is usually only the physical symptoms that are noticed. Those affected often suffer in silence and struggle with the difficulties of daily life. Particularly in the university context, the disease should be given more consideration, as it reduces equal opportunities in performance assessments, just like other diseases.



History to Touch

The Beauty and History of Door Knockers

Have you ever considered that when you knock on a door, you're actually touching a piece of history? Door knockers, those small metal artworks, have more to tell than one might initially assume. Picture yourself strolling through an old alleyway and stumbling upon an intricately crafted door knocker in the form of a lion's head. Have you ever wondered what stories it might have heard and which visitors it might have announced? Welcome to the fascinating world of door knockers, where behind every door lies a story and hidden beauty waiting to be discovered.

The origins of door knockers stretch far back to antiquity, when people began attaching simple wooden knockers to their doors to announce visitors. In ancient Greece and Rome, these early knockers increasingly were made of bronze or iron and took on initial decorative forms. Throughout the Middle Ages, door knockers evolved into elaborate metalworks, often richly adorned with various symbols. These designs served not only practical purposes, but also as status symbols and protective emblems for houses.

Over the centuries, door knockers reflected the artistic and cultural currents of their time. During the Renaissance, they became true works of art, and in Victorian England, lion-head door knockers were particularly popular, symbolizing power and strength. In many cultures worldwide, door knockers became an integral part of architecture and culture, often endowed with specific meanings and symbolisms. They bear witness to a rich history and artistic tradition that continues to thrive and can be admired on many doorsteps worldwide.

Door knockers not only vary in their form and function but also in their cultural significance and the intricacies of their design.

In Spain, door knockers are often elaborately adorned, reflecting Baroque style, indicative of the wealth and artistic taste of their owners. Moroccan door knockers, on the other hand, frequently display geometric patterns and religious symbols, emphasizing Islamic influence and spiritual significance. One typical example is the "Hand of Fatima," which is not only decorative but also serves as a protective symbol against evil. These cultural differences make door knockers a fascinating mirror of local traditions and stories, with each region infusing its own aesthetic and symbolic nuances into the design of these small artworks.



The true beauty of door knockers often lies in the detail and craftsmanship that goes into their making. Each piece is a miniature artwork, distinguished by intricate decorations, delicate patterns, and symbolic designs. Whether they depict majestic lion heads, delicate hands holding a sphere, or fabulous creatures like dragons and gargoyles, each door knocker tells its own story. The materials range from simple iron to intricately wrought bronze, and over the years, the surface can develop a beautiful patina, reflecting the age and history of the knocker. These aesthetic details, often unnoticed in the hustle and bustle of daily life, reveal a hidden beauty and invite us to discover and appreciate the craftsmanship and symbolism behind these small metal works.

The hidden beauty of door knockers invites us to explore the history and artistic tradition behind these small masterpieces. Each door knocker carries its own story and symbolizes cultural diversity and craftsmanship that are worth admiring and appreciating. Let us open the doors to a fascinating world full of hidden treasures.

From Strangers to Family

A pep-talk for developing deep friendships

I started my studies during the lockdown. I had just recently moved to Augsburg and was new in the city, which meant I didn't have the chance to easily meet new people. During this time, I struggled with loneliness, and this couldn't be changed easily because it was also an external loneliness, so to speak, which means there just weren't any people around. Looking back now I realize I can call this place home now because of the deep friendships I have found and also invested time and effort in over the past four years.

It's absolutely normal to feel lonely sometimes.

However, it was a journey, and I am pretty sure that everyone has felt lonely before. And even when you're surrounded by people that doesn't mean that you don't feel lonely. This feeling of not being known even though you're in a crowd is also called internal loneliness. And when it comes to COVID and the subsequent lockdown period, we all have heard about the different physical and emotional effects of loneliness like headaches, sleep disorder, fear or even depression. Studies often talk about the consequences of loneliness, but they never really tell you what to do to prevent loneliness or how exactly to get out of it. Maybe you're like me and you started your studies during Corona, maybe you're a fresher and moved to Augsburg recently or maybe you're an extremely popular student who knows that a big crowd doesn't necessarily make you feel truly known. Because that is where friends come in, they fulfill the longing to belong that human beings carry naturally. Friends make you feel known and accepted, a feeling of deeply belonging.

**Friends play an important role,
they make you feel known.**

But how do you develop these friendships that aren't only study buddies, or people you have small talk with before the next lecture?

Here are some of the things that helped me develop the deep and enriching friendships. But firstly, a quick disclaimer: friendships take time to grow, and it takes time to build trust, so don't rush it and respect boundaries if someone isn't interested. Secondly, you don't have to be friends with everybody. There are different levels and types of friendship that you will share with different persons in your life and that is perfectly fine.

That being said, I want to encourage you to be brave and reach out to people you find interesting and, even more importantly, don't crawl back into your shell when you feel rejected. It's worth it. And then when you meet a potential friend be real and be present. That also means putting your phone away, listen intentionally, don't assume that you already know the answer and don't try immediately to fix the problem. But instead, ask questions, like "How did you feel when this happened?", "Why did you react like that?" or "How are you now?" You'll find out you can actually get to know a person when it's not always about you and you'll also find hidden depths in people that you weren't expecting. And in the end, take the first step and make yourself vulnerable by sharing how you truly feel for example. And then watch how new friendships grow out of hidden depths.

It's worth it.

Rhythms of Routine

Unveiling the Power of Daily Habits

The alarm clock rings at the same time every morning. As you wake up, you look at your cell phone and scroll through social media to check the latest news. Some will meditate in the morning, a few use a shower in order to wake up and others will reach for their beloved cup of hot coffee to kick the day off to a good start.

Daily routines are like a symphony of habits that shape our lives. The way we start our morning, the route we take to university – each action carries its own significance and meaning. It is indeed fascinating how these seemingly small tasks and actions can reflect our values, priorities and even emotions.

At first glance, daily routines may appear repetitive and rather unexciting. So why do we like to stick to same procedure? It's because they provide structure and stability, which is crucial. By establishing consistent habits, like daily sports, we create a sense of predictability and control which can reduce stress and anxiety drastically. Moreover, daily routines can serve as a foundation for personal growth and self-improvement. By incorporating activities like exercising, reading, or meditation into our daily schedule, we learn to prioritize our physical and mental well-being. The time we invest in ourselves does not need to be long in order to make a positive impact on our health.

Stay aware of unhealthy patterns

In principle, routines are beneficial and something good. That's because we have control over them. But they can also easily shift into something entirely unhealthy. We often don't recognize the harmful patterns of routines when they take over. Supposedly healthy routines determine our day and can decide about whether we are to be happy when we accomplished our routines or not. We might feel unsatisfied if we don't complete our routines and the associated constraints. But why don't we recognize unhealthy patterns? The reason behind that is the human brain can't distinguish between good and bad habits as they both give us satisfaction. When our daily routines are, in fact, priority and need to be done in order to be happy, you might rethink your decisions.

