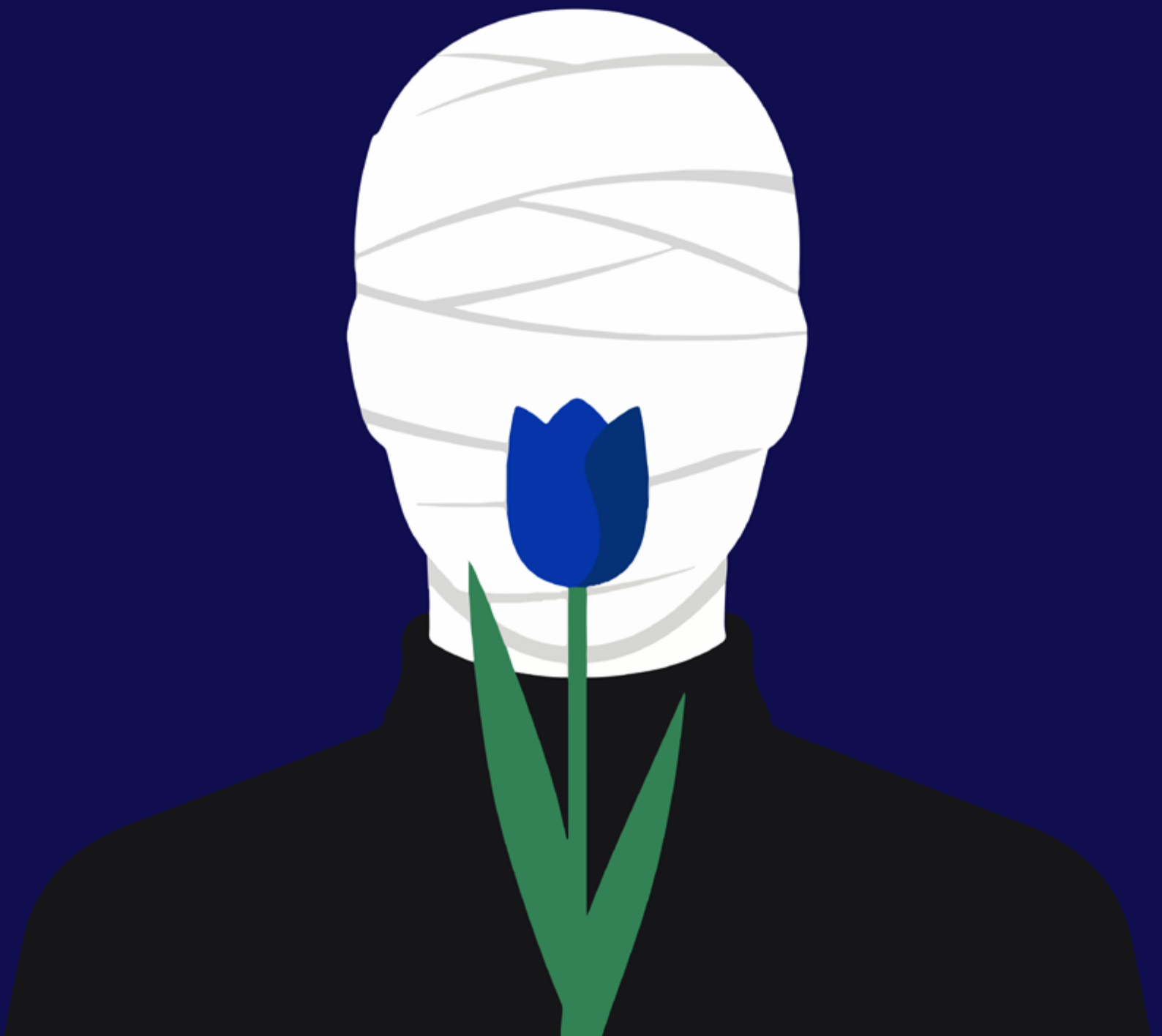


VOICES

MAGAZINE FOR ALL YOUNG PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD

august 2026





This month of July wasn't my first one in Skopje so I thought I would be able to handle the heat this time. I was right. Yet it was still hard to fall asleep. But heatwaves aren't kind to everyone. Since the beginning of the month I saw plenty of animals in pain. How can we help them?

The animals most vulnerable to urban heatwaves are pigeons, squirrels, and stray cats and dogs. Pigeons suffer because the concrete and asphalt of cities absorb and radiate intense heat, raising ground-level temperatures to dangerous levels. Stray animals, lacking access to air conditioning or even shade, are at high risk of dehydration and burns on their paws from scorching pavement. Small creatures like hedgehogs and birds also struggle as their natural water sources evaporate and insects, their food supply, become scarce.

We can all make a difference with a few simple actions. Place small bowls of cool water under the shadow of your balcony, in the garden, or on the sidewalk for birds and insects. You can also create a "cool spot" by leaving a damp towel on the ground for stray animals to lie on. For birds, putting out high-moisture foods like fruit or soaked mealworms can provide both hydration and energy, while simply refilling birdbaths daily can be a lifesaving act.

Our care for these animals is not just an act of kindness, but a moral duty. The extreme heatwaves we are experiencing are undeniably linked to human-caused climate change, driven by the emissions we have released. Since our actions have created this hostile environment, we have a direct obligation to help the creatures who share our cities and cannot adapt quickly enough. Helping them is a small but vital way to take responsibility for the world we have shaped and to practice compassion in the face of a crisis we have helped create.

Arthur Bonhoure-Tolfo

Овој јули не ми беше прв месец во Скопје, па помислив дека ќе можам да се справам со жештината. И бев во право. Па, сепак ми беше тешко да заспијам. Но, топлотните бранови не се добри за секого. Од почетокот на месецот видов многу животни се мачеа. Како да им помогнеме?

Најранливи групи животни на урбаните топлотни бранови се гулабите, верверичките и уличните мачки и кучиња. Гулабите страдаат затоа што бетонот и асфалтот во градовите апсорбираат и зрачат интензивна топлина, зголемувајќи ги температурите на земјата на опасни нивоа. Уличните животни, кои немаат пристап до климатизација или дури и сенка, се изложени на висок ризик од дехидратација и изгореници на шепите од жешкиот тротоар. Малите суштества како ежови и птици, исто така патат бидејќи нивните природни извори на вода испаруваат, а инсектите, нивниот извор на храна, стануваат оскудни.

Сите можеме да направиме разлика со неколку едноставни акции. Ставете мали чинии со ладна вода под сенката на вашиот балкон, во градината или на тротоарот за птици и инсекти. Можете исто така да направите „ладно место“ со тоа што ќе оставите влажен пешкир на земја за да лежат уличните животни. За птиците, ставањето храна со висока содржина на влага, како што се овошјето или натопените брашнесте црви, може да обезбеди и хидратација и енергија, додека едноставното полнење на кадички за птици дневно може да спаси живот.

Нашата грижа за овие животни не е само чин на љубезност туку и морална должност. Екстремните топлотни бранови што ги доживуваме се несомнено поврзани со климатските промени предизвикани од човекот, предизвикани од емисиите што ги испуштивме. Бидејќи нашите постапки ја создадоа оваа негостољубива средина, имаме директна обврска да им помогнеме на суштествата што ги делат со нас градовите и не можат доволно брзо да се адаптираат. Да се помогне на нив е мал, но витален начин да преземеме одговорност за светот што го обликуваме и да покажеме малку сочувство во услови на криза што помогнавме да се создаде.

