

ALL LIGHTS ON



Powerful idiots

... and why their populism is making the world a very scary place

Populism is a word that has been bandied around general discourse so often that it's become part of our vocabulary. What does it actually mean, though? And why is it something really, really worrying? Well, I'll try and explain that here.

An explanation

Populism is basically a political view that is, well, popular! It's a political philosophy which is viewed to be that of the people. However, in the past few years, certain politicians / political parties have been using this term to push their hardcore right wing views. The rise of the right wing is a phenomenon we're seeing all over the Western world, helped by the internet's ability to spread their propaganda. This has led to alarming changes, with people like Donald Trump (a reality TV star), Boris Johnson (hardcore Brexiteer turned Prime Minister, as things stand) and Jair Bolsonaro (just generally unfit for his job, by all accounts), to name but a few, getting into positions of huge power, positions which they should never ever have got near to. They all have one thing in common, namely having achieved their common goal - getting into power - by promoting what was considered 'the will of the people'

The main suspects

These people, so-called 'populists', have used misleading propaganda to promote their archaic and downright backward views. The sad thing is - it worked! A mix of obvious lies, being spread across social media and the mainstream media, along with spreading of rumours about opposite political sides. It's always the case that a kind of siege mentality is created. An 'us-against-them' kind of view. Boris Johnson claimed, in the run-up to the Brexit Referendum, that they would give the £350m they

gave to Brussels every month (lie) straight back to the NHS (lie!) if people voted for Brexit. Immigration would also be cut down massively. Donald Trump - well, where to begin? The numerous lies in his election campaign, his massive anti-immigrant, nationalist rhetoric, him making promises he has, in large part, failed to deliver upon - and he still got elected! Or just take a look at Jair Bolsonaro, with his wanting to take Brazil back into the dark ages - such as eradicating any sort of LGBT community in Brazil, taking the gender roles back to the 1950s, with the women back at home, and the men earning the money, or believing that the forest fires in the Amazon were nothing short of propaganda!

How did all these people get into office, you may ask? Simply by presenting themselves as the 'good guy', appealing to the masses, and against the so called 'Elites'

How can this be stopped?

These were just a few of the most prominent right wing populists, with their dangerous views. Of course these aren't just isolated cases, this thing is everywhere.

It'll be hard - But we're making progress! In England, the younger generation is mostly getting behind Labour and Jeremy Corbyn, in America, Democratic candidates like Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren or Joe Biden really do have the American people as their priority! As for Brazil, we will wait and see.

So HOW do we stop it? Well, quite simply, by being smart. By not being hateful, not swallowing nonsense and just informing ourselves and also - VOTING! Getting out there and making our voices heard. Our time is now, and we need to seize this opportunity with both hands and make the right choices - to secure a future without so much hate and so much division.

Augsburg, I've changed

on being a stranger in my hometown

Youthful ambitions and big plans

At the age of 19, I had no doubt about having a bright future ahead of me. Born and raised in Augsburg, I was desperately ready for a new chapter after years of school and, being very lucky, I had made it possible to fly out and explore the whole wide world for myself on a work-and-travel journey in Asia and Oceania. Living up to the cliché, I came back a changed person nine months later and was dead certain I would no longer want to live with my family, since I had very much enjoyed the advantages of living on my own. And so, this journey continued.

Only three months later I moved to Heidelberg, a beautiful university town in the north of Baden-Württemberg. Another chapter started and, despite some initial difficulties, I settled in, met great peers some of whom are still my favourite people today, and learned a lot about love, linguistics, and myself. For three full terms, I proudly called Heidelberg my new home. Until that one day, when a phone call changed everything and the little world I had built up crumbled.

Back to my bullshit

My mum was seriously ill and the odds were very much against her. I instantly knew that I couldn't let my family down, so I moved back to Augsburg as soon as I could. Back to my former childhood room, back to my younger siblings, back to a place where nothing had really changed. I was aware of this contrast of my new self living in the setting of my old, but what could possibly be more important than

being with my family? I was present during endless sessions of chemotherapy, surgeries, doctors' appointments and hospital stays, and it felt so important to just be around. While this exceptional situation persisted, everything was manageable because nothing else really mattered. Yet, when it came to building up some normality for myself, I really started to struggle: further on in my studies, it wasn't as easy to settle at a new university as it was at my first, since everyone already had their chosen acquaintances. Everything was so familiar, yet I couldn't find my way and feeling myself reverting into old patterns was terrifying since I had been so content with the change I'd gone through before.

