



DOCUMENTATION OF OUR  
EUROPEAN YOUTH GATHERING  
IN 2023

LIVING IN SOLIDARITY  
WITH EACH OTHER

DISCUSSING  
LEARNING  
CREATING

## LIVING IN SOLIDARITY WITH EACH OTHER

From 20/05/2023 till 09/06/2023 thirty-three young individuals from across Europe met as part of an Erasmus+ project in Weißenfels-Großkorbetha, Eastern Germany, to explore politics, society, and craftsmanship. The participating groups from Italy, Romania, France, Austria and Germany prepared this gathering for several months prior to meeting, and continue to stay in close contact.

Together, we engaged in dynamic discussions on pressing issues, while honing our skills in constructing with steel, wood, and stone, guided by skilled artisans. Our focus here was on ecologically viable and sustainable practices and structures.

Delving into politics and society, we shared and discussed our diverse perspectives, challenging conventional wisdom. Through presentations and interactive workshops, we explore democracy, human rights, social justice, and the power of youth in shaping public policy.

Our aim is to contribute to a greener future. Together, we foster a strong sense of community, nurturing personal growth and intercultural understanding. Together, we try to build a better Europe.

**Our project „living in solidarity with each other“ was funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union, as one of several projects of the Erasmus+ Key Action 1: Learning mobility of individuals. Without their support, we would not have been able to realise our youth gathering – thanks a lot!**

## DISCUSSING, LEARNING, CREATING



Funded by  
the European Union



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## ABOUT THE PROJECT

The idea was born in Spring 2022: After the break in what was previously considered normal life, due to the Covid 19 pandemic, we felt there was a big gap where previously communication between young people had thrived. Everybody was limited to their immediate environments. Thinking out of the box, exchanging thoughts with people from different backgrounds of different countries became rare.

As travelling to other countries had not been possible for a long time, and getting in touch with new people got more complicated due to necessary social restrictions, we felt the need of initiating a new starting point for inner-european youth networking. In the time leading up to the youth gathering, the participating groups from Italy, Romania, France, Austria and Germany developed an agenda of complementary activities, informed by the desire of the individuals partaking to network and create a shared learning space: Discussing with each other, learning from each other, and creating something sustainable.

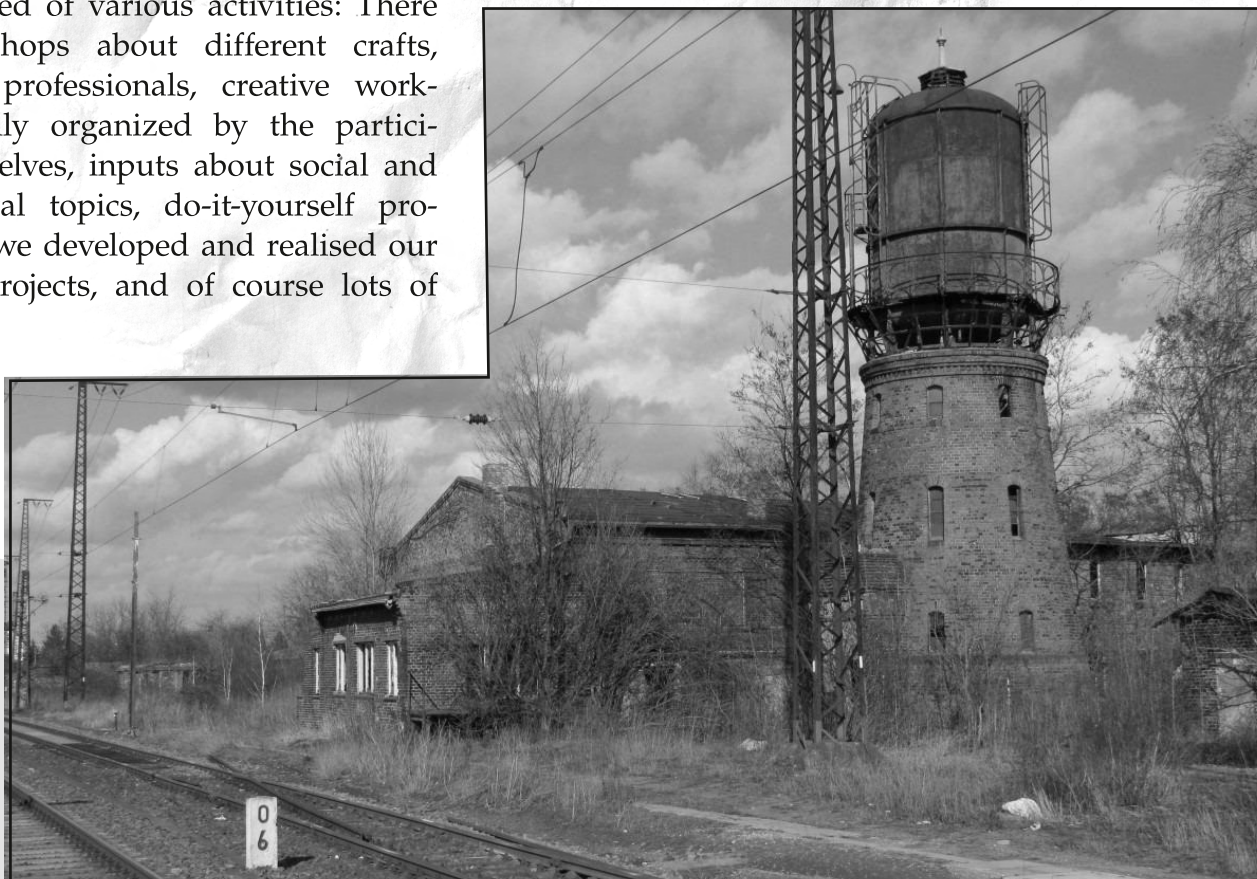
At the end of this preparation process, we organised a 3 week long programme in Weißenfels-Großkorbetha, Germany, that was composed of various activities: There were workshops about different crafts, guided by professionals, creative workshops, mainly organized by the participants themselves, inputs about social and environmental topics, do-it-yourself projects where we developed and realised our own little projects, and of course lots of

space for discussions about European, environmental, social and personal topics.

With our youth exchange "Living in solidarity with each other", we intended to create a place for discussion, exchange, networking, and learning. We built our own little society during the event. Together we discussed, learned, laughed, dealt with conflicts and worked out solutions. During those 21 days, we built a small Europe with all the differences and similarities of the individual countries, cultures, approaches, and our own privileges.

We experienced the effect of being actively involved in what is going on hands on. Through discussion and reflection, we realised that the experiences from our small society can be transferred to the European context. Every voice counts, and political engagement can make a difference - just like taking to the streets against racism, sexism, or wars.

Our youth gathering has just been the starting point, we're up for more! Our organizations remain in closed contact and aim to create a big network through all the countries, changing society bit by bit.





# WHO WE ARE?

## Jugend in der Welt e.V.

„Jugend in der Welt e.V.“ is a German nonprofit organization that has been actively engaged in youth work since 2009. Founded by young individuals for young individuals, the association's mission is to promote intercultural encounters and collaboration, fostering understanding and tolerance among diverse cultures and societies. Additionally, it is dedicated to environmental protection, education and sensitisation, with a particular emphasis on youth environmental education. Through the facilitation of seminars, workshops, international youth exchanges, and cross-border project collaborations, the association and its members strive to contribute to a better future. The programmes are inclusive and open to young people of all ages, genders, backgrounds, and social statuses, creating a welcoming and diverse community.

## Politbeisl

The group around Politbeisl is an informal association primarily composed of young individuals aged 18 to 30, with a focus on FLINTA\* (women, lesbians, inter, non-binary, trans, and agender peoples). Founded in Vienna, Austria in 2019, the association's purpose is to promote political education among young adults. Many of their members have diverse cultural backgrounds, with strong connections to countries like the Czech Republic, Armenia, and Belarus. With a commitment to social change, the group places special emphasis on addressing and challenging racism, migration issues, gender inequality, and sexism.

Their dedicated members, who often experience discrimination firsthand, aim to raise awareness and create platforms for dialogue. They provide support for those affected and work towards advancing awareness of these critical areas in society.

## Soie Rouge

Hand manufactures menstruation pads and distributes at social centers, bars, canteens, schools, universities, and prisons, targeting young people and marginalized groups such as migrants, prisoners, individuals with low incomes, and those experiencing homelessness (as long as they have access to sanitation facilities). To date, approximately 5,000 pads have been distributed in packs of five.

In the past year alone, „Soie Rouge“ has conducted over 100 workshops in school classrooms, bars, social centers, and prisons. Through collaborations with various bars and pubs across different districts of the city, the association reaches a wide range of individuals in the population.