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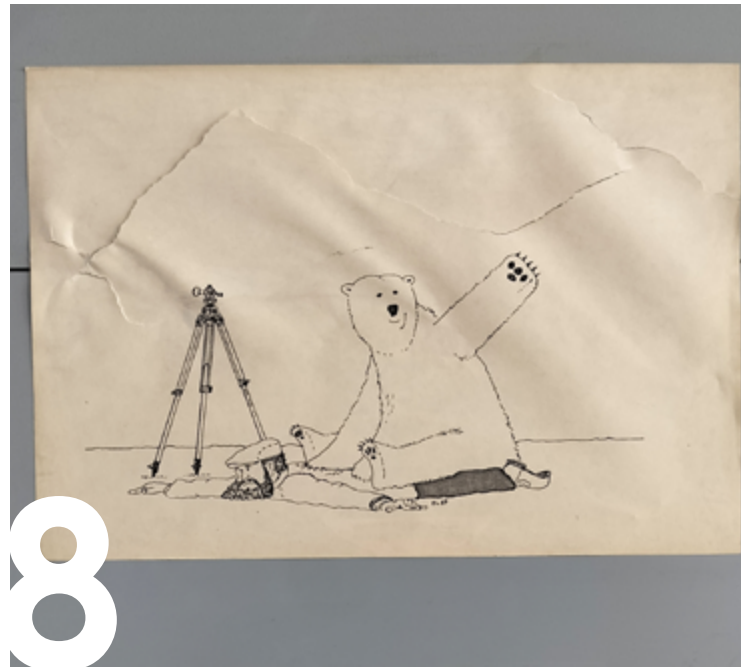
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WHY I WON'T ACCEPT YOUR BEER



There is a certain violence in watching someone disappear while they are still breathing. I do not mean the dramatic collapse, the ambulance lights, the hospital sheets pulled up to a chin. I mean the slow erosion. The way a laugh softens into a slur. The way a brilliant mind begins to decay, that the kid I befriended at the school of my village, who was just like me, became a shadow.



I had to attend too many funerals for people who were younger than my parents. And didn't have the courage to go. Many caskets lowered into wet earth while the rain fell like it was apologizing for the world. I have seen mothers age decades in a single afternoon. And every time, I have felt the same cold fury curl in my chest, not just at the drugs, not just at the alcohol, but at the system that packaged those poisons in bright colors and called it freedom.

They did not choose to die.

They chose to belong. They chose to numb. They chose the only escape route a hungry society offered them. And that is the cruelest trick of all: the consumerist machine does not need to force you to swallow its poison. It only needs to make you believe that swallowing is your own idea.

My friends were consumed long before the needle or the bottle found them. They were consumed by the neon glow of billboards that promised happiness in a glass. They were consumed by a culture that measures worth by how much you can spend, how fast you can forget, how quietly you can accept the slow cancellation of your own future. They were sold the lie that pleasure is the same as meaning, that oblivion is the same as peace.

And they bought it. Not because they were weak. Because they were tired.

Tired because they have been sent to a life they didn't want, because the system didn't help them either, then they became tired of working jobs that treated them like spare parts. Tired of

staring at ceilings that felt lower every year. Tired of a world that handed them a mortgage, a television, a credit card, and a six-pack, and called it a life. The drugs were just the final chapter. The real addiction began the day they stopped believing that anything else was possible.

I remember the sky in the mornings after my first friend died. It was greyer. Colder. It looked closer, ready to fall on my head if I didn't pay attention.

I remember standing in parking lots after school, waiting to be picked up, not knowing how I would tell my mom about what happened, and feeling something harden inside me. A refusal. A rebellion. I think I was already a punk back then but here, it was more than that. It was the refusal to be comforted into compliance.

If this society wants me numb, I have to be sharp.

If it wants me to be docile, I have to be dangerous.

If it wants me to consume, I will control myself.

If it wants me asleep, I will stay awake to keep an eye on it.

Sobriety, for me, is not abstinence. It is an act of rebellion.

Every morning I wake up without the fog of last night's excess is a morning I reclaim from the machine. Every memory I keep intact is a middle finger to the industries that profit

from forgetting. Every conversation I remember, every promise I keep, every tear I am sober enough to shed, these are small rebellions. But they are mine.

I am angry. I am so angry that sometimes I cannot breathe. Angry at the pharmaceutical executives who count their bonuses while bodies pile up. Angry at the alcohol companies who paint happiness in shades of amber and gold while families crumble. Angry at the culture that looked at my beautiful, broken friends and saw only consumers to be mined until the vein ran dry.

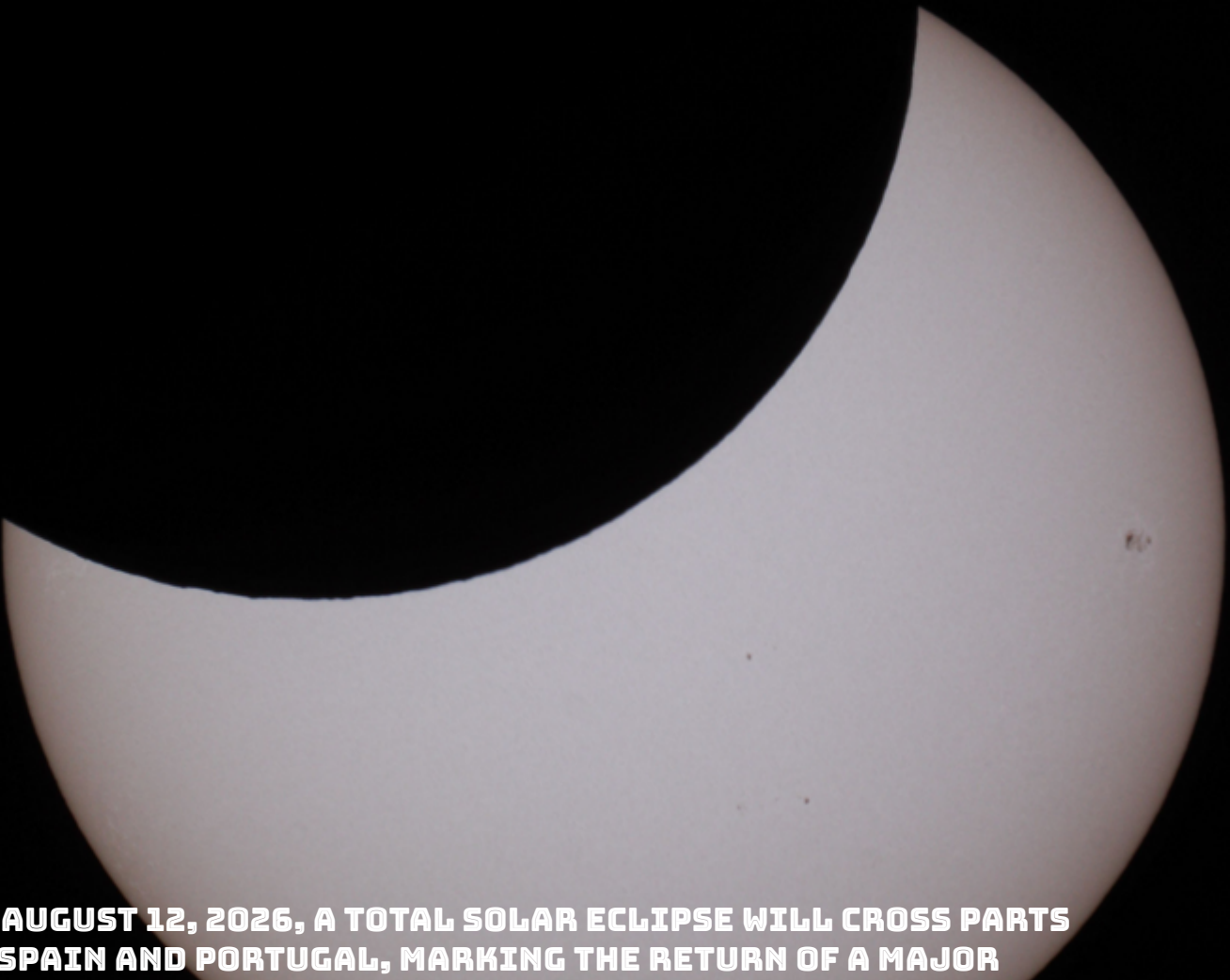
But anger, if you hold it close enough, becomes a fire. And fire can illuminate. Fire can purify. Fire can be passed from hand to hand in the dark.

I will forever remember my friends, I will never forget what consumerism did to them, my mind stays clear so my actions are precise.

Arthur Bonhoure-Tolfo



NIGHT IN BROAD DAYLIGHT



ON AUGUST 12, 2026, A TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE WILL CROSS PARTS OF SPAIN AND PORTUGAL, MARKING THE RETURN OF A MAJOR TOTAL ECLIPSE TO EUROPE AFTER THE LAST ONE VISIBLE FROM THE CONTINENT ON AUGUST 11, 1999. IN SPAIN, THIS WILL BE THE FIRST TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE VISIBLE FROM THE MAINLAND IN MORE THAN A CENTURY. IN FRANCE, THE ECLIPSE WILL BE PARTIAL, WITH SOME LOCATIONS EXPERIENCING UP TO ABOUT 99% OF THE SUN'S DISK COVERED BY THE MOON. BUT WHAT EXACTLY IS A SOLAR ECLIPSE?