You can do this together – sharing is caring

Beyond individual benefits, daily habits also play a crucial role in fostering connections and building relationships. Shared routines, such as weekly running groups or cooking dates with friends, create opportunities for bonding and collaboration. Moreover, it's a great way to stay connected and it's less likely to get trapped in unhealthy habits when you do them together. So, what are you waiting for, share your most favorite activities with your beloved ones!



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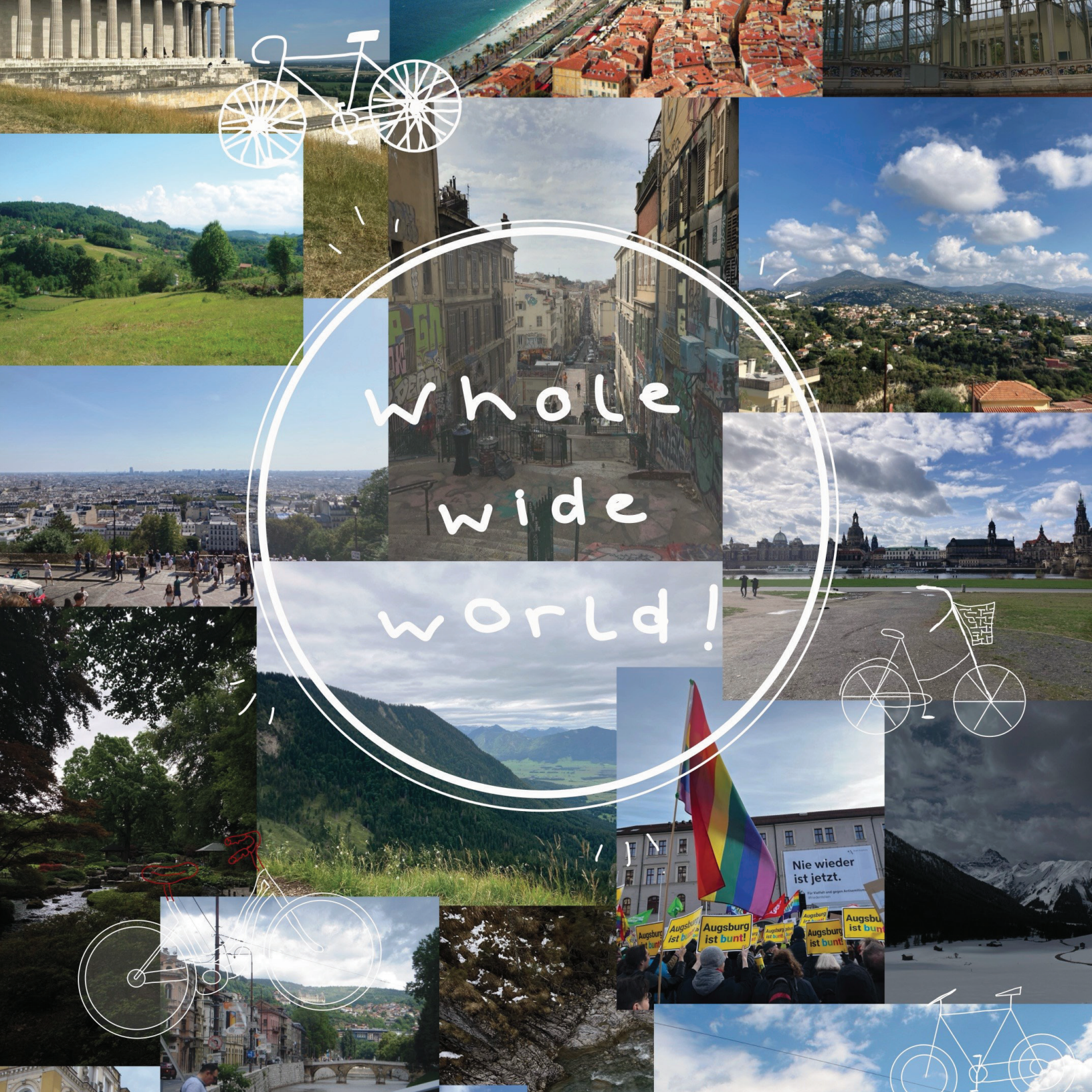
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Female Empowerment in “Gilmore Girls”

“Gilmore Girls” is a portrayal of independent women who are sharp-witted and driven. Lorelai, a single mother who left a life of privilege to raise her daughter on her terms, stands for ambition and humor. Rory, following her mother's footsteps, is a perfect example of intelligence and determination, carving her own path towards success. In the captivating world of “Gilmore Girls,” Lorelai and Rory Gilmore illustrate female empowerment through their captivating journey as a mother-daughter pair. Throughout the series, the Gilmore women confront various challenges, from financial struggles to personal relationships. They manage to maintain a unique balance between their personal and professional lives, handling it all with resilience and strength and often with humor. This portrayal criticizes traditional gender roles and societal expectations, advocating for self-determination and personal growth over conformity.

The Power of Supportive Mother-Daughter Relationships

The most outstanding aspect of the show is the supportive bond shared by Lorelai and Rory. Their relationship serves as a symbol of empowerment and mutual respect, highlighting the importance of strong female connections in navigating life's complexities. As the series progresses, we witness the personal growth of both Lorelai and Rory. They pursue their career aspirations while keeping their individuality, never compromising their values and dreams for the sake of conformity. Their dynamic showcases the potential of women to uplift and inspire each other. This focus on self-discovery and ambition highlights the show's progressive themes, encouraging viewers to pursue their passions.

Changing the perception of women

"Gilmore Girls" has influenced how people see women. By portraying the two women as complex individuals with aspirations and imperfections, the show challenges stereotypes and promotes a deeper understanding of female characters. It celebrates women who are loyal to themselves, opening the way for a broader acceptance of diverse representations of womanhood. Through their distinct personalities and approaches to life's challenges, Lorelai and Rory demonstrate that there is no singular way to be a strong woman.

Additionally, the show portrays various female characters beyond the Gilmore duo such as Lane and Sookie, each representing different facets of womanhood and empowerment. Lane, Rory's best friend, defies her conservative upbringing to pursue her passion for music, symbolizing the courage to follow one's dreams despite societal pressures. Sookie, the talented chef and Lorelai's best friend, embodies the balance between a successful career and a loving family life, highlighting the fact that women can succeed and bloom in multiple roles. This diversity allows the series to resonate with a wide audience, demonstrate that strength and resilience come in many forms.