## Per Aspera Ad Astra

Per Aspera Ad Astra is a dynamic group from Italy that tackles pressing contemporary issues, including climate protection, migration, social inequalities, nationalism, racism, and sexism. The name, Latin for „Through the Roughness to the Stars,“ symbolises their vision of a path towards a better world. The main objective of Per Aspera Ad Astra is to initiate inclusive and collaborative projects with disadvantaged young people, both within and outside the EU, with a particular emphasis on those with a migration or refugee back-



## WHO WE ARE?

ground. They strive to create opportunities for dialogue, opportunities for exchange, and engage in reflective processes on sexism in today's society. Through their projects, the group aims to foster integration and networking among young people, promoting the convergence of different cultures. By cultivating solidarity structures, they aspire to combat racism and sexism, providing future generations with a strong foundation for effective communication and understanding.

### Asociatia Orzontala

Founded in 2016 in Cluj Napoca, Romania, Asociatia Orizontala is an NGO dedicated to promoting a fairer and more equal society. They inform and support groups and communities who contribute to this vision with their projects. The organization emphasizes cooperation among young people at local, national, and transnational levels, fostering personal skills development and a spirit of solidarity. Gender equality, the integration of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, and the promotion of voluntary work are key areas of their work. Asociatia Orizontala conducts cultural and sports events, educational activities, and workshops to inform and train young people through informal learning methods. They also provide advice, training, and support in areas such as project management and campaign work. With strong local and national networks, Asociatia Orizontala plays an influential role in their community and beyond.

## THE LOCATION

### Weißenfels and its history

Weißenfels is located in a structurally weak rural area in the former East Germany, in close proximity to the major chemical plants Leuna and Buna, which were the most important locations for the chemical industry in Germany between the end of the 1920's and 1945. Back then, production focused on manufacturing synthetic fuels from lignite coal for World War II. To this day, the plants remains important sites for petrochemicals and oil processing. The chemical plants were bombed at the end of World War II, leading to contamination which continues to affect the area to the present day. After the war, Weißenfels hosted the largest shoe production site in East Germany. After German reunification in 1990, the restructuring and privatization of companies resulted in the collapse of the entire shoe industry. This led to a sharp in-

crease in unemployment, exacerbated by the significant reduction in the workforce required by the chemical industry.

In the last 160 years, the region has been shaped both physically and socio-economically, by lignite coal extraction for heating and petrochemical industry, mostly through open-pit mining. Numerous towns were demolished, transportation routes and waterways interrupted. With the political changes in 1989/90, unprofitable open-pit mines and lignite processing plants were abruptly shut down. Since then, extensive remediation efforts have been carried out, but these former mining areas still suffer from significant pollution and legacy issues from the GDR era. Some former mining areas are currently being transformed into recreational lakes, while others are left to nature to reclaim. On account of



## THE LOCATION

this historical development, the outskirts of Großkorbetha remain a mixture of vast expanses of wheat, corn and rape seed grown in monoculture, picturesque natural landscapes and captivating remnants of factories from the GDR era. The strong contrast between human impact and nature becomes apparent: humanity, capable of destruction and pollution of the natural world, juxtaposed with nature's remarkable ability to reclaim its territory swiftly once human presence subsides. Like many areas in Eastern Germany, the region around Weißenfels struggles with right-wing extremist ideologies. In the last elections, approximately 20 percent of the votes were cast for right-wing or extremist parties. As in many rural areas, there is very few public socio-cultural infrastructure, which leads to a strong separation of people, inequality of

opportunities and encourages non-solidary and racist behaviour in the long term. But those phenomena are not only visible in this region: We experience similar developments all over Europe, all over the world. We took the situation in Weißenfels-Großkorbetha as the base for broad, sometimes philosophical discussions about ecological destruction and racist structures in our societies.

### Altes Bahnwerk e.V.

The "Altes Bahnwerk e.V." is a very young, small association that advocates for art, culture, intercultural understanding, and the preservation of an old industrial site in Saxony-Anhalt, in a rural region in former East Germany. The association owns a former railway site measuring 12,000 square meters, on which there is a large brick train shed from 1900, several outbuildings, and a water tower protected by the preservation of historic buildings and monuments programme in Germany. The buildings have been vacant for a long time and are now being gradually converted into a cultural center. The aim of the association is to restore the buildings as a whole, as they represent a monument of their time. The site is intended to be used for art and cultural events, seminars, workshops, and lectures to revive the region and make it more attractive to new people, especially the younger generation. A woodworking and a metalworking workshop have already been set up, a seminar room with a cozy courtyard and camping area is under construc-

tion. The "Altes Bahnwerk e.V." places emphasis on sustainability in the construction and operation of the cultural center, which is why recycling old materials and using ecological alternatives are of particular importance to the association. We are lucky that we were able to cooperate with the "Altes Bahnwerk e.V." for our youth gathering, as we were able to not only use the facilities of their wonderful site, but also participate in their work and contribute some work to their project. Some buildings of the social center have been restored by the participants of our youth gathering, we engineered a new generation of compost toilets for use in the next couple of years and created new spaces for future group gatherings. We had the opportunity to be temporarily part of a project that has got a vision of society that we share, and were able to help them to become a reality.



# OUT KEY AREAS

## DISCUSSING - LEARNING - CREATING

### DISCUSSING

Whether it's about needs, conflicts, worldviews, or different life realities: communication is what defines us as social beings. We believe that this is precisely what helps our societies come together, become more tolerant, and open-minded.



### Discussing democracy

Our plan was to establish a small democratically organised society. To decide together what we wanted to do, when to start our mornings, and how to organize everything. Even beforehand, we noticed: That's not so easy! While we all live in democratic societies, there are already so many things that are fixed, and we don't really decide that much together anymore in our everyday lives. We are more accustomed to following rules that were set long ago (mostly by old white men, decades ago). School, traffic, jobs, the financial system, the justice system – all of that is non-negotiable, and no one even asks if everyone agrees with it.


So, we decided to try something radically different for our youth encounter. We familiarized ourselves with grassroots democratic approaches prior to the gathering and set a goal to make all decisions collectively. Initially, it was very difficult for us, and our discussions took forever. It was challenging within our local groups, but coordinating online with all the groups together was almost impossible...

We then tried different consensus-building models, and the structures and decision taking processes suggested there were very helpful for us. We especially liked the „Consensus Fish,“ (see annex, page 25) which „Jugend in der Welt“ found and translated for us. Adhering to the clearly defined steps in our discussions was initially quite unfamiliar, but when one or two of us acted as facilitators, it worked out quite well in the end.

We noticed that in everyday life and in everyday decisions, only the loudest voices are usually heard, and many (especially FLINTA\*-identified individuals) don't dare to voice their opinions. We also observed that in all our societies, there was a tendency not to let other people finish speaking, and as a result, quieter individuals had much less opportunity to express themselves.

Through working with the consensus-building models, we were able to recognize these inequalities. We made decisions together and, in the process, significantly changed our way of communicating with each other and paying attention to one another.

Our original plan was to build a small Europe and experience democracy up close. But in the end, what we did was try out a different form of democracy. Of course, this grassroots democracy cannot be directly applied to our larger societies, but on a small scale, it's a great enrichment!





## LEARNING

How much we learned, we could only truly realize afterwards. Our learning was very diverse, we learned from each other and together, and it encompassed much more than just acquiring techniques: it's about the experiences we gathered, which will shape us throughout our lives. We realised that with the right motivation, we can achieve incredible things. And we've learned to create the framework within which this becomes possible ourselves .

## Do It Yourself (DIY)

In the lead up to the youth gathering, we discovered our interest in exploring various activities: We did not only want to learn skills in one or several crafts, but also to be creative and create our own projects. By compiling a shared online mind map for simultaneous use by several persons (<https://miro.com>), we collected dozens of things we wanted to do, and quite a lot of them seemed to be somewhere in the middle between crafting, art, recycling and up-cycling. Searching for a title for to head all of it, we decided on the the term of DIY - Do-It-Yourself.

We instantly loved the idea of DIY: Have an idea what to build, repair, or do – and search for a way to do it in the group or with parts of the group. Our DIY projects turned out to be very different from one another, but they've got one thing in common: We became our own experts. By gathering information and brainstorming about unusual ways of turning our visions into reality, we entered creative processes that benefited from every person taking part in the action. Do It Yourself does not mean: Do it alone, but do it with a group that focuses on the skills and creativity of everybody involved.

In the DIY projects, we tried out what it's like to tackle our own projects. First, it's important to figure out roughly what the goal is. Or could be. And then, the most fun phase begins: the wild brainstorming of possible approaches. It's great to have multiple people involved to gather as many diverse (and crazy) ideas as possible. It's

good to quickly write down all the ideas so that nothing is forgotten. Sometimes it's also good to sleep on it or talk to people who have nothing to do with the project.