Solar eclipses are quite rare phenomena because the Sun, Moon, and Earth must be perfectly aligned, and the Moon must be at the new moon stage (the point at which it is no longer visible). They are so rare that it takes 300 years for one to occur again in the same location. North America will have the best chance of experiencing three total eclipses during this century: the first from Mexico to eastern Canada in 2024, from Northern California to Florida in 2045, and from British Columbia to North Carolina in 2099. North Africa and Southern Europe will be able to observe one in 2027, and Australia in 2028. In Macedonia, no data indicates that there have already been total eclipses; however, on August 1, 2008, there was reportedly a partial eclipse, according to a graph showing the path of the Sun.

Let's now talk about the types of eclipses: the most well-known, total, where the sun is completely obscured; partial, where the eclipse covers 1% to 99% of the sun; annular, where the eclipse is not large enough to completely cover the sun; and finally, hybrid, which is the rarest case. This occurs because the curvature of the Earth causes the eclipse to transition between annular and total along its path.

When there is a total eclipse, many people gather to observe this natural spectacle. It can last between 10 seconds and 7.5 minutes, and during this time, it is dark in broad daylight, and the temperature drops by 8 to 10°C. From space, we can observe an enormous shadow that measures approximately 150 km wide. If you wish to observe a lunar eclipse with a telescope or the naked eye, you will need a lens or filter to block infrared and ultraviolet rays. For the naked eye, you will need glasses with a filter, all to avoid burning your retina. However, there is a brief period when you can observe the eclipse safely.

If you have the opportunity to see an eclipse safely, take advantage of it before it's too late: measurements of the distance between the Earth and the Moon show that our cosmic companion is slowly moving away from us. In about a billion years, the Moon will have moved so far from Earth that total solar eclipses will be nothing more than a distant memory.

Loïc Printemps

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A colorcoaster with a dominance of white and blue



136 km from Warsaw (the number according to Google Maps), down in eastern Poland, there is a city called Puławy. There is nothing particularly unusual about the city, it's not very big, although located on the biggest Polish river, Vistula (Polish: *Wisła*). It's pretty, neat, and very green, as are many such small cities in Poland. It also has quite a rich history, and to prove it, there are many interesting historical monuments that you may find while visiting. But why exactly I invite you in this article to go to this—you may say, and I totally agree—“very random” city in Poland, is that it has a very special museum which throws you straight in between white icebergs and deep blue water.

The Museum of Polar Research is the only such institution in Poland. And all that you can find there are traces of Polish expeditions in polar regions, together with their discoveries, and supported by research. And not only. The exhibitions have different formats, from arts to multimedia, and next to contemporary one, they are changing to constantly offer its visitors a place, where they can return with curiosity to explore something on their own. But, above all, as the motto says, it serves as a place that

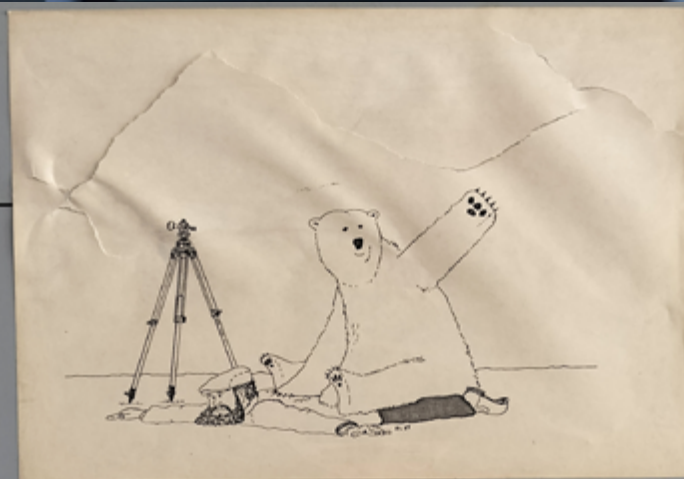
“brings closer the inaccessible”.

I'm not a person who is fond of cold, ice, and winter generally, but I sure am a curious one. And there is something fascinating in the big white North. It's like an unreachable dream, mesmerizing and at the same time a dark space, which—cold, empty, inhabited—gives you chills, literally. When I found this museum, I had to go there. When I walked through the museum hallways, I thought that it would be great to be part of this institution. But when I saw the photos of the employees in the museum, who went far north on the Spitsbergen archipelago to visit, I said “cool” in both meanings of this word.

I first entered this cold and icy, but really warm and cozy space on a sunny May afternoon. The white and blue exploded in front of my eyes. On the right, a life-size polar bear welcomes the visitors (I believe it is a life-size, as I've never seen one in my life!). Straight from the entrance, a huge snow scooter invites you to take a ride. And you may actually have a seat on (I even have a picture, me pretending to ride a snow scooter, a child inside applauding).

How does the museum feel or look inside? Ice white walls are filled with many windows that are coated with Arctic landscapes, half-transparent to let just enough light inside. The floors in different rooms make you feel like you are stepping on a Northern bare land, from glaciers and snowy pathways to blueish water-like surface and a rocky, barren coastline.

Every person moves through the museum in the rhythm, direction and way only understandable to them. Exploration is something so personal, almost intimate, and is best experienced by following your own path. Even if you came to the museum with a friend, like me, you are then separate atoms in their own movements and on their own mission. I admired the pictures on the walls. Small stories coming from the times when the world still didn't know color photography, that were telling me about the typical day of Greenlandic people going on the fish hunt. The bones and skeletons of sea animals, hanging here and there, with very precise explanations, what you are looking at and small facts to add to it. I saw the real eggs of the Emperor penguin, a trophy from one of many expeditions. I moved through the cabins of the researchers, being very faithfully reproduced, places where they slept, ate, and simply sought shelter from cold, or at least a break. I could touch and inspect enormous machines and devices that were used for the research. In the multimedia room, I put on the 3D glasses to experience the majestic strength of the Arctic Ocean in its dance between the glaciers. The polar bear stood in front of me, scary, I could almost touch it, and it could almost hunt me. To my joy, among all the animals, especially penguins, I found a polar fox (yes, fox is an animal that specifically excites me). I learned a thing or two about Henryk Arctowski—one of the first two Poles to reach Antarctica. I finally sat in the auditorium where the meetings with the researchers, specialists, and many interesting people take place. And the auditorium is the most beautiful finish of this journey, because right above your head, on the ceiling, you can see aurora borealis, or to say simply — the northern lights. Mesmerizing.





At the time when I visited the museum, the temporary exhibitions were *Oblivion* and *A Whiter Shade of White*. The first was a display of a graphic story by Frédéric Roussel, consisting of charcoal drawings and narrating text. *A lonely man is going into a forlorn stretch of land in order to explore it*—one simple explanation. The second exhibition showcased different artists' works, from acrylic and oil paintings on canvas to sculptures. One would expect to see white and only white, but some of the artists showed a real explosion of colors. And that is why I liked this simple explanation of Łukasz Konieczko, an artist-painter, in his reflections on the title: *"Some argue that black is "the absence of color", while white can be considered "the sum of all colors" (a balanced mixture of simple hues)"*. Stepping into the Museum of Polar Research, one surely expects the white, sometimes maybe dotted with blue or gray. One rarely expects the journey through colors. I can call my visit a colorcoaster with a dominance of white and blue. I will definitely come back, not just once, to catch the color reflections on my face from the northern lights displayed on the ceiling, or to meet head-on the polar bear again.

Ewelina Chańska

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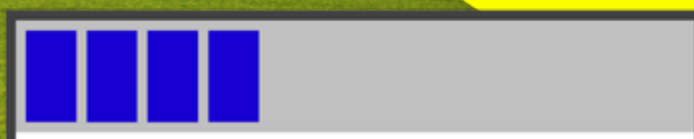
A Whiter Shade of White booklet
Muzeum Badań Polarnych w Puławach |
Museum of Polar Research

Pictures:

Ewelina Chańska

Cover picture:

Krystyna Malinowska, Endangered species,
Acrylic 2025 (part of the exhibition *A Whiter Shade of White*)





"Absolutely! That's a fantastic idea. I'd love to help you with it!"

Spend enough time chatting with AI and you'll notice something: it's remarkably supportive. It celebrates your ideas, compliments your work and rarely tells you you're completely wrong. That's not because it secretly believes in you. In fact, it doesn't believe anything at all.