As a conclusion, "Gilmore Girls" is more than just a TV show — it's a testament to the strength, resilience, and wit of women. Thanks to the progressive themes and relatable characters, it continues to inspire its audience to embrace independence, pursue dreams, and challenge societal expectations. Lorelai and Rory Gilmore remind us that being true to oneself is the ultimate act of empowerment.

Pura Vida

Nature's Paradise and Cultural Haven

The small country of Costa Rica often goes unnoticed by many as it's overshadowed by its large neighbors Nicaragua and Panama. If you consider for a moment: what comes to mind when you think of Costa Rica? Do any remarkable aspects spring to mind? Or, like many others, are you unaware of this progressive nation in Central America? In my opinion, Costa Rica is a truly unique country, where exceptional nature converges with diverse cultures.

Costa Rica is home to an incredibly diverse range of flora and fauna.

One of Costa Rica's most remarkable attributes is its unwavering commitment to conservation efforts. The country has made significant progress in preserving its natural resources through rigorous environmental policies and proactive initiatives. From the vast rainforests to the long coastlines, Costa Rica has become a global model for sustainability and eco-tourism.

At the heart of Costa Rica's biodiversity are its rich rainforest ecosystems, which serve as a sanctuary for countless species of plants and animals. These vital habitats not only support a wide list of wildlife but also play a crucial role in maintaining global biodiversity. Thanks to the establishment of national parks and reserves, these ecosystems are safeguarded for future generations to enjoy and study.

Costa Rica's allure is undeniable - a captivating blend of breathtaking landscapes and vibrant cultures awaits travelers seeking adventure and immersion. This testifies to the harmony between humanity and nature, where preserving the environment is paramount. As we explore Costa Rica's wonders, we're reminded that sustainability and enjoyment need not be mutually exclusive. Its example inspires us to cherish and protect our planet, ensuring its beauty will endure for generations to come. As the Costa Ricans would say: "Pura Vida!"*

* "Pura Vida!" is an unofficial slogan used by many. It means "pure life" and is supposed to symbolize the cheerful outlook and way of life.

Culture, Democracy, Peace: The Essence of Costa Rica

Costa Rica is a melting pot of cultures, where indigenous roots, Spanish colonial legacy, Afro-Caribbean vibrancy, and European influences merge to create a lively mixture of traditions whose diversity is reflected in everyday life.

What sets Costa Rica apart in the tumultuous landscape of Latin America is its unwavering commitment to democracy and stability. With a history of peaceful transitions of power and respect for human rights, Costa Rica stands as a beacon of safety in the region. Costa Rica's decision to abolish its army in 1949 speaks volumes about its dedication to peace. By prioritizing education, healthcare, and environmental protection over militarization, Costa Rica has earned a well-deserved reputation as a peaceful oasis in a turbulent world.

Award Shows Suck

Here's How to Fix Them

On March 10, 2024, the 96th annual Academy Awards, or Oscars, took place in Los Angeles. Regarded by many to be the most prestigious film award there is, it nevertheless seems like the average person doesn't seem to care about the winners but rather the outrageous events that took place there, e.g. Will Smith slapping Chris Rock in 2022 or John Cena presenting the award for costume design this year while wearing almost nothing on stage. Now you may say that you don't really care about the Oscars, and that's totally fine, and that the people that do care are probably movie lovers or critics or people that work in the industry, and you'd largely be correct. But that doesn't really give an answer to why the number of people watching the show or any other award show for that matter, is declining.

Award shows' biggest problems

Simply put, award shows are dull and, in my opinion, terrible, for several reasons. One worth mentioning would be the runtime of the shows. The Oscars approximately run for four hours, the Grammys or Golden Globes are around the same ballpark of three to four hours. And more often than not, the duration of the show doesn't feel justified, as filler content such as speeches about the importance of [select your entertainment industry of choice] are added or random musical acts or comedic sketches are sprinkled in throughout the show. Instead of elevating the entertaining nature of the show, they drain the viewers' energy to watch the program.

Another common criticism is that biased juries are the ones that pick the winners, and the viewers are aware of those biases, e.g. "Oscar bait movies" that fulfill certain attributes are nominated almost every year and may even win the category they are nominated for. And why it isn't possible to watch award shows online via a streaming service or website, still remains quite a mystery.

Prestige vs. Entertainment

But the biggest reason is the way in which celebrity culture has changed in recent years. The number of people idolizing them is shrinking – that's good. And people in general probably don't like the elitist and exclusive feeling award shows try to market themselves as and yet they still do it.



This brings us to the crux of the matter and the question of how to balance an entertaining show while also trying to maintain the prestige and renown a certain award carries with it. A rebrand would probably be the best decision. What about shorter shows, without too much filler content? An option to watch online? Or even letting the people at home have a say in who gets to win a prize?

It's about finding the right balance of the two and maybe, in the future, people will be just as excited as they were in the past when someone read aloud: "And the Oscar for Best Picture goes to...."

Aloha, Hula and Pineapples

How Overtourism Harms Hawaiian Culture

Hawaiian culture has long been romanticized and idealized as a paradise on earth. From the glistening beaches to the lush greenery to the stress-free aloha spirit, it's easy to see why this tropical paradise is a dream destination for many people around the world. But the reality behind the postcards with the stunning pictures is different.

Overtourism: The dark side of paradise

One of the biggest problems in Hawai'i is overtourism. The influx of tourists has overloaded the islands' natural resources and infrastructure. From overcrowded beaches to congested roads, the impact of tourism on Hawai'i is hard to miss. In addition many of the tourists and also immigrants who come to the islands are from wealthy countries and often don't respect the local culture. Through their immigration rich people drive up housing prices which leads to an increase in homelessness among the locals. The islands are fast becoming unaffordable for those who have called them home for generations.

Hula: traditional art form or tourist attraction?

A meaningful part of Hawaiian culture that is very often misunderstood and misrepresented by tourists is *hula*. Hula is a sacred art form for the indigenous people of Hawaii, telling stories about nature, history and culture. For many tourists, however, hula is just a form of entertainment. The portrayal of hula as erotic and dancers wearing coconut bras is so wrong and just shows how misrepresented the culture is. This lack of respect for the importance of hula is just one example of the cultural appropriation that plagues the islands.

Hawaiian wildlife

Native Hawaiians have a deep connection to the land and sea and have long believed in the importance of preserving and protecting nature. However, many tourists do not share this respect, and harassment of wildlife and destruction of nature is all too common. Just last year, 33 Norwegians were fined for harassing a pod of dolphins off the Big Island of Hawai'i.