Then, the most interesting or promising ideas can be selected and assessed for feasibility. Concrete information can be gathered from experienced individuals, groups, books, or the internet. Based on this information, a choice is made (we made decisions in our small working groups using the Consensus Fish Model).

Next comes the construction planning: organising materials, tools, discussing safety measures, estimating the time needed for each step, and the number of people required. It might be necessary to draw up a plan or decide on a step by step approach. These steps can sometimes take longer, as everyone needs to agree on an approach before the actual work can start.

It's important to discuss things thoroughly before starting with specific tasks. Otherwise, unnecessary work might be done, which could have been apparent with proper planning and thus been avoided. Or you might realize on a Sunday morning when shops are closed, that there aren't enough screws for the construction project, the bike tube repair kit is empty, or there's no flour for the quiche dough.

Then, it's important to discuss together who wants to take on which part of the work. Room should definitely be given for expressing personal feelings so that everyone ends up happy taking on the tasks they volunteer for. Above all, it's crucial that



## OUT KEY AETZIAS

everyone feels comfortable expressing what they want to learn, and that a way is found for everyone to leave the project with more knowledge than they came with. Because DIY projects are all about learning: Do It Yourself! And of course, it's also part of the process to tell people who weren't part of the project what was done, how, and why...

### About bits and bites

Extracts from our evaluation on digital competences:

*„During the preparation time, we regularly met online with the other project partners. Almost everyone had used Zoom before, but few knew how to screen share, use breakout rooms, etc. Now, we are definitely experts :)“*

*„Even though there are 1000 ways to learn languages on the internet, I could never motivate myself to do it... During the preparation phase, I finally pushed myself and took the offer from Erasmus+-online-language learning. I would say I still don't speak perfectly, but I am motivated to continue.“*

*„I am in the website group and had never worked with WordPress before. However, creating a website has always been a skill I wanted to learn. One person from Soie Rouge has a lot of experience and is guiding and supporting me and the others in the process. We met a few times during the youth exchange to learn the basics together. Now, we meet online in our small group to move forward.“*

*„For the layout of the final booklet, we learned how to differentiate between important and less important information. We had to shorten texts in order to make them fit the available space, and requirements, and choose combinations of pictures and texts that complemented each other, rather than telling the same information twice. And we learned how to use the layout program that fortunately, one of us had already used quite a lot and knew their way around it.“*

*„I was involved in the organisation of the project from very early on and had never worked with project planning tools like Slack and Trello before. On the one hand, I found it very enriching to learn new skills, but on the other hand, I still find pads and cloud tools quite practical.“*

*„Until now, I had only communicated through WhatsApp and never really thought about it much, as everyone uses it around here. During the youth gathering, we had some discussions about data privacy on the internet, and I realised that especially Germans no longer use WhatsApp but have switched to other messengers.“*



# OUT KEY AETZIAS

## Language

*"I had really underestimated the English. Actually, I feel quite confident with the language, but it was just a completely different vocabulary than what I normally use. It helped me a lot that we had already brainstormed vocabulary and terms in preparation, so I had at least heard them before. But it helped me a lot to label things in English."*

*"During a creative workshop evening, there was an Italian workshop by the Italian group. First we had to write down a word we already knew for each letter and then they read them out to us, which was very funny. It was exciting to hear that apart from „hello“ and „goodbye“, we mainly knew nonsensical words. We continued with games to practise right and left (one person had a picture on a piece of squared paper in front of them and had to describe it to another person so that they could draw it) and finally we listened to the song „Volare“ and tried to complete the lyrics together :-)"*

*„We didn't have good English classes at school. I only started to really learn to speak English when I travelled. Just the opportunities Erasmus+ offers for this are great! Now I have no problem communicating in English and feel up to communicating in foreign countries and cultures. Thank you for that!„*

## Cooking

There were people who took care of the food, which was very impressive because they could cook so deliciously for so many people. Some of us always helped with the cooking, like chopping and washing the dishes, but those who wanted to could also be part of the actual cooking crew. There were some interesting discussions about the food during the meals, as we decided to eat vegan during our youth gathering, for ethical and environmental reasons. We also cooked traditional dishes from our respective countries during our country-themed evenings. This was an intriguing discussion even before we started, especially for our national groups: What is typical for our country? There isn't just one answer to that! Depending on the region, family, and background, culinary traditions vary greatly. In the end, each of us prepared a dish, allowing us to introduce our personal traditions to the others. So, although there were „only“ five country-themed evenings, we had almost 40 different dishes – because the workshop leaders, cooks, and even the people from the „Altes Bahnwerk“ also cooked their traditional foods!

| En                      | De           | It                | Fr                               |
|-------------------------|--------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| angle grinder           | Flex         | FLESSIBILE        | la meuleuse                      |
| to weld                 | Schweißen    | SALDARE           | souder                           |
| metal plate             | metallplatte | PLACCA DI METALLO | une plaque métallique / du métal |
| flat steel              | Flachstahl   | ACCIAIO (steel)   |                                  |
| L-section               | L-Profil     | PROFILO A ELLE    |                                  |
| slabbing / threaded rod |              |                   |                                  |



# OUTZ KEY AETZIAS

## CREATING

During the three weeks of our gathering, we contributed to the continual work of setting up the social center „Altes Bahnwerk“ in Weißenfels, Germany. We did bricklaying and pointing, learned to work with wood and metal, built furniture, a new compost toilet, and did welding. We were guided by professionals and were able to experiment and learn a lot. In addition, we also carried out our own small DIY projects.

## Stonework

The „Alte Bahnwerk“ is an approximately 100-year-old brick building, constructed in different phases. During that time, good building materials were scarce, resulting in evident variations in the quality of the cement used, and the percentage of sand and cement in the mixture used. On some walls of the old brick buildings, the composition used was too sandy, so that wind and water washed out the cement joints that hold the bricks together. In those areas we renewed the stone joints, which basically means: scratching out loose material and re-filling the gap between the bricks with fresh cement. With this repair, the wall regains its original stability. It is a repair that needs just a small quantity of material, but lots of time and patience. We used the time our hands worked to have intense conversations with the persons next to us – philosophy on the scaffold :-)

To be able to reach the parts of the walls that needed re-doing, we had to use scaffolding. For most of us, it was the first time using such a tool. As we were also present when the scaffold was set up, we learned a lot about stability and the logic of setting up a construction safely.

Exploring the different stages of construction allowed us to delve into various mason-

ry techniques and building methods. There are numerous approaches to constructing buildings using stones, cement, clay, straw, or natural stones. The key factors lie in establishing a stable foundation and ensuring a solid connection between the individual components.

Through this experience, we gained valuable insights into diverse materials and the range of possibilities of getting them to stick together. Additionally, we had the opportunity to examine deteriorating structures up close, enabling us to deduce the causes of their collapse or instability.

We also did some research about the energy efficiency, carbon footprint and longevity of the different materials in order to define or estimate how sustainable they really are. To do so we split into different working groups and informed ourselves about one specific material each. As we didn't have access to english books, we mainly used the internet. In short presentations, we let the other know what we had found and compared our results.

Interestingly, traditional construction methods prove to be the most effective in this regard, which explains the resurgence of straw-clay construction techniques.





# OUT KEY AETZIAS

## Woodwork

In the project's wood workshop, we crafted new tables using recycled materials, such as disposable pallets and old roof beams. Once the tables were assembled, we coated them with paint to protect against the elements, ensuring their durability for years to come. These tables now serve in our dining area and will continue to be of use to many other groups.

Besides of getting to know lots of traditional hand tools we got used to more common tools like electric screwdrivers, jigsaws, or angle grinders. With all the knowledge we gained, we were perfectly able to build little pieces of furniture on our own and also repair the stairs of the old compost toilet when they broke in the last week of our gathering.

## Metalwork

In our metal workshop, we learned the basics of how to work with metal. First of all, we had an extended health and safety briefing, as we're dealing with quite dangerous tools that can easily harm us and people next to us. It is necessary to protect ear and eyes, to wear safety shoes, long clothes, sometimes thick gloves. For every new tool you use you have to get a precise instruction in order to know how to handle it safely. Rotating tools, such as angle grinders, are particularly dangerous and difficult to handle. It took quite a while until everybody felt safe working with the tools they wanted to use, and it's crucial to take this time. Better safe than sorry!

We also learned how to drill holes, measure

Repairing the old stairs, we discovered the importance of durable wooden joints. By observing old furniture, we learned about different techniques of joining wood, and which type of joints prove to be more resilient, stable and long-lasting. This new-found knowledge empowered us to tackle future projects with the understanding of which joint techniques to employ for stronger and more durable wooden structures.