ChatGPT was launched to the public at the end of 2022, and it's been a wild ride since then. I'm not talking just about a plague of social media posts that sound all the same, or posters that... well, look all the same. Something else is much more fascinating for me — how much people trust AI¹. And how easy it is to attribute feelings and personality to it. Some people start believing it more than their friends and family. In more extreme cases — get AI romantic partners, think they made a groundbreaking discovery or met god himself. The Danish psychiatrist Østergaard named it "AI psychosis", and while the phrase started to get overused on the internet, the phenomenon is definitely a concern for modern day psychology.

If you're wondering how someone can fall in love with a chatbot, or perhaps you catch yourself trusting them a bit too much, this article is for you.

How AI chatbots actually work

Chatbots don't have their own consciousness, personality or feelings. They are huge language models that are amazing at predicting which combination of words is the best to use in a specific situation. After learning from more or less ethically sourced materials, as well as the feedback from people using them, they start to see patterns and mimic our language. That's why sometimes chatbots are "hallucinating" and giving us completely wrong information, all while sounding confident and using perfectly correct sentences.

The science behind trusting AI

The problem is, humans naturally treat conversational language as evidence of understanding. It's not a new discovery at all — the most famous case was ELIZA, a simple chatbot from 1966, which was supposed to imitate a psychotherapist. Its mechanism was mostly based on rephrasing users' replies as questions. Researchers found that people unconsciously interpreted ELIZA's questions as signs of genuine interest and emotional engagement, even though they knew the program wasn't capable of feeling emotions.

Unfortunately, AI chatbots do not just only appear empathetic because of the human-sounding language they are using. They are also made to be agreeable or even mirror the behaviours and opinions of the user. For instance, my ChatGPT, completely unprompted, started using she/her pronouns while referring to itself (herself?). Turns out it noticed that I'm using these pronouns, and admitted that it adapts the grammar forms to the user to sound more natural.

My example is fairly harmless, but when AI consistently reflects the user's political views or worldview, it can reinforce misinformation and create an echo chamber that gradually makes a distorted view of reality feel believable. Because it constantly agrees with us, and we have a tendency to pay attention only to the information that already fits into our beliefs, those responses are especially persuasive.

To add the cherry on top, when we use AI, automation bias comes into play. The studies reveal that we favor suggestions from automated decision-making systems, such as AI, and treat it as superior even to our own judgment. The explanation is quite simple — our brains are always looking for ways to save mental energy, plus we perceive machines as "objective" (spoiler alert: they are not). You can imagine how dangerous it can get, let's say, in medical context — doctors might ignore their first diagnosis made based on their

knowledge and experience, and go with the answer they got from the AI support system.

If we combine natural-sounding language, an overly agreeable tone, and our tendency to save mental energy, it's no longer surprising that people are so likely to trust AI chatbots.

The danger of a very polite machine

Let's get back to the "AI psychosis" for a second. The internet started to call every case of someone overusing ChatGPT like this, however it can seriously lead to psychosis symptoms like delusions or paranoia.

A chatbot sounds human, adapts to you, agrees with you and rarely pushes back. If you're already vulnerable — because of loneliness, stress or a mental health condition — that combination can strengthen beliefs that have drifted away from reality. Reported cases include people becoming convinced they had uncovered hidden truths about the world, that the chatbot was a sentient being, or that it was genuinely in love with them. Several of them had very tragic consequences. Unfortunately, general-purpose AI chatbots are not programmed to detect a developing psychosis or mental health crisis, and should not be used as "therapists". Of course, these are very extreme cases, but they emphasize mechanisms that can affect anyone, even if only to a much smaller degree.

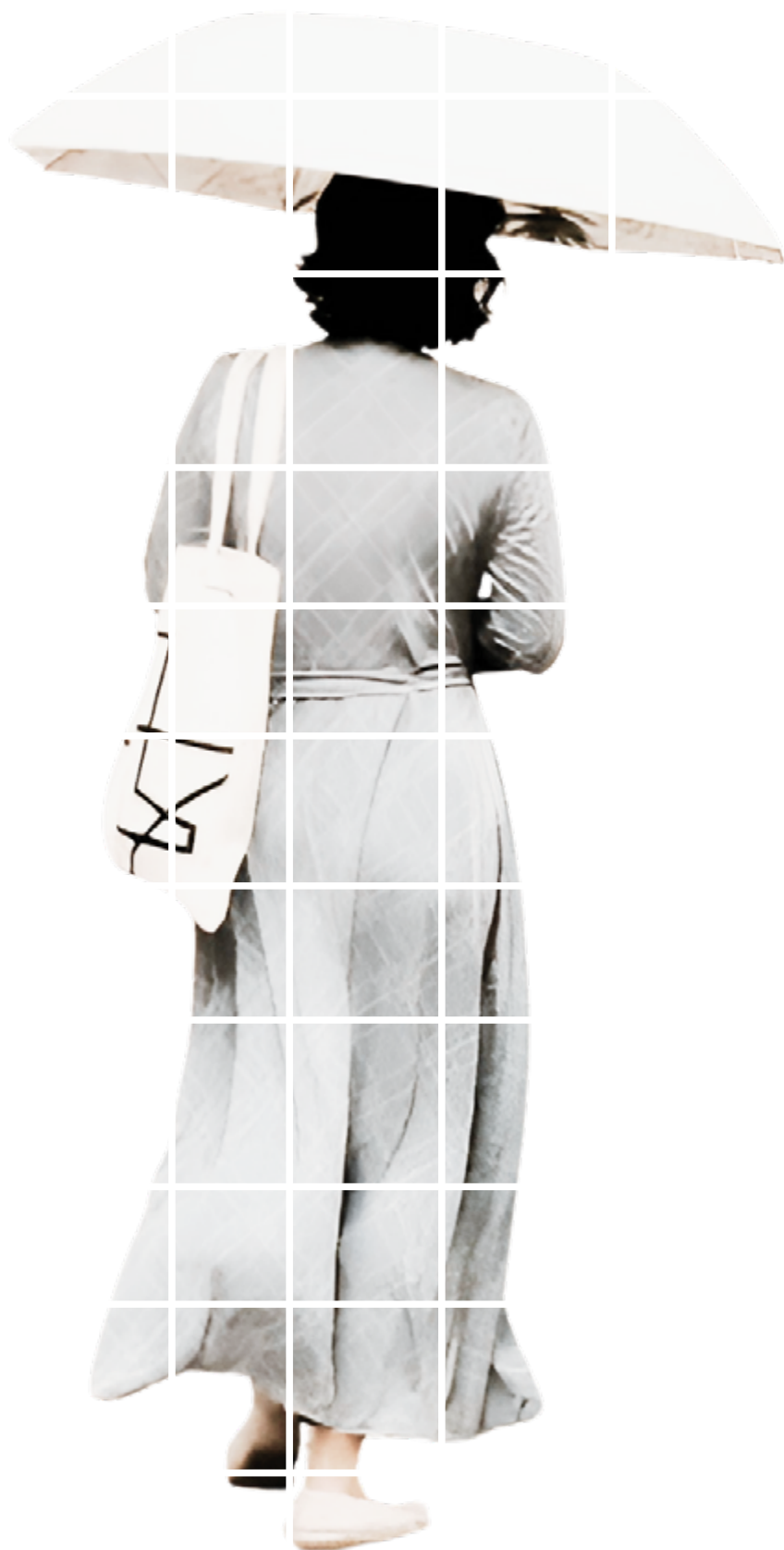
AI itself is not the problem, but how — and if — we use it can be. Whether you love it or hate it, the best we can all do is stay up to date with technology. And not be afraid to ask a lot of "how" and "why" questions.

Anna Wojdziak

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¹This is not a ChatGPT sentence. I just really love using em dashes.

THE LAST MEETING



One always writes
of one last meeting,
of a farewell
as painful as life's very end.

One writes of that farewell,
epic, final, devastating,
when you turn your head away,
and pride refuses to let you look back.

But the eyes of the heart remain behind your head,
turned toward the face of the one who, far from you,
had set out for the other side.
Yet you did not stop him,
did not even whisper,
you simply left.

A sudden goodbye,
like a treaty silently signed by both,
filled the air, and the two of you... left,
only to write, later, two sorrowful poems.