This is not a happy ending

You might have been wondering why I'm sharing this. You might expect some absolute solution, revealing to you the secret potion of how to be the "new old kid". I probably wouldn't be writing this article if I had a definite answer to how to fully settle back into a former home. Coming back was the right decision after all and I would most definitely do it again. My mum is doing okay and this is all that matters. Feeling comfortable and settled in a new situation might just take time, which I need to grant myself. Maybe by putting my story out there I can reach some people in the same situation who can relate to the odd feeling of not (yet) belonging on campus. You're not alone.



It doesn't cost anything to be kind

Why working for people made me hate them

Have you ever recognized yourself being rude to someone? Or have you ever felt like you should change something in your behaviour towards other people? No? Well either you are an angel, or you should definitely read this article.

The beginning

Starting a new job means being nervous and having several expectations. The same with me. I always liked people around me, liked talking, laughing and I was sure that I would have a lot of fun working with people in a shop. Don't get me wrong, I like the job, but in the course of a couple of weeks something changed. People made me feel bad, something I hadn't been used to before, because I was not used to unfriendly people, who behaved nastily even though I worked for these people.

What we have to deal with

One of the things that drive me insane is, that people expect us to do everything for them like their servants. They regard it as a matter of course that we, as shop assistants, are in inferior to them, and I think that's not right. We are all humans, we are all people who live a normal life and who have to struggle with our own life and work. When I am working, I often find a full basket with little items, that someone has just

put on the ground, because they take for granted someone is going to tidy it up anyway. Why can't they bring it to me? I really don't need customers to tell me I need to do my job better just because he has to wait 2 minutes at the till. Often people come and think we as shop assistants are responsible for everything and they are rude to us, they don't show any form of respect. It doesn't matter what you do, if you are a waiter, a cleaner, a bus driver or the lady at the cash desk. Rude people are everywhere.

The other side

Of course, not everyone is nasty and that is the point. The nice and kind people compensate for the bad ones. It can be an old lady telling you about her day, the business guy wishing you a "superdooper weekend" or the little boy smiling at you.

One day I had deaf customers and I tried my best helping them and although they didn't buy anything it made me feel so happy, because I felt their gratitude and their friendliness. What I want to tell you is not that I hate everyone, but I want to make you all aware of your own behaviour and the way you all treat people you meet throughout the day. I am sure you all know the feeling when someone treats you well, when someone opens the door for you, wishes you a nice day, cares for you, or just smiles. It's not much to ask for you to want the people around you to feel well treated or appreciated. So why be rude when you can be nice instead?



How to save the world (a little bit)

The Hitchhiker's Guide to saving the planet

Being eco-friendly sounds exhausting? Well, I guess if you want to be a zero waste person, then yes, it will require some changes. But for those of you who are willing to contribute positively to our planet without making major changes, believe me, there's a way that won't affect you negatively. Are you ready? Just sit down, lean back, take a sip of your Fairtrade coffee and go on reading.

Little changes within your day routine

Let's begin with the basics. Imagine a very normal day in your life. You wake up right? What comes next? Let me guess, you check your mobile phone and realize that it's already very late, so you get up, make yourself some coffee or a little snack and then you go into the bathroom to brush your teeth. So here we are at our first stop: the toothbrush. Just replace it with a bamboo version. It does exactly the same job, doesn't cost much more, but is 100% recyclable. You know another thing that is 100% recyclable? Yes, the stuff to wipe your bum. Recycled toilet paper is sometimes even cheaper than the new one and it contributes to saving the planet. After you did your little traits on the toilet you (hopefully) want to wash your hands. Soap exists in various forms without any plastic (not even in the packaging).

At this point you should go and get yourself ready. I'll skip the getting dressed part here, because the question 'what should I wear today', and the answer will be second hand, might be for the advanced world savers among us. Checking the clock, it's time to make yourself some food-to-go for uni. Instead of wrapping it in plastic foil, just take a container. Checking your bag in the second lecture, you notice you already ate all of your snacks

earlier, so you decide to meet some friends in a café. As we are coffee addicts, we go for a Latte Macchiato, which is unfortunately served with a straw. If you don't need a straw, this is the moment when you tell the waiter 'I'd like latte macchiato, but without a straw please'. Not only are you saving turtles from choking on a plastic straw in the ocean, but you also set a statement towards the café that what they're 'selling' is unwanted. Every second turtle has some kind of plastic inside of them, which can cause severe inner bleeding and can ultimately result in death.