It is amazing how much we learned in such a short time – there should be more such opportunities, also in our daily life back home! When we come back in our home towns, we'll focus on these kind of projects: regular workshops about everything for everyone!

and mark them out precisely, cut correctly and prepare the metal for welding. We got an introduction to different welding techniques, and started trying them out. We made progress bit by bit, seem by seem, always accompanied by our professional workshop leader. It was amazing how much you can learn in a short time, if you've got the opportunity to do so!

Through our experiments, we not only produced a plethora of art but also achieved the ability to forge durable welded joints. These now serve as crucial elements and nice gimmicks in the Alte Bahnwerk, such as the heat protection next to the oven in the concert room :-)





## **Compost toilet**

As the "Altes Bahnwerk e.V." needed a new compost toilet, we decided to take on this building project. A workshop leader was found through contacts of the association, and the required materials were defined and procured in advance. The project involved installing two toilets in an old trailer. The toilets were designed to be slightly different to accommodate anatomical differences of the people who will be using them. It was an interesting process exchanging ideas! In the end, we found two different solutions that could meet everyone's needs. First, we prepared the trailer: We insulated the walls with recycled Styrofoam and some wooden insulation. We extended the trailer to be able to place waste bins under the toilet floor, built a partition wall, installed doors, sanded the seating areas, and built toilet paper holders. During this process, we gained a lot of experience in using common power tools and learned to work both roughly and precisely, knowing when each approach was necessary. Additionally, we learned a lot about various materials, insulation, structural stability, and, of course, how a compost toilet works.

Our workshop leader had already built numerous compost toilets and could tell us a lot about the advantages and disadvantages of different construction methods and their use around the world. In many countries, compost toilets are even installed in regular houses and are nearly indistinguishable from other toilets until you lift the toilet seat!

Lastly, we created a bilingual instruction manual in English and German with pictures, explaining the correct use of the toilet to its future users.

## **Operating mode of a composting toilet**

In principle, the composting toilet is an improvement of the pit latrine – however, without its disadvantages, especially the unpleasant smell of open feces. In a composting toilet, urine and feces are separated from each other by a urine separator (a type of funnel under the front part of the toilet seat). The urine can either be diluted with water and used as fertilizer, or disposed of through the sewage system.

The feces are covered with wood chips, leaves, or soil and can compost with the help of existing bacteria and fungi. Since this process takes 6-24 months, depending on the prevailing temperature, it is recommended to install a system with interchangeable containers. Stable containers of approximately 100-200 liters, such as old garbage bins or rain barrels, have proven to be effective.

The advantages of composting toilets are evident: They do not consume water like conventional flush toilets (which amounts to saving of 50 liters per person per day!) – and the feces no longer need to be extensively filtered out in sewage treatment plants.

Furthermore, composting toilets do not require chemicals and biocides, as found in additives for portable chemical toilets. Instead of adding biocide-containing substances to the feces to prevent decomposition, the waste is collected and composted naturally.

Toilet paper can either be composted (with attention to using thin, easily compostable paper) or separately collected and disposed of (or burned).



# WIE BENUTZT MAN EIN KOMPOSTKLO?

[HOW TO USE A COMPOSTOILET?]

1. Pipi (vorne)

... müssen getrennt von einander sein.

Deshalb bitte immer hinsetzen, wenn Du das Klo benutzt.



& Kacke (hinten)...



[Piss (in the front) & shit (in the back) has to be separated. That's why please sit down, when you use the toilet.]

2.



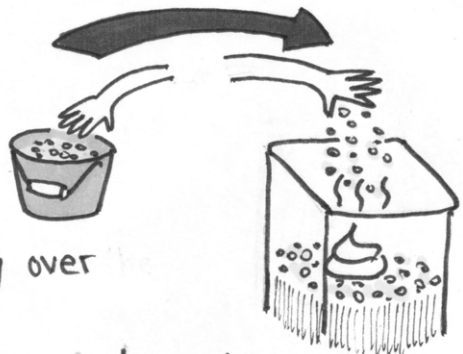
Das benutzte Klopapier kommt in einen extra Eimer & wird später (im Lagerfeuer) verbrannt.

[Put the used paper in a extra bin. It could be burned later.]



3. Nach der Klonutzung, etwas Strev / Sägespäne auf die Kacke streuen.

[After using the toilet put some strewing over the shit.]



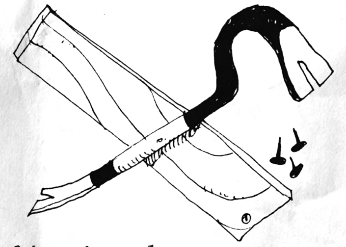
4.



Tampons & Binden bitte in einem extra Abfalleimer entsorgen.

[Please put tampons & sanitary pads in a extra rubbish bin.]





## DIY: Repairing

Repairing stuff is sometimes very easy, for example fixing old chairs. You just have to collect ideas, decide which one you prefer, and go for it. Or fixing wooden constructions. Or fixing metal constructions. It's all about knowing the basic techniques, and having some materials and tools. But when you want to fix bikes, it's a completely different thing! There is always a right and a wrong (or several "rights", and several "wrongs"). The Altes Bahnwerk received some old bicycles as guest bikes, but none of them rode really well, and most of them didn't function at all. Fixing all of them was a really big challenge... We taught each other what we knew, read old little German DIY booklets called "Einfälle statt Abfälle" ("Ideas Instead of Waste"), sometimes with the help of translation apps, and watched tutorials on the internet for a few things – and finally, we could repair everything :-)

Honestly, fixing bikes was perhaps the most useful thing we have learned - changing tires, patching tubes, swapping the rear wheel, adjusting gears: all no longer a problem now!! Yes, we can do it!!

## DIY: Screen printing

One particular DIY project we did was about screen printing. As one person from Soie Rouge had seen this technique once at a festival, we searched for a possibility to learn how to do it. Leading up to the gathering, some of us did some internet research about the procedure itself, and as it became clear that we would need access to various tools to fabricate a screen, we searched for a screen-printing workshop in Leipzig (a city close to Großkorbetha-Weißenfels) to help us do it. Fortunately, we found a very nice professional workshop that liked our project and gave us an introduction! It was amazing being able to transform our drawings into screens, and then print them to our clothes...

We did everything on our own: We spent many hours drawing different drafts and modifying them so that they could be printed. It's quite special which kind of drawing you can print – you can use rough cross-hatching, but you have to clearly distinguish what's a line, contour, or object and what's not. In the workshop, we first of all strung our screen. You have to follow a precise procedure to do so, because the screen has to be very tight.

Then, we coated the screen with a special, UV-sensitive layer. We scanned and printed our drawings in the negative on plastic sheets, put them on the coated screen and exposed the composition to a strong UV lamp. After washing out the screen meticulously, it had the shapes of our drawings on it!

Finally, we could start screen-printing our drawings to our clothes. Again, we had to work very precisely, and use lots of pressure, applied by hand, to get the paint through the screen. It worked out amazingly well!

After printing, you have to clean the screen immediately with water. You can use it as often as you want to, this is why screen-printing can also be done during festivals :-)

the only things you need are some tools, special paint, and water to clean.

If you want to change the drawings of the screen, you can go to a workshop, re-coat it with the UV-sensitive layer and add other drawings.

It is possible to use the screens for a very long time, and you can even choose the size of them freely. The screens we made remain at the German group, and the drawings we made remain on all our clothes and are traveling all over Europe at the moment!





## OUT KEY ACTIVITIES

### DIY: Plants and compost

Some of us were interested in exploring permaculture as something ecologically valuable and sustainable. We wanted to create garden beds or build a herb spiral. On-site, we realized that due to years of industrial use, the soil unfortunately wasn't suitable for gardening anymore, and another group had already built an herb spiral. However, since it was the perfect gardening season, we constructed a few small raised beds and planted tomatoes, cucumbers, and zucchini. We also planted flowers and shrubs around the garden swing to create a beautiful seating area. Since it was right in the middle of our camping area, we could truly enjoy this setup.

Another project we tackled was the composting area. Good soil is essential for gardening in raised beds, and the best soil comes from compost! We explored different construction methods and composting techniques theoretically, then built a relatively large composting system for kitchen waste and yard trimmings. We opted for a design with two chambers to allow the compost to mature properly. In a meeting space like Altes Bahnwerk e.V., where a large number of people gather for short periods of time, having sufficient capacity is crucial. Through our research, we also found a method for a compost specifically for cooked food. We built this one using old tires and chicken wire, adding extra earthworms. Whenever it's full, you just stack another tire on top, creating a tall tower! Once it reaches around 1 meter in height, you start a new tower next to it. We're looking forward to the photos of the compost that will be ready next spring; the crew from the Altes Bahnwerk has promised to send us some.

## IMPORTANT SOCIAL TOPICS AND ASPECTS

### Sexism

The majority of us are FLINTA\*-persons. FLINTA\* is a German abbreviation for persons who define themselves as Women, Lesbian, Inter, Nonbinary, Transgender or Agender persons – so basically everybody who isn't a cis-male person and also defines themselves as such. We adopted this expression because it's short and easy to pronounce.