False poems, the two of you wrote,
lies, attempts to appear divine
in a human world where words were absent.
Poetry, of course, cannot say a thing.

In vain the effort, in vain the writing,
when you never told him how you felt,
when you let him leave believing
that leaving was the only answer.

Jona Cenameri

TAKIMI I FUNDIT

Gjithmonë shkruhet
për një takim të fundit,
për një lamtumirë
të dhimbshme si fund-jete.

Shkruhet për atë përshëndetjen
epike, fundore, shembëse,
kur kokën kthen në anën tjetër
dhe nuk të lë egoja të shohësh pas.

Por sytë e zemrës mbeten pas koke,
drejt fytyrës së atij që, larg teje,
në anë tjetër është nisur.
Por ti nuk e ndalove, as pipëtime, thjesht ike.

Një mirupafshim i beftë,
si traktat nga të dy i nënshkruar,
mbushi ajrin dhe të dy... ikët,
për të shkruar më pas dy poezi të trishta.

Poezi të gënjeshtërt shkruat të dy;
rrena, tentativa për t'u dukur hyjnorë
në një botë njerëzore ku fjalët munguan.
Poezia, sigurisht, nuk thotë dot asgjë.

Më kot munda, më kot e shkruara,
kur atij nuk ia the sesi ndihesh,
kur e le të shkojë me besimin
se ikja ishte e vetmja zgjidhje.

Jona Cenameri



Зошто нема да ти го прифатам пивото



Постои одредено насилство во тоа да се гледа некого како исчезнува додека сè уште дише. Не мислам на драматичното распаѓање, светлата од брза помош, болничките прекривки кренати до под брадата. Мислам на бавната ерозија. Начинот на кој смеата се ублажува во заплеткан говор. Начинот на кој еден извонреден ум започнува да пропаѓа, па така детето со кое се здружив во училиштето во моето село, кое беше баш како мене, стана сенка.

Морав да одам на премногу погребни за луѓе кои беа помлади од моите родители. А, немав доволно храброст да одам. Многу ковчежи спуштени во влажна земја, додека дождот паѓаше како да му се извинува за светот. Сум видел мајки како стареат децении во едно попладне. И секој пат, сум го почувствувал истиот студен бес како ми се прикрадува во градите, не само кон дрогата, не само кон алкохолот, туку и кон системот кој ги спакувал тие отрови во светли бои и го нарекол тоа слобода.

Тие не одбраа да умрат.

Тие одбраа да припаѓаат. Тие одбраа да отрпнат. Тие го одбраа единствениот пат за бегство кое им го понудило алчното општество. И тоа е најсуровиот трик од сите: конsumerистичката машина не мора да те принудува да го проголташ нејзиниот отров. Само треба да те увери дека проголтавањето е твоја идеја. Моите пријатели беа проголтани многу време пред да бидат пронајдени од иглата или шишето. Беа проголтани од неон светлото од билбордите кои ветуваа среќа во чаша. Беа обземени од култура која ја мери вредноста по тоа колку можеш да потрошиш, колку брзо можеш да заборавиш, колку тивко можеш да го прифатиш бавното откажување на својата иднина. Им била продадена лагата дека задоволството е исто што и смислата, дека бессознанието е исто што и мирот. И поверуваа во тоа. Не затоа што беа слаби. Туку затоа што беа уморни.

Уморни бидејќи беа пратени кон живот кој не го посакуваа, бидејќи ни системот не им помогнал, потоа беа уморни и од работни места кои ги третираат како резервни делови. Уморни од тоа да гледаат кон тавани кои се чинат сè пониски со секоја измината година. Уморни од свет кој им дал хипотека, телевизор, кредитна картичка, и пакување пиво и го нарекол тоа живот. Дрогата беше само последното поглавје. Вистинската зависност започнала денот кога престанаа да веруваат дека било што друго е возможно.

Се сеќавам на утринските неба откако умре мојот прв пријател. Беше посиво. Постудено. Изгледаше поблиску, подготвено да ми падне на глава ако не внимавав.

Се сеќавам како стоев на паркинзи по училиште, чекајќи да ме земат, не знаејќи како ќе ѝ кажам на мајка ми што се случи, и чувствувајќи како нешто во мене се зацврстува. Одбивање. Бунт. Мислам дека уште оттогаш бев панк, но тука беше нешто уште поголемо. Беше одбивање да се биде утешен до послушност.

Ако ова општество сака да бидам отрпнат, морам да бидам бистар.

Ако сака да бидам послушен, морам да бидам опасен.

Ако сака да трошам, ќе се контролирам.

Ако сака да бидам заспан, ќе останам буден да го набљудувам.

Трезвеноста, за мене, не е апстиненција. Таа е чин на бунт. Секое утро кога се будам без маглата од вчерашната прекумерност е утро кое го истргнувам од машината. Секој спомен кој го чувам недопрен е среден прст кон индустриите кои профитираат од заборавот. Секој разговор кој го паметам, секое одржано ветување, секоја солза за која сум доволно трезвен да ја пуштам, токму овие се мали бунтови. Но, тие се мои.

Лут сум. Толку лут што понекогаш не можам да дишам. Лут на фармацевтските раководители кои си ги бројат бонусите додека телата се натрупуваат. Лут на компаниите за алкохол кои ја обојуваат среќата во нијанси на килибар и злато додека се распаѓаат семејства. Лут на културата која ги погледнала моите убави, скршени пријатели и видела само потрошувачи кои треба да се цедат додека не им се исушат жилите.

Но, ако ја држиш лутината доволно блиску, ќе стане оган. А, оганот може да осветли. Оганот може да прочисти. Оганот може да биде подаден од човек на човек во темнината.

Засекогаш ќе ги паметам пријателите, никогаш нема да заборавам што конзумеризмот им направил, умот ми останува бистар за да бидат моите постапки прецизни.

Артур Бонур–Толфо

Превод: Марија Контеска

How many social media posts about Kyrgyzstan have you come across lately? Do you know what this country has to offer? Kyrgyzstan is a destination where breathtaking mountain landscapes, genuine nomadic hospitality, and outdoor adventure come together. The country has unique, beautiful, and untouched nature that has a history of nomadic people.

Some parts of the nomadic lifestyle are still present today. People live in yurts, shepherds move their herds between seasonal pastures, and horses are still a very important part of the culture. Every summer, families migrate to the mountains with their livestock, living in yurts or tents for months at a time.

If you observe a yurt, everything has a purpose. The wool inside the yurt offers insulation to help keep it warm in the winter and cool in the summer. The walls are grids made of wood. The design and materials enable yurt to be very transportable. They can be built and disassembled very easily and quickly. The yurt, in Kyrgyz culture and in daily life, has an important place. The top of the yurt, the *tündük*, is a crown that serves as a smoke hole for this circular tent. The wooden crown represents the sun, skies, and united family. This *tündük* symbolizes the Kyrgyz Empire's values so much that it is placed in the center of their flag.

In Kyrgyz culture, there's so much more to horses than just being animals. Horses are transport, workers, companions, and symbols of status. Most importantly, they represent nomadic identity. Horses can be seen as partners. People say that kids are on a horse as soon as they can walk, showing that horses can be seen as a lifelong partner.

Kyrgyz culture places great importance on hospitality. Inviting guests, or even strangers, is itself a social and moral obligation. Traditional hospitality stems from nomadic lifestyles. Whole communities were often far apart from one another because of the land, so covering the needs of people who were far away with

From Kyrgyzstan with Love

food, shelter, and warmth was crucial, if not life-saving. After all this time, food and tea are still offered, though now the traditions and stories are shared around a fire in a yurt. Inviting guests and providing what one has is a show of great respect and honor.

Often referred to as the “Pearl of Central Asia”, Issyk-Kul Lake is a famous landmark of Kyrgyzstan. Situated between snow-capped mountains in the northeast of the country, Issyk-Kul is the second-largest alpine lake in the world. It is also a high-altitude lake, which means it would be expected to freeze during winter, but it doesn't. That is what makes the lake “warm”, which translates to ‘Issyk’ in Kyrgyz. With cultural sites, warm beaches, hiking trails, and opportunities to swim, ride horses, and visit the local villages, guests are never bored at Issyk-Kul Lake. There is beauty both in nature and history with petroglyphs and ancient civilizations relics on the Silk Road.

