

I'm Just Glad I Live in Germany...

... Where We Do Things the *Right* Way – a Rant

Ah, spring. Remember when spring was a time of rebirth and lazy afternoons in the park? Had you asked a person to form a sentence about spring and breathing, they'd have told you about spring allergies or how the fresh spring air got them out of bed at 8 am on a Saturday. Welcome to spring 2020: breathing is still a topic, as COVID-19 patients suffocate in underequipped hospitals or unarmed Black men are choked to death by police officers. Luckily, we're far away from all this tragedy. We're Germans, and we don't have these issues. We do things the right way, "right" meaning "correct", not to be confused with right-wing populism.

But it's their own fault

How quickly we point fingers. Why would Americans vote for a racist, sexist, many words ending in -ist president in the first place? Why don't Italians get a decent government, instead of supporting the Lega and Five Stars Movement? Why are Bolsonaro and Johnson in power, and not their inspiring, charismatic opponents, whose names all of us certainly remember? No wonder nothing's going well in these countries. Feeling sorry? Yeah, but they chose their fate. No German head of government would ever show a lack of responsibility in the face of a pandemic. No German politician would ever discriminate against a specific social or ethnic group. Hitler? An Austrian.

The Borderline of Tastelessness

Don't get me wrong, I love discussing politics. I love a good debate, comparing candidates and policies, and I, too, can only shake my head about some countries' administrations. Sadly, there's a deep-rooted need for judgment and adding one's two cents in our German psyche that goes way beyond, and at the same time falls short of, a healthy need for debate. This can be funny in some moments and demanding in others.

Right now, however, I can only see it as a lack in good taste. How come that, out of the hundreds of thousands of young Germans participating in #blackouttuesday, hardly anyone mentions police brutality in Germany? How can German politicians gain approval despite their failure to react to the COVID-19 pandemic until the end of March, when hospitals in northern Italy were already overflowing with patients? No, we're not better than other countries – except at repression. And when the storm has passed, we'll just go ahead and pretend we've had all the answers all along, like we do every time. If everything goes well, that's thanks to us paying our taxes, staying at home and supporting the right candidate back in 2017, right? Congrats, we're practically heroes.

COVID-19 in Germany

If you're going to thank anyone, don't thank the principles of German efficiency or our supposedly great skill for planning, like I've heard people do. Our hospitals weren't exactly well-equipped or -prepared; we got lucky and profited from little exposure because nobody visits Germany in February. Thank the medical staff, who've done an awesome job, often risking their own health when protective masks and disinfectants weren't in stock. Nurses and other pink-collar workers are overworked and underpaid even at normal times. Now imagine that same demanding job, but during a pandemic. I think it'd leave a sour taste in my mouth if I'd been working my fingers to the bone for years, risking my own health during the pandemic, and all I get in return is €11 per hour and a nice round of applause.

The same is true for supermarket staff and people working other essential jobs, often for a meagre salary. Interestingly, these are fields that often employ an overproportionate number of women and immigrants. Kind of ironic how it seems to take a pandemic before we realise what jobs we really couldn't do without. But, you know, these are global

problems. In the field of income equality, Germany is doing great overall. At least our waiters don't depend on tips, right?

The Problem with Our Police Force

I'm not the ideal candidate to report on ethnic discrimination in Germany. The ideal candidate would be an immigrant or their descendants or a Person of Colour, ironically not the kind of person usually invited when racism is discussed on German state television. Oury Jalloh or Ahmed Amad might want to get in a few words. You know, if they hadn't died in police custody. Or maybe ask Seda Başay-Yıldız, a lawyer involved in the NSU (National Socialist Underground) trial, who received threatening letters signed NSU 2.0 between 2018 and 2020. You'll never guess where their trail led: a police station in Frankfurt. Not the eastern German Frankfurt an der Oder in case that fits your stereotypes. I'm talking about Frankfurt am Main, supposedly a colour-blind metropolis of the shiny financial world.

Raise your hand if you've heard these people's names before. Anyone? These people and their stories will make it to the national news once, if at all. The reason we don't stumble upon these kinds of stories isn't that there are none. We as Germans are just way better at tuning in when other countries' affairs are being discussed, and this extends to the level of what makes it on the news. Meanwhile, the list of wrongdoings by the German police goes on and on, and involves not just cases of racism, but also of sexism, unnecessary violence against protesters or the press, to name but a few. Don't get me wrong: about 250,000 people work for one of the different German police forces, and I'm not trying to judge them as a collective, because that would be, you know, discrimination. I'm sure a lot of them are doing a great job. What I'm trying to say is, just because you've never suffered from police brutality in Germany doesn't make it non-existent, even less so if you are White and have a German last name.