In the run up to the gathering, we already started discussing a lot about FLINTA\* in crafting environments, and how different the experiences of FLINTA\* are, compared to cis-male people. The discussions turned out to be much more personal than we had expected, as every experience also shapes our behaviour and our mindset. Facing sexism means automatically: questioning ourselves. Questioning our way of thinking and feeling. Learning empathy. And recognising where we've got even more to learn. It is always a very personal process, changing our mindset bit by bit, in order to abolish sexism.



## IMPORTANT SOCIAL TOPICS AND ASPECTS

Here is a collection of our personal thoughts:

### Cis-male perspectives

*„We realised how differently we were socialized. The girls were told, „Make sure everyone is doing well!“ and the boys were told, „Be a man! You have to be strong and capable of everything!“ How ridiculous is that? And why the hell don't we finally change it? It's just crap for everyone!“*

*„I had learned that it was polite to take heavy things away from women. I had never thought about how it must feel for the person involved. During the youth encounter, it was quickly made clear to me that such behavior towards women is not a sign of politeness but one of patronization and belittlement. At first, I was quite taken aback. After a conversation with my buddy person, I sought the group's help on this issue. It quickly became evident that everyone had a need to discuss this topic. We spent several hours in changing small groups talking about sexism and gender roles. In the end, we all benefited from it, but honestly, I must say that us guys finally became wiser, and the girls benefit from us having finally done so. And: There is still a long, long way to go until everyone is truly equal. I will do my best to contribute to that!“*

*„Participating in the youth gathering and engaging in discussions about sexism was a transformative experience for me. I came to the realisation that I am not merely a passive observer but an active participant in addressing this issue. Recognizing that my own socialization is part of the problem, I am committed to being part of the solution. In addition to challenging and speaking out against sexist behaviors, I will also initiate conversations with other male individuals about emotions and the problems of male socialization. By creating safe spaces for open dialogue, we can break the barriers of toxic masculinity, support one another, and foster healthier relationships and mental well-being. Together, we can redefine what it means to be a man and work towards a society where everyone can thrive and express themselves authentically.“*

*„I never experienced any discrimination. Participating in the youth gathering focused on crafting opened my eyes to the pervasive issue of sexism in our European societies. Interacting with other young individuals, both female and male, shed light on the gender disparities and inequalities that exist within various spheres, including skills in a craft. Witnessing the experiences and stories shared by fellow participants made me realize the magnitude of the problem. It has ignited a passion within me to challenge these societal norms and strive for gender equality.“*

*„We discussed consensus in interpersonal relationships. To be honest, I had never thought about it before. Nor had I considered that some people find it easier than others to express their opinions or say no when they don't want something. Until now, I always thought silence meant agreement. I based this on my own approach: If I don't want something, I just say it. But I never thought about how it would feel if I were afraid to say no... We shared our feelings in such situations with each other, and it opened my eyes. We explored the concept of „Only yes means yes“ and practiced how to communicate with each other through role-playing. I am very glad that we delved into this topic.“*



# IMPORTANT SOCIAL TOPICS AND ASPECTS

## FLINTA\* perspectives

*„In a non-discriminatory environment, I was able to delve into activities like drilling, welding, woodworking, and even bike repair. What made this experience truly special was the freedom I felt to ask questions and explore these traditionally male-dominated fields without fear of judgment or bias. This unique opportunity not only empowered me but also shattered gender stereotypes, proving that skill and dedication are what truly matter.“*

*„Empowerment projects that bring together female and male participants in crafting activities are so important for challenging and dismantling male-dominant structures in society. Breaking down gender barriers in traditionally male-dominated fields fosters a sense of shared responsibility, respect, and understanding, laying the foundation for a more equitable future.“*

*“It was amazing to meet other non-binary and trans people in a space that didn't primarily focus on discussing TINA\* issues, but constructing, crafts-person?-ship and utopic societies. It makes me wish we could meet more often outside of the discussions we keep having amongst ourselves, to share our perspectives and experiences of the world, and meet each other and collaborate in contexts such as metal work or masonry. Sometimes it was annoying to keep reminding people there's more to gender and identities other than 'man' and 'woman' or worse, 'girls' and 'boys' when referring to adults in a setting you don't know everyone well, and it's difficult to gauge whether it's a joke I'm ok with, or whether that's just using vocab in a weird, not good way.“*

*„I had always been hesitant to use tools due to fear of judgment, and the youth gathering was a very important experience for me. It was incredible to be in an environment where I could freely explore and experiment with various tools without any fear or prejudice. The support and encouragement I received from my peers opened up a whole new world of possibilities. Trying out different tools and witnessing my own capabilities was empowering and exhilarating. This experience has sparked a newfound passion within me, and I am determined to continue working in this area, breaking gender stereotypes along the way.“*

FIGHT  
SEXISM



# IMPORTANT SOCIAL TOPICS AND ASPECTS

## Racism

Racism is one of the most significant forms of discrimination that shapes coexistence in our societies. For those not affected by racism, it is difficult to imagine how such discrimination affects lives, as its impacts are highly diverse: prejudices leading to discriminatory or even violent behavior from acquaintances or strangers, disadvantages when looking for a job or accommodation, unequal treatment by authorities. Racism impairs both small-scale coexistence and the peaceful cohabitation of all people on our planet. Right-wing parties have been gaining strength for years and are already playing important political roles in our countries of origin.

We want to counteract this trend. To do so, it is necessary to confront our own prejudices and listen to those who are affected. For the latter, we have watched various short films and subsequently discussed them.

Because in order to change the circumstances, we must start with ourselves...

### **Here are some of our thoughts:**

*„Engaging in conversations about European politics and the concept of Europe itself opened my eyes to a sobering realisation: while the European Union brings undeniable benefits to its citizens, it simultaneously creates disadvantages for non-Europeans. For instance, the freedom of movement within the EU, which fosters cultural exchange and job opportunities, reinforces stricter border controls for those outside the Union. Additionally, economic policies that protect European industries can contribute to trade imbalances and hinder development in non-European countries. These discussions highlighted the importance of critically examining the impact of European advantages on a global scale, and it sparked my commitment to advocate for more inclusive and equitable policies.“*

*„There was an evening where we watched short-films on racism. The films had been selected in advance by different participants, covering a wide range of experiences of racism from various individuals. They provided intense insights into the discrimination faced by Sinti and Romani people, People of Color (POC), and individuals with a migration background in different countries. The films addressed both personal discrimination and structural racism, as well as instances of racist treatment by state officials.*

*In the ensuing discussions, it became evident that many of us who had not experienced racism themselves were not fully aware of the extent of discrimination faced by others.*

*Those who had already extensively studied racism, who either had direct or indirect experiences, or had close friendships with people affected. This realisation made us want to create local networks in our hometowns, bringing together those affected by discrimination and those who are not. As the discussions progressed, this idea expanded to include all other forms of discrimination, resulting in the motto: „Know your neighbours! And contribute to ensuring well-being for all!“*

*„Listening to the experiences of those with migration histories and individuals from Romania, I was confronted with the harsh reality they faced due to racism. Stories of discriminatory treatment, racial profiling, and systemic inequalities resonated deeply. It became evident that racism extends far beyond individual acts and permeates various*



# IMPORTANT SOCIAL TOPICS AND ASPECTS

*aspects of life, including education, employment, and access to opportunities.”*  
*„Reflecting on the legacy of colonisation, I recognise its profound impact on our present situation. Ecologically, colonial powers exploited resources, leading to deforestation, land degradation, and loss of biodiversity. Socially, the imposition of power structures and cultural dominance has resulted in systemic inequalities, discrimination, and marginalisation. The consequences persist today, as indigenous communities and post-colonial nations continue to bear the brunt. Recognizing this, we must actively work towards decolonisation by amplifying marginalised voices, promoting land restitution, and addressing the root causes of inequality. Only through acknowledging and rectifying the historical injustices can we strive for a more equitable and sustainable world for all.”*

## **Europe**

We constantly engage with our individual position in Europe: Who are we? What possibilities do we have for shaping and influencing this space? What responsibilities do we have – for ourselves, for our society, for the Earth, and for all the people, living beings, and plants that inhabit it? Through discussions and brainstorming in both small and large groups, we broadened our horizons and develop a new awareness of ourselves as part of a whole. We realize how self-centered we have been at times while growing up, and that in today's situation, it is more important than ever to take responsibility. Our privileged position in Europe, and the individual privileged position of each participant, obligates us not to stand by idly, but to actively initiate processes of change. The question is not, „What possibilities does my European citizenship offer me?“ but rather, „What duties arise from those possibilities?“

## **Past, present and future of Europe in the world**

We examined the role that Europe occupies in the world, both historically and politically. We briefly delved into the history of colonisation, drawing parallels and causal connections to the current situation. Humanity has a long tradition of exclusion, and power plays a decisive role in the distribution of goods, opportunities, and freedoms. While military power used to define dominance in earlier years, today it is more than ever about financial power and political alliances and affiliations. Through these discussions, we arrived at our respective personal stance on „Fortress Europe,“ the categorisation of refugees into „useful“ and „useless“ refugees, and Europe's current migration policy. With our different countries of origin, we each bring different perspectives to the latest developments. Some of us are also involved in supporting refugees, and one person has witnessed firsthand the life-threatening risks people in the Mediterranean endure to get the possibility to file for asylum. Piecing together all these puzzle pieces resulted in a completely different image of Europe. One that shuts itself off from the outside world and whose prosperity still originates from the exploitation of other nations.