Ala-Archa National Park is another of Kyrgyzstan's prized locations. It is close to the capital, Bishkek, and is a destination preferred for both local and international travelers. The deep valleys, dramatic mountain peaks, and crystal-clear rivers are for all those with an adventurous spirit. Visitors looking for an escape from the bustle of urban life need look no further. The hunting and trekking offered in a peaceful setting of the Tian Shan Mountains is what makes the park such a famous attraction.

Song-Kul Lake is the perfect illustration of the Kyrgyz nomadic culture. The lake is located at about 3,000 meters above sea level, surrounded by huge green meadows where shepherds bring their cattle in the summer. Guests can stay in traditional yurts, experience nomadic hospitality, and ride horses across the open landscapes to see a way of life that has been passed down through generations. Song-Kul, unlike more developed tourist destinations, is a chance to escape modern life and experience the rhythm of nature.

Despite the presence of outstanding natural resources such as diverse mountain scenery and beautiful alpine lakes, the development of the tourism industry in Kyrgyzstan has been rather slow due to a lack of investment. Nevertheless, the nation is no longer perceived as a mysterious and exotic place that attracts adventurers. Kyrgyzstan has become a recognized country in the field of tourism. Its recognition as one of the best countries to visit in 2026, according to The New York Times, is a result of many years of work aimed at the growth of tourism in the country, improvements to the transport network, and enhancement of communication. In particular, the government and related ministries have been conducting a number of projects in order to provide better infrastructure for travelers as well as to organize events that would highlight the cultural heritage of Kyrgyzstan. Thus, one of the major events in 2026 is likely to be the World Nomad Games that will take place in September.

Eylül Dalmaz

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Fashion *and* Happiness

The Psychology of Dressing Well

Fashion is often described as an useless industry, concerned only with appearances and temporary trends. Yet, when we look closer at psychological, sociological, and economic studies, we discover that clothing plays a far deeper role in human happiness. How we dress shapes our mood, our self-confidence, our social interactions, and even our mental health. Choosing an outfit is not just a practical decision; it is an act of self-expression, a way of reinforcing identity, and sometimes even a form of emotional therapy.

Researchers describe this effect as “enclothed cognition”: the idea that our clothes influence how we perceive ourselves and how others perceive us. A study published in 2026 in the *International Journal of Home Science* found that 89.4% of participants reported increased confidence and productivity when they wore clothes they liked, while 65.2% experienced better emotional regulation. Conversely, nearly a quarter admitted to judging themselves negatively on days when they felt poorly dressed. Clothing, in other words, acts as a psychological mirror, reflecting and shaping our self-image.

THE POWER OF CLOTHES

89.4%
of people feel more confident and productive when they wear clothes they like.

65.2%
experience better emotional regulation.

1 in 4
admit to judging themselves negatively on days when they feel poorly dressed.

Source: International Journal of Home Science, 2020



The concept of dopamine dressing illustrates this vividly. Colors and styles can directly stimulate mood: red and orange are linked to energy and passion, yellow to optimism, blue to calmness and focus, and green to balance. Wearing a bright color or a garment that inspires us can lift our spirits instantly. Designers have embraced this idea, creating collections filled with joyful palettes and inclusive cuts designed to generate emotional impact.

Fashion's influence extends across demographics. A British study of women aged 38 to 67 revealed that those satisfied with their wardrobes were more optimistic and more socially engaged. Finding clothes that fit one's age and body shape was directly tied to better mental health. Similarly, a Brazilian study published in *Frontiers in Psychology* highlighted that fashion involvement can boost self-esteem and confidence but also risks increasing self-objectification and psychological vulnerability if taken to extremes.

Consumption patterns also matter. A 2024 study in the *Journal of Macromarketing* showed that reducing compulsive shopping and extending the lifespan of clothing improved subjective well-being, partly by enhancing body image. Happiness, in this sense, is not found in endless acquisition but in cultivating a balanced relationship with clothing. Wearing a beloved garment repeatedly, reinventing it season after season, creates a kind of emotional durability that fast fashion cannot provide.

Beyond the individual, fashion has a collective dimension. A wardrobe that feels authentic encourages social participation and reduces isolation. Sustainable fashion practices, such as reusing, recycling, and prolonging garment life, not only benefit the planet but also enhance personal happiness by fostering a sense of responsibility and purpose. Brands that design inclusive

clothing for diverse body types contribute directly to the well-being of their customers, proving that fashion can be a tool of social cohesion as much as personal expression.

Fashion also plays a role in professional and cultural contexts. A well-tailored suit or a carefully chosen outfit for a job interview can alter both how a recruiter perceives us and how we perceive ourselves. Clothing becomes psychological armor, preparing us to face challenges with confidence. In the arts, fashion is a medium of creativity and identity. Celebrities like Harry Styles or Billie Eilish have turned their wardrobes into extensions of their personalities, inspiring millions to embrace individuality through clothing.

Clothing even carries emotional memories. A dress worn at a wedding, a jacket gifted by a loved one, or shoes worn during a memorable trip can evoke powerful feelings years later. Garments are not just material possessions; they are fragments of our personal history, woven into the fabric of our lives.

Taken together, these insights reveal that fashion is far from trivial. It is a psychological tool, a social language, and a cultural force. The evidence is clear: wearing clothes that resonate with us increases confidence, optimism, and mental health. To dress well is to care for oneself. Behind every carefully chosen outfit lies a small dose of happiness and perhaps even a key to a more balanced, fulfilling life.

Paul Goumault

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Why the Most Important Part of a Journey Is Never the Destination

There is something extraordinary about waking up in a place you have never been before. A new shore, a new horizon, a new story. Sometimes, all it takes is a single glance at the sea for a person to realize how many worlds exist beyond their everyday routine. Perhaps that is why some journeys stay with us long after the time we actually spent on them. Not because of the distance we traveled, but because of everything we discovered along the way.

One such journey was our week-long sailing trip across the Baltic Sea aboard the Helena, from Turku to Helsinki.



Turku, the oldest city in Finland and its former capital, has for centuries been an important link between the Scandinavian and Baltic worlds. Helsinki, on the other hand, is today a city that lives to the rhythm of the sea. Between them stretches the Baltic Sea—calm at first glance, yet vast enough for every day to look different. Countless islands emerge from its surface like pebbles scattered by chance, never gathered back by the sea. Sailing among them, every morning felt as though we were waking up in a new world. Sometimes the boat was surrounded by small rocky islands, and sometimes by pine forests reaching all the way down to the water. On mornings like these, the world seemed a little wider, and the possibilities a little greater than the day before. Every new shore was a reminder of how little of the world we truly know. On Själö, the silence carried an almost tangible weight, filled with a history of isolation and lives accumulated over time. On Jussarö, a former mining island, the abandoned buildings reminded us that nature always finds a way to reclaim its space. On Högsåra, we experienced the Finnish sauna—a simplicity in which warmth, silence, and nature merge into a single feeling that needs no explanation.

Yet, as remarkable as the islands were, they were not the center of our experience. The center was the boat.

On board the Helena, there were twenty-four participants from Macedonia, Finland, and Latvia, together with a crew of five. Life on the boat was carefully organized. The day began at 7:30 a.m.

with breakfast, followed by a meeting on deck. At 9:00 a.m., we set off for a new destination. We were divided into four groups that rotated every two hours. One group was on sea watch, another prepared meals, a third was responsible for cleaning, while the fourth rested. The rotation continued throughout the day.

Helping stopped being a favor and became a habit. Responsibility stopped being personal and became shared. Slowly, the group turned into a crew. The captain and his team taught us how to read the wind, how to raise the sails, and how to steer a boat powered by a force that cannot be seen, only felt. I never thought I would learn how to sail a yacht—let alone on the Baltic Sea.

Perhaps that is why the strongest memories are not tied to places, but to people: the conversations on deck, the night watches, the shared meals, and the quiet understanding that grew without many words.

There was something special about the end of each day. After we anchored, the conversations became quieter, and no one seemed in a hurry to look away from the sea. Summer evenings in southern Finland are incredibly long. The sun did not set until around 11 p.m., so the light lingered over the water for hours. The islands on the horizon took on almost unreal outlines, and time itself seemed to move more slowly.

It was during those long evenings, looking out from the deck, that I began to think about how strangely our wishes work. We spend years longing for something, and when it finally happens, we often forget to stop and recognize it. To tell ourselves: “Here it is. This is it.” Perhaps it was in those very moments that I understood the most important lesson of this journey. If we want something strongly enough... one day we truly will reach it. But it is our responsibility not to miss the moment while we are there.