To-go-alternatives that matter

Even if you're in a hurry and just get a drink to go, make sure to have your own individualized coffee-to-go cup with you. It won't take you any effort to just put one into your bag wherever you go, they are available in almost every design and size. Speaking about individualized items, the much more convenient version than a coffee cup is the water bottle. The amount of plastic bottles you save by simply taking your own very fancy bottle contributes to a huge waste reduction, as an average German uses 200 plastic bottles per year. Apart from that you can refill it everywhere and you stay hydrated throughout the day.

The plastic pollution in general is immense. A German person produces 480 grams of plastic a day and Germany in general 14.8 million tons of plastic a year. Well, I reckon it's time to go home and be happy that without even really wanting to, you can reduce the use of plastic without even meaning to (although you really should mean it).

Save the turtles and stay eco-friendly!



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Just a small town girl

who took the midnight train to Augsburg

The perfect childhood?

I grew up in a tiny village not too far from Augsburg and last year, when I moved here for university, was actually the first time that I ever changed my home. To paint you a bit of a picture of this village: imagine the most typical Swabian village that comes to your mind.

There is only one big main street going through the entire village, lined with houses on both sides. There is one small town square in the middle.

You can immediately smell the presence of three farms, signaling there are way more cows and pigs than humans living here. But it can look quite idyllic, especially in the summer months.

There are three little rivers flowing through the village, which sparkle beautifully in the afternoon sun and are surrounded by lush bushes and trees in which birds are chirping.

Village life in a nutshell

With only 800 people living together, it's a tightly-knit community. We still have an elementary school with one class of approximately 15 school kids each year. We spent our afternoons outside, playing along the rivers and catching frogs. It was like paradise, seen through the eyes of a child. When asked about my happiest childhood memory, I would say harvesting apples each year with all my family and relatives in our giant garden. With my grandma living right next to us and the rest of the

relatives and friends only a few streets away, I was constantly surrounded by the people I love most.

How times have changed

But as I grew up, this paradise-like vision of my childhood in the village changed. When I started going to high school a few towns away, it became a struggle to commute when only four buses stopped here per day. But besides the infrastructure, it became increasingly difficult to escape the village gossip. You can imagine how rumors spread in a village where everyone knows each other. So it is not surprising that when it came to light that 19% percent of our towns' population are AfD voters, they didn't stay anonymous for long. Since these most recent parliamentary elections, I have begun to notice a lot of little things among the people here. They seem to be very unhappy with their lives. The farmers don't make enough money; the soil is too dry, there aren't enough jobs, there are no young people etc. Although it's in our nature to complain, turning to extremist parties isn't the solution. The majority of the population here is over 60 and afraid of all that is new and desperate to cling on to their old traditions. For the conservative people living in a small, secluded village, things are often changing too quickly. But why is it that the views of people in villages are so outdated? Why are they so prone to voting for extremist politicians? I can't tell – I still love my village. For now, I'm just glad I'm far away from that alarming political mindset.

The grass is greener on the other side



Experiences of a part-time vegan

What do Dirk Nowitzki, Lionel Messi, Bill Clinton and Kaya Yanar have in common? They all eat vegan. On the one hand, some vegans assert that they have more energy and stay healthy, even in old age.

On the other hand, vegans have to ensure that their diet is balanced. All sorts of vegetables, legumes, nuts, etc. and diverse vitamins should be included.

My family lived vegan for about two and a half years. I used to think living vegan is only about giving up things, but I discovered a surprising variety of foods. We all experienced some of those positive effects, but we also experienced a few problems.

Difficulties and useful knowledge


Did you know that some juices or wines contain gelatine? Well, at first I didn't either. In many groceries you don't expect animal products, so it's important to do some research. Cooking vegetable meals isn't that difficult, but it takes time and some failed attempts until you find an acceptable solution. For example, cooking custard is only possible with almond milk, it stays liquid with rice or oat milk. By the way, I have to mention that coffee with oat milk tastes really great! I'm not a fan of all those vegan meat imitations. Vegan sausages are highly processed products and far away from a natural diet. Going vegan is time-consuming. So in the beginning it's easier to change only a few habits. At the time I went vegan, we had to be creative in replacing some ingredients or order them online, because

vegan food is not available everywhere. Luckily now it's much easier.