So don't pretend we've got it all figured out. Get informed, read up on the issue online, get your news from more than one source. Problems might exist in your own neighbourhood.

And It's Not Just the Police

What do you and I have to do with income inequality and police brutality? We don't train police officers and we don't employ nurses, so why is this our problem? There are two reasons: first off, issues like discrimination exist on an institutionalised level, but also on a personal level. Many people I know support political candidates that don't hate women or Black people or go to BLM protests. Then they turn around and make jokes about Oberhausen and its less wealthy, ethnically heterogeneous population. Well, you're still practising racism, sorry to be the one to break it to you. Joking about "ghettos" isn't so harmless, and it isn't just a normal part of an urban lifestyle, a part as two words, not to be confused with Apartheid.

The second reason we've got to face certain issues is because they're taking place in our communities. Even if it's got nothing to do with us as individuals and we aren't involved in the least bit – we should still feel it's our duty to stand up for those victimised by our society, income and ethnic equality being just two issues out of a broader range. As Germans, we are constantly confronted with our nation's past to the point where a) it feels like all bad things must already lie behind us, and b) where we might feel the need to overcompensate and gloss over all present controversies. It's crucial not to believe a) and not to give in to b). Germany isn't a perfect country. Yeah, we've come a long way. However, that doesn't mean we've reached perfection. It only proves we already know how to change.

Support Your Locals

Help for Restaurants During the Corona Pandemic

Thanks to world-wide protests people have become more concerned about the environment and the man-made climate change. Even some of you reading this might be trying to make an impact and aim for living an eco-friendly life by lowering their carbon footprint with local and seasonal groceries. A huge community has already started to do so and there are a lot of websites and forums that will help you to achieve your goals. Shopping local has become more and more popular and we really need to stick to that – especially during these times.

Corona Shaking It Up

Living during a worldwide pandemic isn't always easy as you may have already noticed. Not knowing where we're heading and having no clue what we are to do can drive us insane. Now imagine the following: you are working your shift in the restaurant as usual. Suddenly your boss shows up and tells you that you have to stay at home and are not allowed to go to work the following day. So, no tips for ... how long? Two weeks? A month? Nobody knows. And what about the wages? Horrifying scenario, right? But that is exactly what happened to a large number of people in the gastronomy. Restaurant owners needed to figure out how to pay for running expenses such as rent, debts or employees. Quite a lot of them even had to fire some waiters in order to not go bankrupt. Luckily, some restaurants like the Enchilada in Augsburg made it through the first – and hopefully only – lockdown fully staffed. They also came up with good solutions to keep the business running. If you want to know more

about how the Enchilada coped with the situation feel free to read my second article in which I talked to one of the waitresses there: <https://www.emag-augsburg.de/2020/06/04/enchilada-during-the-corona-crisis-an-interview-with-an-employee/>.



What You Can Do

Since the pandemic hit, restaurants had to get creative. A lot of them started delivering food and some even cocktails! Picture yourself with a freshly mixed Caipirinha sitting in your garden and sharing thoughts with a friend perfectly in accordance with the authorities' regulations. Wouldn't that be great? On top of that you can make sure that your favourite bars in Augsburg won't have to shut down. If you are interested in helping your locals you can get more information regarding deliveries and business hours on <https://www.augsburg.de/umwelt-soziales/gesundheit/coronavirus/hilfe-fuer-lokale-betriebe>.



What Are You Waiting For?

Not in the mood for cooking? Longing for a cocktail? My request to you is simple: support your locals! So we can make sure that our favourite hotspots will keep on existing in the future.

Every Meal Matters

Fighting Hunger and Food Waste

"Everyone in Germany has what he or she needs to live" (Jens Spahn, at a press conference in March 2018)

Why We Need Food Banks Like the Tafel

Is Spahn's statement true? Let's have a look at some facts.

Despite Germany being one of the most prosperous countries in the world, there are still people struggling to pay for their basic needs. Approximately 19% of the German population lives below the poverty line, which means that they're not able to achieve a regular living standard with enough money for housing, clothing and above all: food. It is particularly the unemployed, single parents, migrants and pensioners that are profoundly affected by poverty.

Meanwhile, tons of food are wasted by the German food industry each year even though these products are still edible without any health risks.