Responsible tourism

In summary, while Hawai'i is undeniably beautiful, its popularity has also brought with it a number of problems for the local population. From overtourism to cultural appropriation to environmental degradation, it's clear that something needs to change. There is no shame in visiting Hawai'i as a responsible tourist, quite the contrary, a big part of the Hawaiian economy depends on tourists. It's just the loads of tourists that don't bother showing respect or care for the native people, lifestyle or wildlife. In order to preserve and protect Hawaiian culture, we must all take responsibility and make a concerted effort to understand and respect the traditions and values of the Hawaiian people. Only then can we truly appreciate all that the islands have to offer and ensure that the true spirit of aloha lives on for generations to come.

A Timeless Call in a Modern World

Becoming a priest in the 21st century

We live in an era that is marked by rapid cultural change and evolving societal norms. In these changing times priesthood might seem ancient and irrelevant. However, for those who feel the divine call, this journey is as relevant and compelling as ever. Through conversations with three young people we will delve into the unique experiences, profound reflections, and the everyday realities that shape their paths to becoming priests in the 21st century.

Divine Calling and Personal Reflections

An experience that was shared across the board was that the journey to priesthood begins with a profound sense of divine calling. This, however, does not mean that becoming a priest is a spur of the moment decision. Quite the opposite, in fact. As one seminarian stated: "It was God's 'call' that inspired me to pursue priesthood. However, what allowed me to hear that call was the good example of certain priests in my life, the practice of faith and prayer in my family, and the encouragement of people I trust.". This gradual realisation of one's calling is often filled with internal conflicts, as another interviewee humorously recalls: "I used to say to God in prayer: 'God, I really want to find a nice girl, get married, and have a family.' But the more I prayed about it, the more I felt God calling me to the priesthood. How rude of God to keep calling me after I asked him to stop several times!". This shows clearly that their decisions were not made lightly, but were the result of a long and thoughtful process of prayer, reflection, and seeking counsel from trusted mentors and family members.



Navigating Challenges and Overcoming Doubts

Every path in life has its obstacles and the journey to priesthood is certainly no exception to this. Each of the people I interviewed faced many challenges, from feelings of inadequacy to societal misconceptions about celibacy and the priesthood itself. One candidly admitted: "There have been many times when I felt not good enough for priesthood. But St. Patrick's example, who admitted to being a terrible sinner, inspired me. His achievements came not from his own greatness but from God's grace."

Another significant challenge mentioned was the fear of engaging with young children. "As an only child, I had very limited experience of engaging with people younger than me. The thought of interacting with children frightened me. However, being assigned as a religion teacher in a primary school in Dublin during my seminary experience helped me overcome this fear. I learned to just be myself around young people."

Fostering Relationships & Dedication to Service

Community support and authentic relationships are vital for the formation of future priests. Seminarians cherish the camaraderie and mentorship within their seminary community, which provides a source of strength and encouragement. This sense of community extends beyond the seminary to interactions with family, friends, and parishioners. "Everyone needs intimacy – even priests. I treasure the intimate relationships I share with my family and friends," one seminarian noted.

The importance of mentors was also highlighted: “I very much value the relationships I have with my pastoral supervisor and spiritual director. Ministry can often be like a sponge washing dishes – it picks up a lot of 'dirt', and it's important to have a place to wring it out.” This is not just about companionship, however; it is about finding fulfilment in a life dedicated to service. Through meaningful connections and non-romantic relationships, seminarians and priests reduce loneliness and find profound satisfaction in their calling. “Serving others brings a deep sense of purpose and joy,” one priest explained, underscoring the fulfilment they find in their daily lives.

Challenging Societal Perceptions

Navigating societal perceptions and stereotypes about priesthood is a significant part of a seminarian's journey. These young men strive to challenge misconceptions by embodying authenticity and humility in their interactions. “Regarding societal perceptions,” one seminarian noted, “Yes, there will be people who think you are crazy. Maybe you are! However, there will also be people who will support you, encourage you, maybe even admire you.” Another expressed regret about society's tendency to view all priests with suspicion, saying, “I find it regrettable that society paints all priests with the same brush, seeing them as potential abusers and always under suspicion.” Despite these challenges, they find solace in the understanding and support of their loved ones. “Among my friends and family,” shared one, “there are also disagreements about how the official church handles various societal issues. However, they differentiate between the official church and me, as they know how I personally struggle with the official church. For me, bringing God's kingdom to people and faith in God is more important than some of the church's dogmas.”

In the face of societal scrutiny and scepticism, these future priests find strength in the unwavering support of their faith communities.

Embracing Celibacy

Celibacy is often a topic of curiosity and concern for people, both inside and outside the faith community. The interviewees acknowledge the challenges but also highlight the unique freedom and fulfilment it offers. “Because humans are sexual beings, there is a certain kind of unnaturalness to celibacy. However, celibacy also offers a lot of freedom. A married person loves one other person exclusively, but celibacy gives me the freedom to love many people inclusively,” one explained. Another shared a poignant perspective: “Though celibacy is a big sacrifice, it allows me to spend hours with families and individuals in need. It enables priests to love their people more effectively. Would St. Maximilian Kolbe have volunteered to die in place of his fellow prisoner if he had a family relying on him?”

A Timeless Call in a Modern World

The journey to priesthood in the 21st century is a dynamic and multifaceted path. These seminarians and priests with their diverse experiences and reflections illustrate that this calling is as relevant today as it ever was. As we reflect on their journeys, we are reminded of the enduring call to faith and service.

As readers, we are invited to reflect on our own journeys of vocation and purpose. Whether considering priesthood or exploring other paths, let us seek mentorship, support networks, and authentic relationships to guide us along the way. In the pursuit of our dreams and callings, may we find courage, resilience, and unwavering faith.

Special thanks to Fr. Francis, Fr. Jordan & the seminarians from the Augsburg seminary!

Life in the (Mis)Information Age

Navigating Fake News on Social Media

Who among us hasn't had to deal with some kind of misinformation before? Whether you've fallen for it yourself or had to correct someone who did, it's unlikely that you've never seen any. In fact, 70% of Europeans report that they often encounter information that isn't truthful. But why is misinformation so common?

Most of us have at least one social media account, and though we should all be aware that not everything you see on Facebook, Instagram & co is factual, people are increasingly treating these platforms as news sources. It's a double-edged sword: social media operates faster than traditional news outlets; on top of that, it's usually free and accessible. Often, social media also gives a platform to stories and issues that are less likely to be reported on by traditional news sources.

Problems with Social Media as a News Source

On the flip side, this ease of access facilitates the spread of fake news ranging from mostly harmless to actively dangerous, and from lifestyle topics to politics. People will read headlines and draw their own conclusions without actually reading the linked article or even just checking the source, especially if their friends have shared the post already. Given how fast-paced social media tends to be, everyone's just trying to get in on the conversation before the next thing comes along, even if that means their contributions are un- or misinformed. Of course, the more shocking or outrageous the headline, the more people will engage with the post. Since more user traffic means more profit, social media plat-

forms have limited interest in removing misinformation from their websites. For the same reason, many "news" websites will deliberately put out stories that are embellished or exaggerated for dramatic effect, or even made up out of whole cloth.