Haha... how funny!

When you're a vegan, you have to endure lots of jokes or negative comments from people who don't accept the vegan lifestyle. "If you ate something proper, you wouldn't be sick all the time." This was an utterance I heard, after refusing to eat meat, when I wasn't feeling well. "Salad makes your biceps shrink!", giggled my brother when I asked him about any comments he got at the gym. I had to laugh out loud, when I heard I would be a good catch, without my "weird eating habits". "Oh, you are a vegan? I actually don't eat meat that often, but I could never live without it..." Just relax! Not everybody is a member of the vegan police, you don't have to justify your eating habits.

Veganism is an individual decision and maybe not suitable for every metabolic type. Some people perhaps don't get enough power out of a vegan diet, have to take many different food supplements or are afraid of becoming prone to diseases. After all, it's your personal choice and nobody should judge you. I decided to live as a part-vegan, which works great for me personally. I'm still vegan at home, but I make exceptions. In the end, isn't it important that we keep an eye on what we eat and how it influences our health, animal rights and the environment?



“Pfiat di” – “Bless you!”

And other encounters of a North German in Bavaria



In many parts of Germany, it's a common joke that Bavaria is not a part of Germany but instead, a country in its own right. There are heaps of stereotypes many Germans have of the Bavarians, such as always wearing Lederhosen (of course) and speaking in a dialect so weird no one can understand it and which cannot, under any circumstances, be related to the German language. But don't such stereotypes exist of many regions in a country? What are the stereotypes people have, as far as North Germans, for example, are concerned? Being a North German myself, I don't actually know what jokes there are about 'my people'. So after asking some friends, I found out that North Germans must like fish and are cold-hearted people. Wow, thanks. I wouldn't mind swapping with the Bavarian stereotype. Anyway, what would actually happen when a North German comes up with the crazy idea of moving to the part of Germany, which isn't actually a part of it? Well, I'll tell you.

The crazy decision

Last summer, I finished my bachelor's degree in teacher education in Hildesheim, Lower Saxony. Then I figured it might be nice getting to know a new place and, because I'm a passionate whitewater kayaker, I opted for Augsburg (in case you didn't know: Augsburg's Eiskanal is a very famous spot for whitewater kayaking). Additionally, getting a teacher's degree in Bavaria is also not the worst idea, as it'll be much easier getting a job in different parts of Germany compared to having a teacher's degree from Lower Saxony. Obviously, my family and friends were not too happy about the news; "It's so far away!", "You won't understand anyone", "Don't emigrate", "You must be crazy", but after they had understood that I wouldn't change my mind, they all wished me good luck, which is what I badly needed.

The cons of living in Bavaria...

Having a degree from another federal state which is not Bavaria and then trying to get credits for it at a Bavarian university can be quite challenging. Lecturers were telling me that a degree from outside Bavaria is not comparable to the Bavarian 'elite training' in any way and not even my A-levels obtained in Lower Saxony can compare to the Bavarian Abitur. Being told this again and again made me feel brilliant, as you might have guessed. This feeling didn't improve when people working for the blood donation society told me that they couldn't use my blood donation pass (issued by Deutsches Rotes Kreuz, mind you) in Bavaria, since I'm considered a foreigner. Well, thank you.

...And the pros

Anyhow, there are also heaps of pros about having moved to Augsburg. For example, misunderstandings because of the Bavarian dialect often offer the chance for a good laugh. The first encounter with the word 'heuer', for example. A friend told me he hadn't been to the hairdresser's 'heuer'. Me telling him that no one needs to go to the hairdresser's every day, first left him puzzled, but once he realized my mistake, he told me that 'heuer' doesn't mean 'today' but 'this year'. Oops. Apart from the weird dialectal phenomena, living in South Germany is just wonderful because of its proximity to the Alps, Austria, Italy, Slovenia etc. This is, especially from a whitewater kayaker's point of view, just crazy as whitewater kayaking in flat Northern Germany is not that much fun. No mountains, no whitewater. Overall, moving to Bavaria has been a life-changing decision for me and it has also taught me that Germany is a multi-faceted country and that no-one should be biased because of stereotypes. too biased because of stereotypes.