On this matter, we all agree – this is not the Europe we aspire to. As citizens of Europe ourselves, we will strive for the values that Europe proudly proclaims – freedom, tolerance, equality, and equal opportunities – to apply to all people, regardless of where they were born. The task of our generation is to ensure global justice and put an end to the tradition of isolation and exploitation. Only in this way does humanity stand a chance of survival.



# IMPORTANT SOCIAL TOPICS AND ASPECTS

## Climate change and ecological policy

### Ecological movements

We watched the movie „Beyond the Red Lines“ relatively early on in the gathering and then had a discussion about it. The movie follows three protest initiatives before and during the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris. „Beyond the Red Lines“ tells the story of a growing movement that says „Enough is enough! Ende Gelände!“ (No more compromises) and engages in civil disobedience, taking the transformation towards a climate-just society into their own hands. Some participants were already familiar with such actions, while for others, it was their first time seeing such images. It quickly became evident that different forms of environmental activism are prevalent in different countries, and in Germany, a special tradition of protest has emerged through the anti-nuclear movement. In other countries, there were much more pronounced protests for social or political reasons.

After the film, we gathered in small groups and discussed the questions raised by the film. It was alarming to see that since the film was made in 2015, essentially nothing has changed. The socio-ecological movements still exist and have achieved little, leading to the radicalisation of individual protest movements (e.g., „Last Generation,“ „Extinction Rebellion“). Yet, humanity continues to march steadily towards its own demise, ignoring the obvious consequences of its destructive actions and caring more about today's exploitative luxuries than the consequences of its behavior. The alarming aspect is that we all know it theoretically, but we don't truly care about it in practice. We are shaped by growing up in societies that are skeptical of changes, especially if these changes involve limiting consumption. Progress is often associated with growth, and prosperity with consumption. We discussed our personal responsibility in this whole situation extensively. Suddenly, it was no longer just about whether we can behave more sustainably through our personal consumption. Keywords: vegan, eco, greenwashing. We won't be able to turn the tide through „more sustainable consumption.“ For our generation, it's more about what levers we can set in motion to bring about bigger changes. For us, the future is genuinely at stake.

Later on in the gathering, we had another input on this topic. The author of the book „Kleine Geschichte der Umweltbewegung“ („Little story about the ecological movement“) was a guest one evening and gave a lecture followed by discussions in small groups. We learned a lot about existing networks of global environmental activists and subsequently developed initial ideas for our own engagement.

### Global Footprint Test

We did the global footprint test to evaluate our own contribution to climate change and the excessive consumption of the world's resources. We were all surprised, how wrong we were in our self-perception... One of us wrote this, and it's representative for nearly all of us:

*„Taking the global footprint test for the first time was a humbling experience. Despite my belief that I led a sustainable lifestyle, the results sensitised me to the stark reality of resource consumption. It hit me how much I unintentionally contribute to depleting resources, considering the limited availability for everyone worldwide. It's made me reevaluate my choices and take a more mindful approach to minimize my ecological impact. I now understand the urgent need for change and strive to make a difference by embracing sustainable practices and advocating for a more equitable distribution of resources.“*



# IMPORTANT SOCIAL TOPICS AND ASPECTS

## Workshop solar and wind energy

*„I am amazed by the successful repair of the solar thermal system that the owners of the place installed some years ago. We got help for this by a solar technician who also explained to us how the system works. Now it provides an abundant supply of hot water for everyone's evening showers, all thanks to the power of the sun. This experience leaves me pondering why such simple and sustainable systems are not more widely adopted. The efficiency and effectiveness of harnessing solar energy for heating water is evident, and it makes me question why we rely so heavily on conventional energy sources.“*

## Civilisation without electricity - is it conceivable?

We embarked on an evening of thought experiment: What if there were no electricity? How would our society look then?

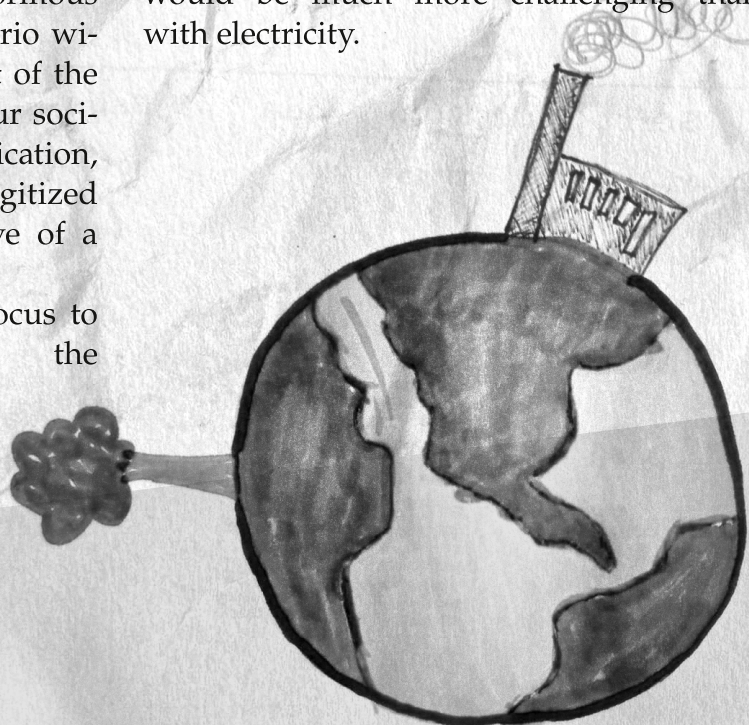
We initially divided into small groups and engaged in lively discussions. It became immediately evident to all of us how incredibly dependent we have become on electricity – nothing works without it, and yet it has only been around for about 150 years, with widespread electrification existing for about 100 years. We all agreed that if electricity were to suddenly disappear overnight, it would lead to significant social tensions, even wars. Therefore, we focused on a thought experiment that deliberately ignores today's reality. We were interested in imagining how a society would function if we had today's knowledge but electricity simply didn't exist. What would be different? Initially, we actually had enormous difficulties envisioning such a scenario without painting a picture reminiscent of the Middle Ages or the 18th century. Our society is so fixated on global communication, and our knowledge is so heavily digitized that it seems impossible to conceive of a modern society without electricity.

It was only when we shifted our focus to the interpersonal level that the

breakthrough came: Our civilization is not only about science and progress (which, honestly, is also part of the problem with climate change) but also about our form of social coexistence.

We started painting a utopia where all human basic needs are met, where everyone treats each other with respect, and where everyone can freely flourish. And we realised that it doesn't require electricity for this to happen, but rather a societal consensus that the group can only thrive if each individual thrives.

However, when it came to practical implementation possibilities, we were at a loss. Whether with or without electricity, the group of 8 billion people seemed too large to achieve such a societal consensus. It is clear, though, that without electricity, it would be much more challenging than with electricity.





## CONFLICTS AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

We employed effective conflict management strategies to address the minor conflicts that arose. In the lead time, all participating groups engaged in different conflict management strategies, so that everybody was already trained in solving conflicts before the youth gathering started.

We also discussed about why conflicts arise, how to avoid them, or how to use them in a constructive way to develop common ideas, to become more empathic and tolerant to different living situations. We had exchanges about prejudices and personal vulnerabilities that might be relevant in conflict, and how those aspects could have an impact on our individual conflict management. We also talked about conflicts we have had in our past, and developed ideas how they could have been solved in a more sustainable way. Bit by bit, we all became much more skilled in conflict management.