How Can We Combat Misinformation?

First and foremost, you should question everything that gets shared to your feed. Make sure to check the source – it might be a satirical publication that people are misinterpreting as a serious one; or it might be a source you don't know, or even one you know to be untrustworthy. Check the replies under the post as well: maybe someone else has already pointed out issues with the article or the source that you can take into consideration. When you read the article, watch out for indicators that suggest a bias on behalf of the writer, and question generalisations and statements that seem extreme. If the article links to a study, read the abstract to verify whether its findings are being reported correctly. If a user is presenting information directly, check their credentials: a marine biologist is going to be a more reliable source of information on whales than, say, twitter user @dril.

Most of all: if you're on the fence about the accuracy of a claim, don't share it. You don't have to be involved in every conversation, and sometimes the best thing you can do is to take a step back and wait for more information.



Keep It



Local

Schön hier

Fairytale Scenery Next Door

As students at a university, we often can't afford to travel the whole wide world. But also, regarding sustainability and acting responsibly, we should consider local travelling more and rather avoid long flights. Still, many of us have the desire to discover the world's charm.

This article provides examples of natural attractions that are less famous than their counterparts far away, but easier to reach and definitely not less stunning.

So if you have the desire to...

...enjoy the view of the turquoise Caribbean sea: visit Blautopf, Blaubeuren. A lot of people dream of crystal clear beaches in the Dominican Republic. A local and low-budget alternative is the Blautopf. It's a karst spring near Ulm. People also refer to it as the "Pearl of the Swabian Alb". The impressive colouring, a radiant turquoise-blue, lures in many nature-loving visitors. The water is 22 meters deep and because of the incident daylight every colour except for blue is reflected. You can do a 20-minute hike on the circular hiking trail around the Blautopf or enjoy a small refreshment in the terrace café directly located at the Blautopf.

If you'd rather...

... listen to the rushing Niagara Waterfalls: there's a small version of it in Pfersag, Füssen. Rushing water has a very calming effect on us, therefore many travel to wa-

terfalls to clear their heads. But there's no need to take a long flight to Canada when you could just stay in Bavaria. The waterfall in Pfersag rushes over a horseshoe shaped stone step, creating a special visual effect. But it isn't only worth a visit in summer. In winter, numerous icicles decorate the scenery. So it is perfect for anyone who needs a new landscape post for their social media or is passionate about photography. But make sure to watch your step and to wear sturdy shoes because you will have to walk over a lot of big stones and tree roots.

Or if you want to...

... get an adrenaline kick from the Grand Canyon, USA: the Breitachklamm, Oberstdorf might be perfect for you! It is the deepest rocky gorge in Central Europe. So pay attention, adrenaline junkies - a trip there is not for the faint-hearted! You can choose between many hiking tours to discover the Breitachklamm with its raging water, interesting lighting conditions and astonishing views. You might return tired and hungry, which is the perfect opportunity to try one of the many local restaurants in the area. Snow lovers can also use the cold winter months to take part in a torchlight hike and catch a cozy and mysterious vibe.

Needless to say, these are just three examples of what the region we live in has to offer. So cancel your next hour-long flight, grab your friends and enjoy the local beauties!

Fernweh for Home

The Beauty of German Nature

The 'Fernweh' for the Unknown

'Fernweh'. That is the German term for a longing for far-away places. Places you always wanted to visit. But do these locations always have to be exactly that – far away? Or could there be places in front of your own doorstep that you just never really noticed? Maybe even just an hour-long drive away? To this question there is an easy answer. Yes, there are. It's just that most Germans want to explore destinations abroad rather than their own country. But why is that?

GerMANY – the wide variety of places to see in Germany

First of all, it's important to mention that there are so many gorgeous locations all around the world. And it's understandable that someone with wanderlust wants to see as many of them as possible. But here in Germany, there are so many hidden places that are easily overlooked. But if you take a closer look, you can find everything from the highest mountains in Bavaria over the Black Forest and the Ore Mountains to the sandy shores of the North and Baltic Seas. Maybe try some sightseeing in the big cities or even in the countryside. You could always go hiking in the Alps and visit the most famous castle in Bavaria – Neuschwanstein Castle.

The trend of travelling abroad

But even though these beautiful locations attract lots of tourists, there still exists a widespread misconception among Germans that their country lacks exciting destinations and activities. That might be because they think of Germany as their homeland and conclude that it doesn't take more than a day trip to go and hike a little. But even if you live close enough to the Baltic Sea for example, it could be worth planning a few days to visit the south of Germany. Otherwise, the probability of you ever going to another place farther away is rather low, even if it is located in one and the same country. And the mindset that Germany is boring and doesn't have scenery as beautiful as other countries just supports the trend of travelling abroad. It could be helpful to try and acknowledge German nature in its beauty and uniqueness.

Find your 'Fernweh' for Germany

All in all, Germany might not be the most appealing country to its own countrymen and many of them would still rather go to Thailand, Spain, or India, but it is still a country of utter beauty which – in my opinion – doesn't get enough credit. It could be helpful to try and acknowledge German nature in its uniqueness. Maybe it will awaken your 'Fernweh' for home and you'll find yourself loving the places in front of your own doorstep. So before you book your next flight to a tropical island, keep that in mind.

“In Europa kennt uns keine Sau!”

How our region could profit from FC Augsburg qualifying for a European Competition

Every supporter of FC Augsburg and most of the people living in our region will remember the magic nights during the cold winter of 2015/16 in Augsburg and throughout the whole continent. It was during that time that FC Augsburg gave its debut on the European stage and played its most important games in club history. They've never managed to qualify for the Europa League ever since, but with the new coach Jess Thorup the chances of playing in an international competition have increased again. This raises the question of whether the region would profit from FC Augsburg's return to the international stage?

The answer to that question would most likely be yes and here are four reasons why:

1 Positive effects on local sports culture – According to the city of Augsburg's department of sports, the success of the well-known local football club can potentially have a huge influence on the city's sports culture because it motivates other locals who engage in sports and creates a feeling of pride and unity. A boost of motivation amongst young athletes after a successful season of FC Augsburg is especially noticeable.

2 Image boost within Germany - Qualifying for a competition hosted by UEFA is generally regarded as a pretty difficult task to achieve because only the best 7 or 8 teams of the Bundesliga are allowed to compete against other European clubs next season.

So in order to play against international teams, FC Augsburg has to be successful on a national level first. And playing a good Bundesliga season draws a lot of attention on the club as well as the city which can indeed enhance the reputation of Augsburg and the region within Germany.