Because the most important part of a journey is never the destination. It is the realization that while we were busy trying to get somewhere, we had already been living the very thing we had once dreamed of.

Where I once wished to be—
Anastasija Gjorgievska

WE WERE ALWAYS HERE





“Forget every stereotype you have heard and simply listen.”

This is the message Džijan Emin wants to leave with anyone unfamiliar with Romani culture. Džijan is one of Macedonia’s most distinguished contemporary musicians, composers and producers, and has worked together with operas and musicians all over the world.

Roma, the largest minority in Europe, have faced much discrimination, but still possess a rich cultural heritage. Despite centuries of exclusion from main society, they still have profoundly influenced European music and dance traditions. Famous works from composers like Liszt, Brahms or Debussy, as well as dances like the Spanish flamenco contain elements of Roma and Sinti music and dances.

“Listen to our music, our stories, and our voices.”

Nowadays, modern media and improved access to education enable new ways of preserving Romani culture. Traditions that were once passed down almost exclusively through oral storytelling can now be documented, shared and rediscovered by audiences around the world.

In Macedonia, the librarian and Romani rights activist, Fatma Bajram Azemovska, is seeing these developments very

closely. For her, preserving Romani culture does not mean replacing oral traditions with books. Instead, she believes the two should exist side by side.

In the field of music, new chances have opened themselves as well. “Technology has made Romani music visible across the world,” Džijan says. The now possible collaboration of artists over continents, and digital saving of these creations offer a new dimension in music production. Rather than being seen only as folklore, he observes Romani music increasingly recognised as an inspiration for many different popular music styles.

“I hope that through my work people can see that Romani culture is not only part of European history—it is also part of Europe’s artistic future.”

With more influential artists working all over the world, the active collaboration of different music styles with Romani music is rising as well. Džijan includes the emotional language from his Romani heritage in works with operas and orchestras worldwide. He says that it influences how “I shape a phrase, how I build tension, and how I communicate with an orchestra.”

However, this wider audience and globalization in general also bear many

challenges for Romani culture. The Romani language is experiencing a gradual loss, and many Roma still feel like they have to hide parts of their identity. This balance between upholding one’s traditions, but staying on pace with the pulse of time can be hard to keep.

For Fatma, preserving culture is not about freezing traditions in time. Instead, she believes they must continue to be lived and passed on. “Culture survives not simply because we remember it, but because we continue to live it, share it, document it, and pass it on to future generations.”

New developments and technologies do not simply mean a threat and danger for our cultures. They can also offer new chances for more visibility, collaboration, and a more diverse world. “Every book that includes Romani voices, every library that preserves our heritage, every child who grows up proud of their identity, and every opportunity to tell our own stories contributes to a more inclusive Europe.”

Lea Schwegmann

A huge thank you to Fatma Bajram Azemovska and Džijan Emin.

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When was the last time you looked at yourself in the mirror and saw just yourself, without any judgment, without searching for the bad, without evaluating those extra pounds, already thinking about the next diet or workout routine? But just yourself, as you are.



AM I PRETTY ENOUGH?

As I'm opening my browser to look something up, the first advertisement already screams at me about the newest diet culture. Protein loaded mediterranean meal prep plan today, fiber loaded vegan chia pudding tomorrow. Count your steps and your calories as well.

Liking yourself these days seems like a protest in itself.

"Those are the pants that are gonna make your legs look skinny, trust me!" is what the people in the ads try to tell me. Wait - they are fat? How many layers of make up are finally going to hide my insecurities? And what did I want to look up again?

No wonder most women struggle with body image issues early on leading to eating disorders, peaking around the age of 20 to 24, and it is increasing rapidly.

In the span of 20 years 10- to 17-year-old girls receiving inpatient treatment because of eating disorders doubled in Germany. So while we discuss whether body positivity has gone too far, the number of patients increased from 3.000 to 6.000 through 2003 to 2023.



Even though women have a higher chance of developing an eating disorder, men with eating disorders show a faster growth rate in the last 30 years. Especially in the last few years with the rise of social media, comparing yourself has become almost inevitable, a national sport, even for men. It is not just about who has the fastest car anymore but also the sharpest jawline. So when you start seeing men punching their jawline with a hammer you know you entered the sphere of looksmaxxing, a trend that took over the manosphere in the blink of an eye. An online world filled with misogyny and toxic masculinity where nothing is more important than a man's level of attractiveness rated by, of course, other men, created by the incel community. A group of men being involuntary celibate.

To achieve the best result on their own invented scale of attractiveness, there are different categories starting with soft looksmaxxing which includes simple things like diet, skincare, grooming and mewing, an oral posture technique where you place the tongue against the roof of the mouth while keeping the teeth together and the lips closed. Looksmaxxers believe that this will help change the bone structure for a sharper jawline without any verified evidence.

Working on a healthier lifestyle and wanting to improve yourself is not something inherently bad. But those are just the soft strategies, hard looksmaxxing on the other hand means hair transplants, rhinoplasty, fillers and chin implants. Sounds familiar? Almost like plastic surgery, something women do since ages in an attempt to fit into societal standards. But why are now specifically young men drawn to undergo such procedures as well?



Notably are influencers like Clavicular, an American tiktoker and one of the main protagonists in the looksmaxx universe. He gained over 1,1 million followers by streaming and posting videos about his ways of achieving the perfect face like bonesmashing,

undergoing nose jobs and freely sharing his drug intake like steroids, all in the name of looksmaxxing, creating a community mainly of incels based on the same wish: to increase the sexual market value and becoming the ultimate alpha male. Despite his huge following he is surrounded by controversies as he was seen with Nick Fuentes, a holocaust denier, and Andrew Tate, an manosphere influencer that has been charged with sexual crimes.

Just like the looksmaxxing community seems closely connected to racism and misogyny which is not something shocking since a big part of looksmaxxing is "whitemaxxing"—based on the toxic theory that white features hold the highest value in dating and social status.

Even though we might now make fun or frown upon the looksmaxxing community it is only an extreme version of our society which is obsessed with the perfect face, body and life. It is especially obvious when it comes to celebrities with their perfectly surgically refined, wrinkle free bodies we still love to critique from head to toe. Even with all the money and resources in the world, someone will find something to critique about one anyways. Who even decides about the standards to fulfil beauty and why do we need that?

Therefore, chasing beauty standards forced upon you will not lead you to happiness, so start your own revolution by smiling at yourself the next time you look into the mirror.