The work of the charity organization Tafel addresses these two issues by "rescuing" food from local supermarkets, bakeries and grocery stores in order to give it to people in need.

The non-profit organization is able to achieve this feat by having a nationwide network securing leftover food for it and redistributing it among the 1.5 million people who require it each year.

The Tafel in Augsburg

You may not know - but it's safe to say that there might be people living right next door struggling to afford a meal every day. Therefore, the Tafel established six food banks in Augsburg located in Göggingen, Stadtbergen, Lechhausen, Oberhausen, Bärenkeller and the downtown area. They provide food for approximately 4,000 Augsburg citizens in need each week while the number of applicants for authorization is rising constantly.

In order to feed the people in need, volunteers pick up donations from supermarkets every day. Aldi and the bakery chain Ihle

for example, are among the donators that have committed to passing their expired or unsold food on to the food banks. Almost all the food is of good quality but can't be sold anymore to consumers due to the strict regulations by the government. In 2015 the Tafel in Augsburg rescued 35 to 40 tons of food and thus contributes to a more sustainable management of local food resources.

Volunteering

Volunteers are the lifeblood of this non-profit organization. The Tafel relies on individuals that help with the collection, checking and distribution of donated food several times a week. Last year, 220 volunteers collectively spent 40,000 hours of their time working free of charge. Whilst working a full-time job, Petra – a 52-year-old mother of two adult children – supports her neighborhood food bank on a regular basis. She says that the "combination of social and ecological commitment at a local level" makes volunteering at the Tafel so special. She and the other volunteers quickly realized that you don't need money to help; "you just have to be there". "I'm a mother myself and it breaks my heart seeing families living right next door being in desperate need of help because they're struggling to afford the essentials for their children", she says. Furthermore, working at a food bank isn't only "her social responsibility and an act of humanity". Petra also appreciates that she gets "the chance to meet people of all ages and many different cultural backgrounds," which is "personally enriching" to her. Eventually, it does not take a big commitment to make a big impact!

Why Spahn Is Wrong

Volunteers like Petra and the 4,000 people in Augsburg that rely on donated food prove that Spahn's statement is wrong. In Germany, not everybody has what he or she needs to live. That is why institutions like the Tafel are essential.

50 Years of Scientia et Conscientia

Happy Birthday, Augsburg University!

A big lake in the middle of a lush, green park, countless young people waiting for their coffee, hurrying to the next lecture or simply working in front of their computers. This is what comes to my mind when I think of the University of Augsburg. This scene, with bigger and smaller changes, has been part of Augsburg's students' minds for exactly 50 years now. Time to look back in time and celebrate this amazing anniversary, which really concerns each and every one of us.

A Struggle in the Beginning

Although Augsburg was always interested in education and had several institutes which influenced the education not only in but also around Augsburg, it never had a university. In 1834, a lyceum was founded, but it wasn't able to replace a real university as it only offered philosophical studies. After that, there were no further plans for a university in Augsburg for some time. However, the wish for a higher education institution finally came true after several failed attempts in the 1960's during the educational expansion. What started as the plan for a medical university became a university for modern business and social sciences after the initial plans were realised in Munich.

As the planning continued, the idea of including the education of teachers into the university curriculum raised high interest. When the Bishop of Augsburg

wanted to keep theological education within the Augsburg area, another faculty found its way into the discussion. In 1966, the plans for a university with several faculties were finalised. The official announcement of a University of Augsburg was made in 1969 and in 1970, the University opened its doors for students.

An Unusual Celebration

The 50th anniversary of the university was supposed to be celebrated in many different ways. There are postcards and bags available, a pop-up store presenting life in the university was supposed to open up in the city centre and many festivities, guest lectures and concerts were planned for the special occasion. Due to the coronavirus, all of this (except for the bags and postcards, of course) has had to be cancelled. One of the biggest birthdays in Augsburg has to be postponed because of a virus nobody saw coming.

But yes, it's all just postponed, not completely called off – we will be able to celebrate our university sooner or later. Sabine Doering-Manteuffel, our president, has already announced that the festivities will take place in the course of the following year. With that being said, let's just hope this virus will not crash our party in the next year so we'll be able to celebrate our beloved university. Here's to another 50 years of stress, education and wonderful times!