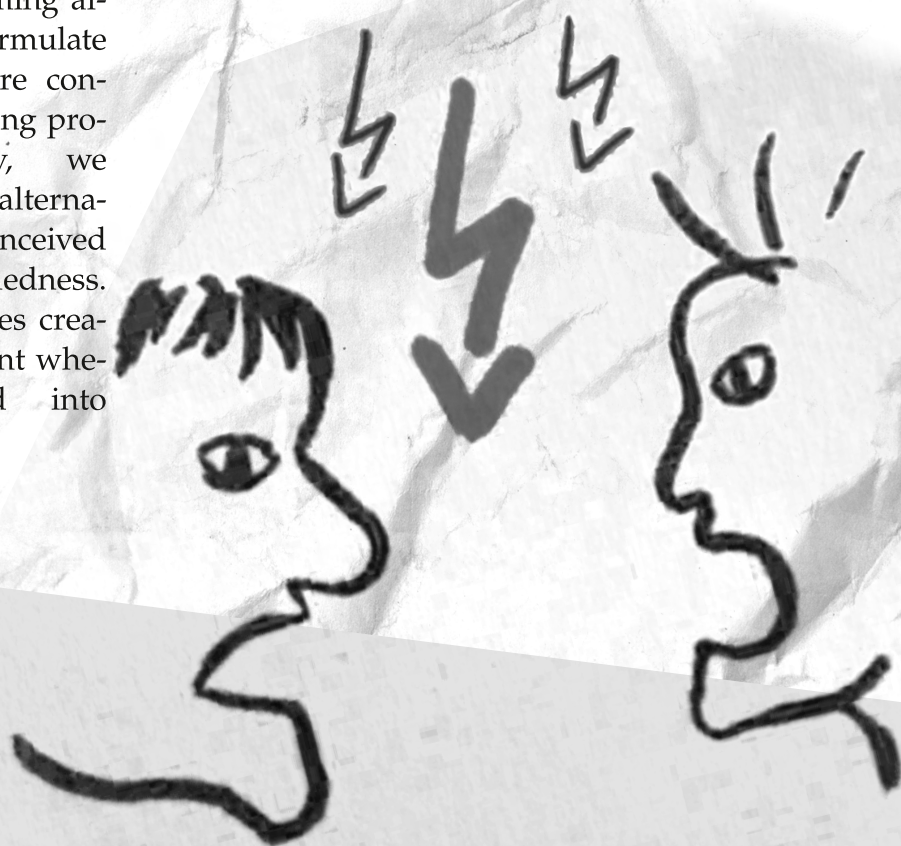
In case of a conflict, we actively sought a third person to facilitate and moderate discussions, ensuring fairness and balance. Through active listening, the conflicting parties/persons attentively heard and respected each person's perspective, fostering understanding and empathy. Reframing allowed us to reconsider and reformulate statements and concerns in a more constructive and positive light, promoting productive dialogue. Additionally, we encouraged each other to consider alternative viewpoints, challenging preconceived notions and promoting open-mindedness. These conflict management strategies created a safer and inclusive environment where conflicts were transformed into

opportunities for growth, understanding, and collective problem-solving.

In case we needed them, the group leaders and facilitators were available for helping in managing the conflicts which arose, but as we were already highly trained, there was rarely need for their intervention, and most of the conflicts got solved in a quite early stage.

We implemented the „random buddy system“\*, which helped us to identify small conflicts early on. One of the predefined tasks of the random buddy was to take care that in case of a conflict situation of their buddy, an appropriate solution could be found between those involved in the disagreement.

(\* by drawing lots, you establish pairs of people who are assigned to take care of the emotional well-being of each other, as if they were friends since a long time. You can change buddies after some time. This method is useful for big groups of people who don't know each other before meeting, to facilitate and speed up the readjustment process of a constellation or a group. See also: reflection methods)





# CONFLICTS AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

## **Communication as origin of conflicts**

At the beginning of the youth gathering, we had quite a problem with communication. Speaking English was more difficult for everyone than speaking their native language, and so it happened quite often that bilateral talks were done in the native language. This led to the situation that other participants felt excluded by this behaviour and also started to communicate in their own languages – a situation that nobody was happy about.

This vicious circle was interrupted on the first reflect-and-relax day, where we had long-lasting discussions how we feel about this topic and how we want to change the situation. We agreed to always switch into English as soon as somebody might hear the conversation. This practical rule made us sometimes even change the language in the middle of sentences, and after some days, it got an easy routine.

Concerning the different abilities of speaking English, we implemented hand signs to slow down the speed of speech. As they were quite funny, and a lot of participants used them, communication got quite easy from the second week on, regardless of how well someone spoke English.

## **Sexism as origin of conflicts**

Looking closely into the small, daily conflicts, we noticed that many of them arose from deeply ingrained sexist gender roles and 'traditional' inequalities. One particular discussion revolved around the act of taking off shirts in a gender-mixed group. It became apparent that societal expectations limited people who identify as female or are labeled thus by society from keeping their upper bodies uncovered without thinking about it. Several cis-male born individuals were not aware of their privilege until this conflict arose.

After engaging in thought-provoking discussions, using various methods of discussion in big and small groups, a group consensus emerged: everyone would only remove their shirts if all present individuals felt comfortable doing so. In reality, this was only the case at some swimming events with little groups at the lake. This experience shed light on how normalized inequality is in our lives. Many of us were surprised by how unquestioningly we had accepted these disparities. It was a wake-up call, urging us to challenge these societal norms and work towards a more inclusive and equal future.

Sexism in crafting was a major topic for the female born participants from the very beginning of this project. As most of the masculine participants did not engage much with the topic of sexist discrimination previously, intense discussions evolved arising from the reports of female participants about their experience in crafting, and society in general. Once this topic was opened, it became visible in nearly every aspect of our social life. We spent hours, comparing our experiences and different perceptions, behaviours and feelings in various situations. At the end, we can't say that we're not influenced by sexism any more, but at least, we understood a bit more how we are influenced by social gender norms, and what we could do to diminish them.



## EXPECTATIONS, SURPRISES, CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

When we started planning the project, we just had a rough idea of what it could be like. We didn't know the other groups very well, and most of the participants had never met before.

Therefore, developing a common idea of what we wanted to do was quite challenging during the first months of planning. Meeting regularly in online video calls was a really good start, but only with the preparation meeting in person (we met with 2 persons of each group in the Altes Bahnwerk) we were able to start developing a shiny utopia of what we really wanted to create.

We were surprised, how broad and sometimes revolutionary the project's dimensions developed: The inclusive and reflected communication structure, decision taking using consensus models, the deep and personal discussions about so many aspects of sexism, racism and other discriminations – our level of dealing with all those subjects was incredibly high. Therefore, it is not surprising that the debate about Europe, European politics and our responsibility as European citizens turned out to be very intense and controversial. We started not only to see the advantages that we have as people with European passports, but also the problems that are caused by our well-being and privileges. We managed to take a step back, and have a look at the bigger picture, both historically as well as in the global, present day context. There are so many inequalities and injustices, related to us, the politics of our states and our lifestyle.

We took this realisation as motivation to contribute to necessary changes. We developed shared ideas how to do our bit, creating a solid network between our groups and starting working in our hometowns, using the energy we discovered during our gathering. We want to establish connections between people living next to each other, we want to dissolve the harming prejudices that are connected to sexism, racism, lookism, ageism, etc. We want to share the feeling that everybody can contribute to changes – we all together are the society, and we are the only ones who can change it and start creating a better one, where everybody feels safe, seen, equal and free.

**Maybe it's an unattainable utopia. But being dreaming up utopia is the only way that leads to a better future.**



## ABOUT THE ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME

The Erasmus+ project is an initiative established by the European Union to promote international cooperation and mobility in the fields of education, training, youth, and sport. It offers opportunities for students, teachers, and young professionals to study, train, and gain experience abroad.

The Erasmus+ programme seeks to promote equal opportunities and access, inclusion, diversity and fairness. At the same time, its aim is to raise environmental consciousness in general, inciting reflection on participants' individual environmental footprints and promoting environmentally sustainable and responsible behaviour.

The Erasmus+ Programme supports all participating organisations in improving the quality of their projects by integrating a participatory dimension, offering young people relevant opportunities to actively engage and participate in the conception and implementation of project activities as a pathway to discovering the benefits of active citizenship in democratic life.