3 Increased prominence of the city among other European nations – If FC Augsburg actually manages to participate in another European tournament, fans and supporters of foreign clubs will notice that there's actually a bigger city in-between Stuttgart and Munich, two cities that are renowned throughout Europe - partially also because of their football club's fairly recent appearances in international competitions.

4 A boost for the local tourism industry – Fans from the potential Europa League rivals of FC Augsburg are most likely going to travel a long distance in order to support their teams in Bavaria. This means that they are also very likely to stay overnight in the city. This will support our local hotels.

Conclusion: Although there are – of course – also some downsides that come with increased success in football (e.g. extra shifts for policemen and tram drivers resulting in more expenses for city and state), the pros of a potential return of FC Augsburg to the international stage clearly outweigh the cons. This implies that every fan of FCA should keep dreaming of playing against Liverpool again. Eventually, the time will come...



Head, Heart and Hand

Attending the Leadership Experience Workshop

I had the pleasure of being a part of the Career Service's "Leadership Experience" Course and now I'd like to tell you, about what it was like.

First of all I'd like to tell you a bit about what the Career Service actually is. The Career Service was created for two reasons, first to develop the career skills of students enrolled at the University of Augsburg, second to support students in their job orientation and career entry. They offer courses both in English and German, depending on what you might need for your future career. As some of the courses are embedded into the students' courses of study, those students' attendance is funded by their respective faculties and they get ECTS credits for it as well. Otherwise, taking part in a course costs 30 Euros.

The course started on a Friday morning. We were 9 students, including me. During a quick introduction round, we discovered that we were a very heterogeneous group. Three of us were from Germany, three from India, one from Turkey, one from Pakistan, and one from Malaysia. That gave us the opportunity to get insights into the different approaches to leadership in different countries. Our instructor was Irmelin Kütke. She actually has her own company doing courses like this one, so we were really lucky to have her. The course in general was about learning, interactively, how to become a leader with the focus on being a leader while also being part of a team. The experience was about holistic learning, according to the motto "head, heart and hand". It was a mix between the theoretical aspects of it all and practical activities. The theoretical part was very think-pair-share based. We

did a lot of group work and collected our background knowledge. After those phases we presented what we had collected and automatically got to practice how to present our findings which is also a competence one has to acquire and establish as a leader. We usually were in groups of three and were encouraged to not always work with the same people. The practical exercises were all a bit different but had the same basic structure. One of us was the leader and this person had to make sure a certain goal was reached. The tasks varied from getting everyone to jump over a rope in a certain time frame to figuring out a complex game. Each game had its special perks, like only one person could move the item or everyone had to touch the item being passed around. Honestly, the practical exercises were a lot of fun! I feel like they were also really good for team building, as by the end of the seminar we were really close, even though we had only known each other for two days.

To conclude the seminar, we did a revision round and gave Irmelin our feedback. Some of us had to take an exam as this course is part of their "Soft-Skills" courses they have to do for their bachelor's or master's degree. The rest had to leave and will receive a certificate for attending the course. The seminar wasn't just fun, but it also left me excited to apply the techniques I learned in the real world. I'm studying to become a primary school teacher so I will definitely get the chance to test them out in the classroom. I definitely recommend having a look at the courses the University of Augsburg's Career Service is offering – I'm sure you'll find something that's interesting for you, too!

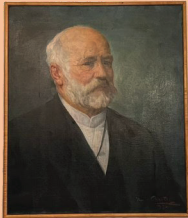


Augsburger Localbahn

Ingenious or a Dying Art?!

When I walk or drive around Augsburg, I feel like there are fewer trucks in the city in comparison to other cities. So, I asked myself the question: How come? I discovered that Augsburg has a hidden gem tucked away only 5 minutes from the “Rotes Tor”: The “Augsburger Localbahn”.

The Augsburger Localbahn is a train company transporting goods in and around Augsburg. They were founded in 1889 and celebrated their 135th anniversary this year. Although it has existed for such a long time, very few people know about it. I had the privilege of interviewing the COO of the company, Helmuth Schmitt. Inspired by our conversation, I wrote this article.



Originally, the Augsburger Localbahn was founded because there was a lot of traffic in the city and the industrial part of Augsburg wanted to reduce it. The idea was floated by Heinrich von Buz (General Director of the MAN AG), Viktor Martini (“Martini & Cie” textile printing company) and Paul von Schmid (Banker), three very influential businessmen in Augsburg during that time. Up until that point, the goods were transported via horse carriages, which caused a lot of traffic jams and delays. They

initiated for the first train tracks to be built: the “Ringbahn”, which is still in use today. Based on that they expanded to Haunstetten and Göggingen. The decline of the textile industry in Augsburg in the 1970s caused the Localbahn to be less & less in demand.

With the up and coming “Verkehrswende” German politicians want to implement, Augsburg would have the perfect basis for expanding their train tracks and using the Localbahn more frequently. According to Mr. Schmitt and some students of the Technical University of Applied Sciences Augsburg, who carried out a “potential analysis” of the company, there is definitely potential to expand their services in and around Augsburg. It could give the Localbahn a big push and would mean greater success. Fun fact: they technically also have a connecting track to the “Messe” right next to our university.

At the moment, they transport 500,000 tons (only in Augsburg!) per year and frequently deliver to seven companies in Augsburg. Some of these are well-known companies like MAN, UPM, Nuber and Präg. As a reference, that currently saves the city 20,000 truck loads! They are using 4 locomotives, one of which can carry around 12,000 tons, depending on their output. Aside from the companies mentioned above, they also transport goods to and from other companies in Augsburg, just not as frequently. This year, they were also able to expand their transports to other cities like Kempten, to which they have delivered 50,000 tons of goods so far.

Some of their biggest challenges currently are that the industry in Augsburg is decreasing, and that the companies located in the city simply don’t use them. Surpris-



ingly, most of them would be connected to the rail tracks, they just don't have a contract with the Localbahn. Another challenge is the bureaucracy. The outdated bureaucracy and the overcompensated guidelines and regulations ultimately hinder the company from remaining competitive. Shockingly, truck companies don't have to fulfill as many guidelines, which is a reason why employing them is cheaper. I'd like to quote Helmuth Schmitt here: "We are looking for safety but are creating bureaucracy." The biggest challenge currently is the opening of the new "container freight station" in Augsburg. Unfortunately, it supports the use of trucks in the city immensely and the opening would inevitably lead to more trucks thundering through the city. In actuality, it would be perfect to use the Localbahn for this if it were to be pursued.