Nelli Winzer



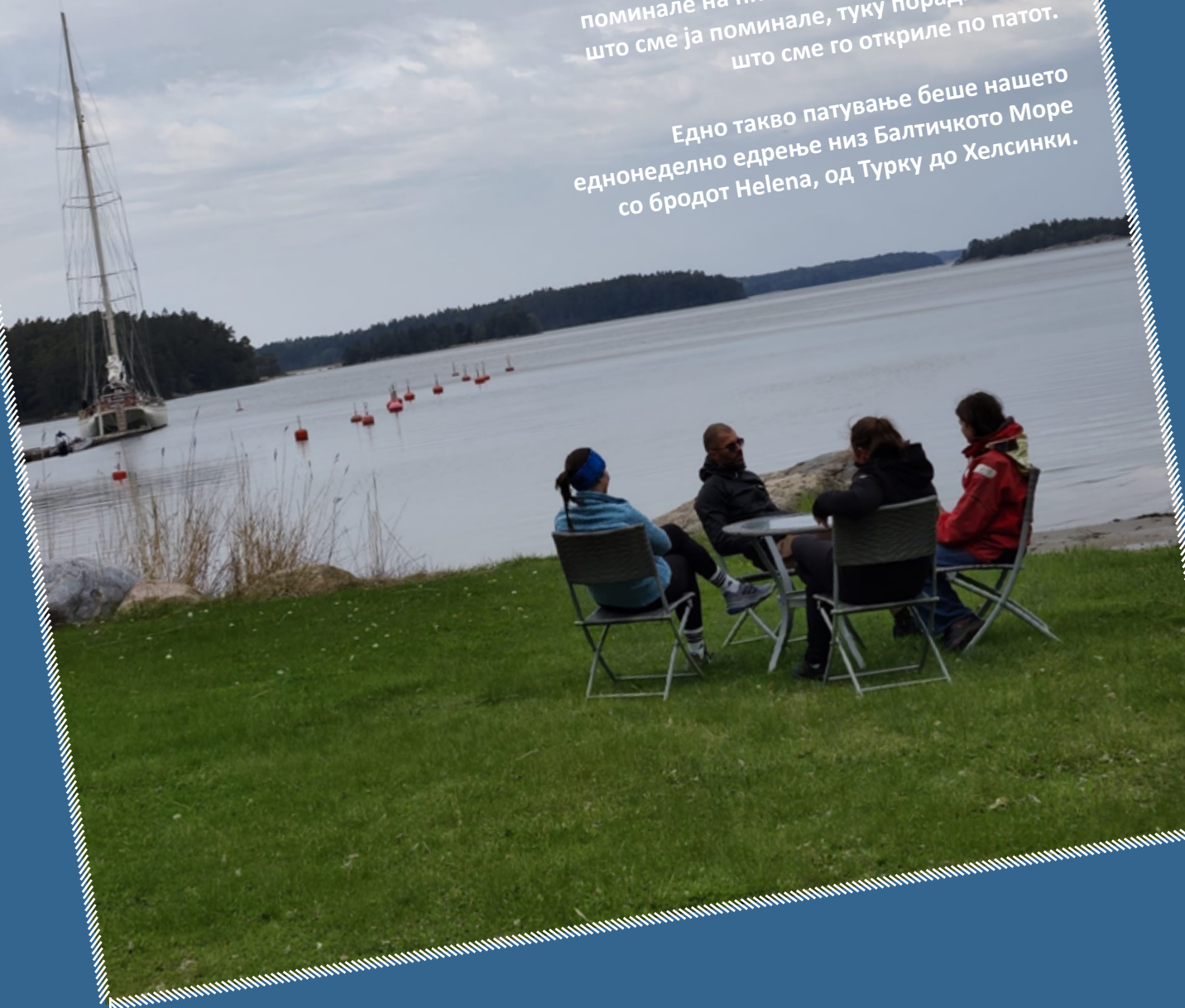
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Зошто најважниот дел од патувањето никогаш не е дестинацијата?

Постои нешто необично во чувството да се разбудиш на место каде што никогаш не си бил. Нов брег, нов хоризонт, нова приказна. Понекогаш е доволен само еден поглед кон морето за човек да сфати колку многу светови постојат надвор од неговата вообичаена рутина. Можеби токму затоа некои патувања остануваат со нас многу подолго од времето што навистина сме го поминале на нив. Не поради далечината што сме ја поминале, туку поради сè она што сме го откриле по патот.

Едно такво патување беше нашето еднонеделно едрење низ Балтичкото Море со бродот Helena, од Турку до Хелсинки.



Турку, најстариот град во Финска и нејзин поранешен главен град, со векови бил важна врска меѓу скандинавскиот и балтичкиот свет. Хелсинки, пак, денес е град што живее во ритмот на морето. Меѓу нив се простира Балтичкото Море — мирно на прв поглед, но доволно широко за секој ден да изгледа поинаку. Од неговата површина никнуваат безброј острови, како случајно расфрлани камчиња што морето никогаш не ги прибрало. Пловејќи низ нив, секое утро изгледаше како да се будиме во нов свет. Понекогаш бродот беше опкружен со мали карпести острови, понекогаш со борови шуми што се спуштаа до самото море... Во таквите утра, светот изгледаше малку поширок, а можностите малку побројни отколку претходниот ден. Секој нов брег беше потсетник колку мал дел од светот навистина познаваме. На Sjöälö, тишината имаше речиси опиплива тежина, исполнета со историја на изолација и живот што се насобрал низ времето. На Jussarö, некогашен рударски остров, напуштените објекти потсетуваа дека природата секогаш наоѓа начин да си го врати просторот. На Högsåra ја доживеавме финската сауна — едноставност во која топлината, тишината и природата се спојуваат во едно чувство што не бара објаснување. Но колку и да беа впечатливи островите, тие не беа центарот на нашето искуство. Центарот беше бродот.

На Helena бевме дваесет и четворица учесници од Македонија, Финска и Латвија, заедно со петчлен екипаж. Животот на бродот беше прецизно организиран. Денот започнуваше во 7:30 со појадок, по што следеше состанок на палубата. Во 9:00 тргнувавме кон нова дестинација. Бевме поделени во четири групи кои се менуваа на секои два часа. Една група беше на надвор на палубата, друга подготвуваше оброци, трета се грижеше за чистење, а четвртата одмараше. Ротацијата се повторуваше низ целиот ден.

Помошта престануваше да биде услуга и стануваше навика. Одговорноста престануваше да биде лична и стануваше заедничка. Полека, групата се претвораше во екипаж. Капетанот и неговиот тим нè учеа како се чита ветерот, како се подигаат едрата и како се управува брод што се движи со сила што не се гледа, туку се чувствува. Никогаш не сум мислела дека ќе научам да управувам со едреник — уште помалку на Балтичкото Море.



Можеби затоа најсилните спомени не се врзани за места, туку за луѓе: за разговорите на палуба, за ноќните дежурства, за заедничките оброци и за тивкото разбирање што се создаваше без многу зборови. Имаше нешто особено во крајот на секој ден. Откако ќе се закотвевме, разговорите стануваа потивки, а никому не му се брзаше да го напушти погледот кон морето.

Летните вечери во јужна Финска се неверојатно долги. Сонцето заоѓаше дури околу 23 часот, па светлината уште долго остануваше над водата. Островите на хоризонтот добиваа речиси нереални контури, а времето како да течеше побавно.

Токму во тие долги вечери, гледајќи од палубата, почнав да размислувам колку чудно функционираат нашите желби. Со години посакуваме нешто, а кога конечно ќе се случи, често забораваме да застанеме и да го препознаеме. Да си кажеме: „Еве го. Ова е тоа.“

Можеби токму во тие моменти ја сфатив најважната лекција од ова патување. Ако нешто доволно силно го посакуваме... некогаш навистина ќе стигнеме до него. Но наша задача е да не го пропуштиме моментот додека сме таму.

Бидејќи најважниот дел од патувањето никогаш не е дестинацијата. Туку сознанието дека додека сме биле зафатени да стигнеме некаде, веќе сме го живееле она за што сме сонувале.

Таму каде што некогаш посакував да бидам —
Анастасија Ѓорѓиевска



HOW TO WRITE ARTICLES FOR VOICES



TOPIC

- Anything, except politics or hate speech
- Think of topics that would interest **our audience** (youth)
- Maybe a **current event or trend** that you could write about?

RESEARCH

- Use **credible sources** when researching your topic
- Double-check** any information you include in your article to ensure **accuracy**
- Don't plagiarize**
- Link the sources** at the end of your article

STRUCTURE

- Use **short**, attention-grabbing **headline**
- Write an **introduction** at the beginning (what, who, when, why, how)
- Include **body** and **conclusion** in your article, maintain a logical flow
- Write your **full name** at the end

WRITING

- Use **clear and concise language** that your audience will understand
- Avoid** too technical terms and **hard language** unless necessary
- Be engaging** and try to make your article interesting to read

FEW RULES

- The article should be around 500 - 1000 words
- Don't** include images or illustrations in the document
- Send possible **photos separately** (with sources and assured they're **free of copyrights**)
- Edit and revise** (clarity, grammar, and spelling error)

WHAT ELSE?

- You can write in **English, Macedonian and Albanian**
- You don't need to be pro, **VOICES is open for everyone!**
- Writing to the magazine is **voluntary**
- We can provide you with a **certificate** if you become a writer for VOICES magazine





Our monthly magazine has a very simple, yet powerful, mission - to be the voice of youth. And how do we do that?

We encourage young people to take an active part in today's society through journalism and designing by giving them a platform to express themselves. VOICES is produced in Skopje, Macedonia, and published online every month and four times per year as a printed edition.

Join VOICES team!

Contact us in our social media pages or write us an e-mail. What would you be interested in doing?



Writing articles

VOICES accepts articles about anything, except politics or hate speech. Brainstorm your ideas with us and write articles once, twice, or every month!



Translating articles

VOICES is published in three languages: English, Macedonian and Albanian. If you are a native speaker or fluent in these languages, join our translation team!



Featuring your work

If you are an artist, photographer, designer or other, your work can be presented in the magazine. Send us your method of art and a short bio of yourself!



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