**More information about Erasmus+:** <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/>



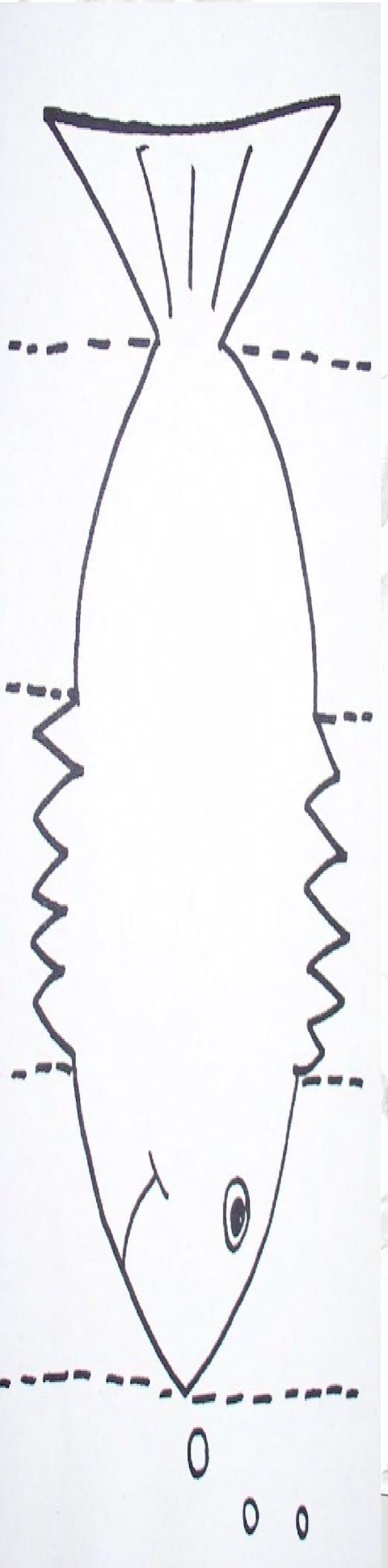
**Funded by  
the European Union**



**European  
Commission**



## Consensus Fish



### 1. Define decision / problem

A- share all relevant information

B- clarify/answer questions

C- formulate what external needs

are involved

D- are there obstacles that have to

be solved first (conflicts in the

group, missing information,...)?

E- formulate which decision should

be made

F- agree on time-frame

G- agree on if consensus is needed

(follow the "Fish"), or consent

is needed (follow the "Dolphin")

### 2. Define everybody's needs

A- collect the needs of everybody

(making a round)

B- clear formulations, listen to each

other, just speak for yourself.

C- It is very important to distinguish

between needs at the one hand,

and interests/strategies/solutions

at the other hand.

D- The main goal of this step is to

find out, which needs are the

base of everybody's interests.

### 3. Searching for ideas

A- brainstorm ideas / solutions

(keep them wide)

B- answer questions about the

ideas

C- discuss pros and cons of each

proposal, modify if needed

D- A veto always has to be explained,

there has to be the willingness to

continue the search for a consensus.

### 4. Formulate proposals

A- modify, eliminate, cluster

ideas, to form proposals

B- make the formed proposals

clear, distinguishable, and

readable to everyone

C- discuss pros and cons of each

proposal, modify if needed

D- A veto always has to be explained,

there has to be the willingness to

continue the search for a consensus.

### 5. Ask for consensus for each

proposal

Possible positions of everybody:

1- Agreement

2- Agreement with concerns (they

have to be explained to the group)

3- Stand-aside (accepting the

decision)

4- Veto (blocking the decision).

A veto always has to be explained,

there has to be the willingness to

continue the search for a consensus.

If consensus can't be reached, go  
back to one of the previous steps.

### Options if there is no consensus reachable:

a. Let the person most affected by the decision to make it

b. Break decision down into parts, some of which can be decided on, and others (points of disagreement) are postponed

c. Postpone all

d. Bring in a facilitator

e. Lottery



## Reflection methods

**Journaling:** Individual journaling allows participants to reflect on their personal experiences and thoughts. Participants can optionally share their journals and engage in group discussions.

**Crosshairs** (from German: Fadenkreuz): A method used for assessing a group, can be used as warm-up, or to get an overview for the opinions and feelings towards a specific topic. Statements are given, such as: "I feel secure within the group" and then people position themselves on an imaginary line, if they agree with the sentence, or not. The method can also be used as a part of decision making.

**Postcard Reflection:** There are many postcards laid out, visible to everyone. Each participant chooses one that resonates with their mood and explains to the other participants why they selected it.

**Personal Learning Diary:** At the end of each day, the participants took a few minutes to reflect on the day's events, inspired by lead questions. They follow the methodology of the Youthpass (<https://www.youthpass.eu/en/>), creating an individual documentation of their learning process with words/drawings/pictures that illustrate their progress. This method assures a documentation of the individual process that can also be used for evaluation purposes.

**Feedback Rounds:** Feedback rounds provided participants with the opportunity to share their experiences and observations. This can be done through verbal or written feedback, aiming to support mutual learning and development. Therefore it's crucial to have some basic rules, such as staying constructive and respectful, and not commenting negatively on what was said. We used feedback rounds in small groups only, as you need a high level of trust and confidentiality.

**Reflection Phases:** Incorporating reflection phases throughout the project allowed participants to regularly contemplate their progress, challenges, and learning processes. This can be done through moderated discussions or individual reflection.

**Relax & reflect day:** One day per week we designed to be exclusively dedicated to the physical and psychological well-being. Especially in such a setting as a youth gathering where lots of communication happens all the time, you need this break to breathe and realise how you feel when it's getting calm around you. We used this day very differently, some of us spent a lot of time with other participants, others used the time to be on their own. Several times, the relax& reflect day was also an initial point of changes in the gathering's setting.

**Small Group Discussions:** The group/the people involved in the discussion were divided into smaller groups to discuss specific questions, issues or tasks. Small group discussions promote closer collaboration and allow participants to engage more deeply with each other. This method can be used for reflection, as well as for discussion.

**Closing Reflection:** At the end of the project, a comprehensive closing reflection was conducted to gather participants' experiences and insights. This allowed for project evaluation and drawing conclusions.



## Discussion methods

**'Plenum':** All group members gather to exchange experiences and insights. It provides an opportunity to develop a shared perspective and address challenges. For bigger groups a moderation is a good idea. We trained ourselves to be able to moderate and rotated frequently, forming moderation teams of 2 persons each. At the end of the gathering, everybody had gained some experience in facilitating.

**Fishbowl:** In the fishbowl method, some group members sit in an inner circle and engage in a conversation or discussion while others listen from an outer circle. After a certain time, roles can be switched. This allows for an intensive exploration of different viewpoints and can also help to crack group structures and typical patterns in speech behaviour.

**World Café:** This method creates an informal setting where participants sit in small groups at different tables and discuss a specific topic. After a while, participants rotate tables, bringing their ideas and insights with them. This encourages a broad exchange of perspectives.

## Methods to support group processes

**Flashlight:** A check-in round at the beginning of the morning meeting where everybody tells shortly how they are, and if there's something special to say.

**Morning Mumbling:** At the beginning of the morning meeting, there is a short huddle where small groups check if there are any significant group issues to be discussed. They then provide feedback on the general mood within their small group and identify the currently relevant topics. This method simplifies the recognition of social conflicts, as they don't need to be identified and addressed by individual persons.

**Random buddy system:** By drawing lots, you establish pairs of people who are assigned to take care of the emotional well-being of each other, as if they were friends since a long time. You can change buddies after some time. This method is useful for big groups of people who didn't know each other before, to facilitate and speed up the readjustment process of a constellation or a group.

**Visualisation Techniques:** The use of visualisation techniques such as mind maps, sketches, or diagrams can help people to organize and share their thoughts and ideas visually. This promotes shared understanding and creativity within the group.

**Circle of Chairs:** A circle of chairs can help to create an open atmosphere for discussions and sharing opinions. Each group member has the opportunity to contribute and express their thoughts.



## Evaluation methods

**Written Evaluation:** At the end of the youth encounter, we distributed cards with four different questions: What did I learn? What was good? What could have been better? What do I take with me for my future life?. After filling them out in silence, the participants presented their answers to others and displayed them for joint consideration and further discussion.

**Distributing Points:** All participants receive three red and three green adhesive dots and are asked to place them on the seminar schedule to indicate what they liked and what they didn't like as much. This made it easy to identify trends and determine which slots were important to the participants. In a subsequent discussion, the reasons for their choices were explored.

**Evaluation meeting:** meeting with a time lag of some weeks, to evaluate the gathering from some distance. Crucial to get an overview and to record constructive criticism that can be used for future projects.

## Links

**Beyond the Red Lines** (movie): <http://beyondtheredlines.org>

**Composting toilets:** [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Composting\\_toilet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Composting_toilet)

**Einfälle statt Abfälle:** <https://www.packpapierverlag.de> Little booklets from the 80s or 90s ("Ideas Instead of Waste") that have many great ideas for improvisation, with drawings and a lot of text (unfortunately, only in German)

**Ende Gelände:** <https://www.ende-gelaende.org/en/> (social ecological movement in Germany)

**Erasmus+:** <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/>

**Global Footprint Test:** <https://www.footprintcalculator.org/>

**Mirobaord:** <https://miro.com> shared online mind map for simultaneous use by several persons

**Slack:** <https://slack.com/> online coordination platform for shared projects

**Trello:** <https://trello.com> online coordination platform for shared projects

## **Contact**

Visit our homepage!

<https://living-in-solidarity-with-eachother.de/>

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