Watch / Read / Listen

Can we all agree it's been a tough few months? Even in the best of cases, COVID-19 still means isolation means too much free time means boredom. On the upside, which has taken me some time to find, what a great opportunity to have a look at our bookshelves, playlists and DVD collections (some people still have these) and rediscover forgotten treasures. In this WatchReadListen section, I will (re)introduce works that I was passionate about as a teen, have forgotten over time and might pick back up one of these days.



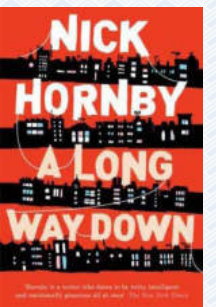
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Watch: The Jacket, dir. by John Maybury (2005)

This was one of the first DVDs I ever bought, mainly out of guilt for having previously owned it in the form of a pirated copy (Sorry!). In the movie, a traumatised war veteran is falsely accused of murder and is committed to a mental hospital, where a doctor experiments on him by locking him up in a morgue refrigerator. So far, so morbid. He seems to develop an ability to time-travel, meeting and falling in love with (this edgy teenager had a soft spot for romance) the grown-up version of a girl he had encountered shortly before his admission. Until the end, we do not know what's hallucination and what's, well, let's just call it reality. The movie presents mixed evidence and three alternative endings, which I found really cool at the age of 16. It also stars Keira Knightley and Adrien Brody, who could honestly sell me anything even today.

Read: A Long Way Down by Nick Hornby (2005)

Already familiar with Nick Hornby's most famous novel About A Boy, 15-year-old me was inappropriately pleased to find a book that spoke more to my edgy side, a book centred around dark humour and, well, suicide: four people bump into each other on their way to jump off the same rooftop on New Year's Eve, don't want to follow through with an audience around and end up postponing their respective deaths. Over the following year, the characters make experiences which change their outlook on life, though not always for the better. The narration follows everybody's way off the allegorical rooftop – sometimes depressing, sometimes funny, always personal. I like that there's no single attempt to embellish or ridicule the problems all four must confront. The book has a positive overall message, which makes it way less edgy, but certainly more valuable in the long run. It was also turned into a movie in 2014.



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Listen: In Utero by Nirvana (1993)

You'll probably get it at this point: I was an edgy teenager. I liked Nirvana, duh. Looking past all the noise and distorted guitars, I found a sound that really spoke to me on the deep level I wanted everyone to know I had. Nirvana's last album, In Utero, not only offers an amazing cover artwork, but also provides the listener with 68 minutes of honest, hand-made music with amazing guitars, surprisingly complex song structures and aggressively vulnerable lyrics that melt ears, hearts, and brains. The album may not be as famous or musically relevant as Nevermind, but I like how it plays on and expands some established motifs. My favourite songs off the album were, and might still be, Pennyroyal Tea and All Apologies.

MEET THE TEAM

Summer Term 2020

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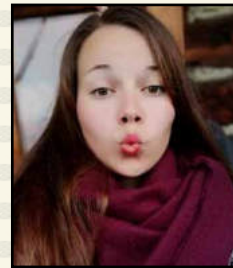


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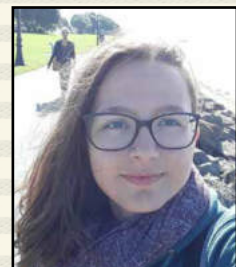


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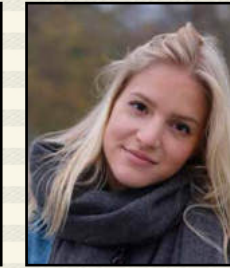
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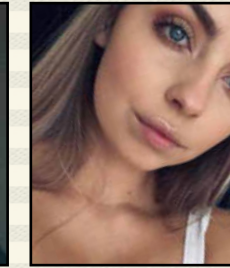
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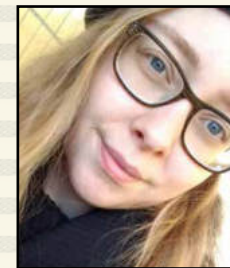
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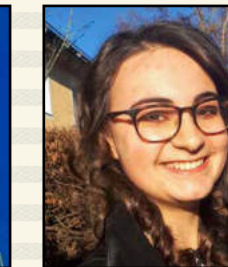
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Janina Trinkl



Sara Vidanovic



Valentina Wirth

An orange tabby cat is lying on a patch of green grass with some dry leaves. The cat is looking directly at the camera and has a small, white and orange stuffed cat toy in its mouth. The toy has a smiling face and a red bow. In the background, there is a grey metal post.

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