Going into this interview I was pretty convinced that the city of Augsburg supports the company financially, as the city's name is part of the company's name and as they're helping the city so much by reducing the traffic and the pollution. To my surprise, Helmuth Schmitt told me that it doesn't. The Localbahn actually has to pay the city, as some of their train tracks are on their "land". Re-investments however, like bridges, are supported through funds by the state. Railroad crossings have to be funded by the state as dictated by law. This means that the only way they can finance themselves is through transports in and around Augsburg. But with fewer companies being aware of their existence, the less likely they are able to go on. A possible solution for this could be if the city of Augsburg furthered talks with the Localbahn. The

biggest question here would be: "How far is the city willing to go?" with Diesel cars being prohibited to drive in city centers like Munich, would it be an option to prohibit the use of trucks in the city center? Should the use of trucks in city centers be more expensive because of the pollution they cause? These are questions the city has an obligation to explore. One thing is for sure, with the Localbahn having the possibility to deliver to the biggest companies in Augsburg the close range transport could be moved from trucks onto train tracks.

In my opinion, moving the transportation of goods onto train tracks was a fantastic idea by the founders and still is. With times changing, this has become less popular which is incredibly disappointing, as it has clear benefits like decreasing pollution and minimizing the traffic in the city. My hope is that more companies and people will start thinking "outside the box" and might consider this form of transportation more frequently. And honestly, isn't it kinda exciting seeing a locomotive in the city center?! Kind of like seeing "Lukas der Lokomotivführer" from the Augsburg Puppenkiste! 😊



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MENTAL HEALTH



Superpower Sleep

And Its Underestimated Impact on Mental Health



In nowadays society, sleep is often not prioritised enough. Whether binge-watching a Netflix series or meeting a certain deadline – most don't have a fixed sleep schedule and consequently don't get a solid amount of sleep. Especially in student life, between academic demands and commitments outside of uni, sleep is often overlooked. Recent studies have unveiled an inevitable link between sleep and mental health. Here's why you should start to prioritise your sleep in the future:

Improving Mental Health And Regulating Emotions

You've probably felt testy, especially after a sleep-deprived night. No wonder: Sleep is an important factor when it comes to handling stress, dealing with people and influence your mood. Further, chronic sleep deprivation can favour mood disorders like depression and anxiety. Research has shown that improving your sleep can vastly impact your mental health. It can help reduce depression, anxiety, and stress, as well as omitting negative thoughts that mostly bother you when lying in bed.

Reducing Stress and Enhancing Cognitive Functioning

Lacking sleep can collide with your body's stress system, leading to increased anxiety and fatigue. However, a decent amount of REM sleep benefits staying calm in pressured situations and dealing with challenges more effectively. Sleep is a vital factor for brain recovery: When you sleep, the brain processes information and braces itself for the upcoming day. Consequently, you can benefit from concentration and focus. When running low on sleep, the energy usually devoted to cogitating is rather needed to keep you awake, meaning your overall productivity will be significantly lower.

Practical Tips for Better Sleep:

Generally, experts highlight the importance of improving or establishing so-called "sleep hygiene", consisting of a set of factors that influence the quality of sleep. Therefore, the following 4-point plan helps to get you started:

1. *Sleep environment:* A sleep-friendly environment is dark, quiet and filled with fresh air. Also, your equipment like mattresses and pillows plays a significant role in how comfortable you drift off in dreamland.
2. *Build up an evening routine:* Try to set up a schedule to get your body and mind in the mood for getting ready to sleep. Here, you can incorporate relaxing activities like reading a book, doing an evening meditation or simple breathwork – just find something that helps you wind down.
3. *Establish a sleep schedule:* You should sleep a consistent number of hours at the same time each day to ensure that your body gets used to regular sleep.
4. *Limit screens before bedtime:* Screens should be avoided at least one hour before bedtime. Instead, why not try some calming activities?

Always remember: Sleep and mental health are like best friends - they go hand in hand. Sleep should not be a luxury since it's a biological necessity crucial for keeping your brain and mental health up. So, although you're probably currently in your exam phase, remember to allow your brain to have a break – it deserves it!

Pets

A Child's Best Ally in a World Made for Adults

Navigating the difficult waters of childhood is no joke for children between 6 and 12. School's not just about catch and doodles anymore; we're talking real pressure—homework, tests, and not to mention, the social issue of cliques and bullies. At home, it's often a balancing act with high expectations from parents and family. Then, throw in the dizzying pace of our high-speed world and, boom, it's a lot for a kid to handle. And here's the kicker: by the time they get to fourth grade, nearly half of all kids have had experiences with social media. That's right, primary school children scrolling through feeds, exposed to a world where everyone only shows their success and heavily edited photos. Especially when their peers are included, this leads to totally unrealistic ideals of beauty and life.

It's no wonder we're seeing a spike in anxiety and depression among this age group. But here's a breath of fresh air: enter the humble household pet. Be it a cat, a dog or a tortoise, these cute and often furry friends are an excellent aid for achieving better mental health. Many experts are in agreement—pets provide a unique form of companionship that's both comforting and stabilizing.

Petting an animal is proven to calm children and release dopamine, helping them to relax. It's the kind of unconditional love that can really help a kid's self-esteem take flight as they tackle the responsibilities of pet care. Plus, pets are basically a ticket to the great outdoors. Need to shake off the stress? A romp in the park or a jaunt around the block with your dog can work wonders. It's a fun way to beat back anxiety and get a lot of mood-boosting exercise. Let's not forget the social perks. Pets are an excellent entry point for conversation and can bring all sorts of fun activities when friends are over. Even at school a pet might be the reason to invite a new friend.

Integrating a pet in your family isn't just cool—it's a benefit for everyone. It's about laying down a foundation for emotional stability and crafting a supportive environment where kids can really thrive. So yeah, pets? They're not just cute—they're co-pilots on the journey to a healthier, happier childhood.



Unraveling the Butterfly Effect

How small changes can impact our mental health

Ever heard of the Butterfly Effect? It's not just a catchy phrase from a science-fiction movie. It's a concept derived from chaos theory that essentially says that a small change can result in significant changes further down the road. It's the idea that even something as small and delicate as a butterfly can cause a tornado on the other side of the world, simply by flapping its wings. It's a reminder that tiny actions can completely change the course of one's life.

You may wonder what this has to do with mental health. When applying the Butterfly Effect to mental health, we can see that certain problems can be linked to seemingly minor choices or habits.

Just picture your morning routine. What might seem insignificant to you, like changing your cereal to a healthier one or hitting the gym instead of snooze, is anything but. These small adjustments to your morning can set the tone for your whole day, influencing your mood, energy levels, and overall mood for the day.

Also, social interactions – those fleeting moments of connection, conflict, or tension that make you overthink for days. Whether it's a kind word from a stranger, a compliment from a friend, or a tense exchange with a family member, every encounter in our lives can have a lasting impression on our mental health, both positive and negative. So, keep that in mind when talking to people, because you never know what they might be going through.

And let's not forget about our thoughts. It's easy to get caught up in negative thoughts, contemplating past mistakes, or worrying about the future. But what happens when we make the conscious choice to shift towards a more positive mindset? It sounds easy enough, but the impact can be huge. By training our brains to focus on the positive instead of the negative, we can develop a greater sense of resilience, optimism, and overall well-being.

Now you might agree with the fact that small changes can make a difference but wonder how big and significant such difference can be. The answer may surprise you. While each change in your life may not seem like much on its own, it's the cumulative effect that does leave a mark. Over time, these seemingly insignificant changes add up, and without realizing it, you suddenly feel happier, less stressed, and just all-around better.

What you should take away from this is that since small changes can have a huge impact, you need to embrace the Butterfly Effect and recognize the power of tiny adjustments in your daily routines, to control your mental health.

So, the next time you find yourself faced with a choice – whether it's hitting snooze or hitting the gym, dwelling on negativity, or embracing positivity – remember the Butterfly Effect and choose wisely. Your mental health will thank you for it.



Too Clingy and Too Distant at the Same Time

Infantilisation and Hyper-Independence in Immigrant Households

What are hyper-independence and infantilisation?

Hyper-independence describes people who believe they can handle anything by themselves and who are very fixated on their independence, while infantilisation means that a person is treated as if they couldn't function and communicate needs on their own, without checking in with another person - being treated like an infant regardless of their age.

Who makes that experience, how and why does it occur?

Now you may ask who are these people experiencing both ends of the spectrum? Children of immigrant families with precarious backgrounds, coming from cultures with stricter societal rules are often the answer.

Their parents often struggle with two issues: First, adapting to their new surroundings, and second, finding time while working long and hard hours. When parents are confronted with a new language, social codes and structures for work and education their children, who are either already born in the new country or came there at a young age, must handle a lot of life-aspects by themselves and also help their parents with responsibilities, since they are quicker to adapt. One example would be school: these children have to handle everything related to school by themselves because their parents don't understand the class content, administration and often have a language barrier to overcome. For the same rea-

sons they must often take care of basic family organisation, like calling and emailing banks and insurances. Since low-income immigrants basically need to build a completely new life with little to no support, they don't have time to relieve their children if they wanted to. In that way children become hyper-independent.

A lot of countries also still have very traditional views, for example that opinions of elders are worth more and you have to act along societal norms because what will people think of the family if you don't? By implementing such morals, constantly correcting their children, and not letting them act as they think is right, they develop the need for approval in every step they take and are never confident in their own thinking.

What are the consequences and why is this intersection important to be aware about?

The result are children who grow up to simultaneously believe they need to overcome everything in life by themselves or they will burden others with their issues, ranging from small tasks to big emotional crisis, and feeling like you need some kind of supervisor for everything you do since your opinion is not valid enough. Looking at relationships this can also easily lead to unhealthy and toxic bonds, which are shaped by the constant conflict between the difficulty of connecting emotionally, since you're not letting each other in enough and at the same time attaching way too quickly because of the constant crave for validation.



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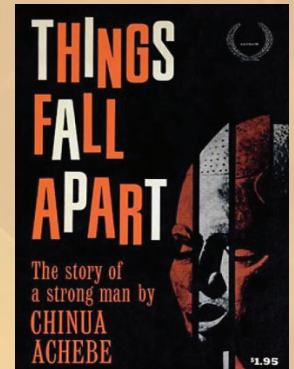
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House of the Dragon — HBO Max

House of the Dragon is an epic fantasy television series that serves as a prequel to the critically acclaimed *Game of Thrones*. Created by George R.R. Martin and Ryan Condal, the series is based on Martin's book *Fire & Blood*, which chronicles the history of House Targaryen. Set 200 years before the events of *Game of Thrones*, the show focuses on the internal conflicts that lead to the Targaryen civil war known as the Dance of the Dragons. With its rich lore, intricate political drama, breathtaking visuals and intense dragon battles, *House of the Dragon* combines the elements that made *Game of Thrones* a global phenomenon with fresh stories and characters, making it a must-watch for any *Game of Thrones* fan or fantasy enthusiast.

Things Fall Apart — Chinua Achebe

Things Fall Apart is a novel published in 1958 by the Nigerian author Chinua Achebe. You may wonder why our recommendation is such an old read and why it would be relevant for today: Achebe's novel takes place in Nigeria before and during the arrival of white settlers, the story follows the life of the protagonist Okonkwo. He is a high esteemed clan leader who deeply struggles with the societal, cultural, and religious changes around him due to the settler's establishment. The novel covers multiple issues ranging from the effects of colonisation, fragile masculinity, and offers food for thought on women's positions and roles in all of this. It's a great starting novel to dive into non-European literature and widen your literary horizon. After all, narratives are also shaped by the stories we consume — start decolonising your mind.



© Chinua Achebe



© Naïka Music

Lost in Paradise, Pt. 2 — Naïka

The album aired in 2021 and follows her previous work "*Lost in Paradise, Pt.1*" while being in high contrast with it. The first part includes more feelings of anxiety and uncertainty while the second part is more experimental and radiates confidence and sensuality. This change is due to the artist's personal journey and gaining confidence in her personality and style. Naïka's music in general is influenced by multiple languages, cultures, and styles due to her biography of constant move and change. Her music could be best described as sensual, exciting, daring, and powerful. Even if it turns out not to be your cup of tea, we feel that the unusual combination of elements is worth giving it a shot.

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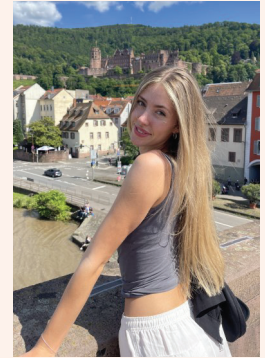
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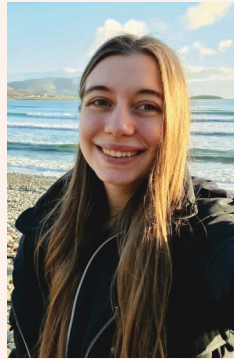
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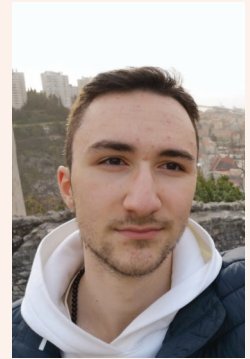
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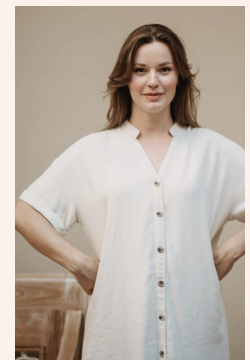
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