

# VOICES

MAGAZINE FOR ALL YOUNG PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD

april 2025







Can you find  
all the cats hidden  
on the pages?



## Editorial

Dear reader,

**B**irds chirping on the trees, water rippling down the mountain, the wind is brushing through the trees and you feel the warmth of the sun shining on your face. Spring is starting and with it a new Voices edition full of inspiration and ideas.

Spring for me is a time to reconnect with nature and being outside, but also a time full of inspiration, reflection and surprises. Thoughts, fantasies and feelings are especially strong or more clear in nature – because you are connecting with yourself as well as your surroundings, your mind is free and you don't have to live up to too many expectations.

Coming to Macedonia I didn't really have much expectations or things set that I wanted to do. For once, I wanted to surprise myself and not put too much pressure on me. Maybe I was lying to myself a bit, because obviously I wanted to make new experiences, enjoy my time and grow. However, as an often overthinking person I think this was a good mindset to start this time with. My plan was to just go with the flow and see where it takes me. I definitely did not expect the place where I am now, but it most certainly is a beautiful place with its own positive and negative sides and an amazing journey here.

Going with the flow is also a way of trusting yourself and sometimes others, because you believe wherever you end up, you will be fine. Imagine yourself sitting in a boat. Of course, sometimes you have to take the paddle in the hand – either to slightly adjust the direction or take a 90 degrees turn. However, sometimes when something is good, it can also be good to see where the stream is taking you and it just might even take you to a nice and unexpected place. So, get on board and trust the boat or use the paddle – however you want, it's up to you!

Maike Seuffert

## Едиторијал

Почитуван читателу,

**П**тиците цвркотат, водата ја бранува планината, ветерот минува низ дрвјата и го чувствуваш сонцето како ти го грее лицето. Дојде пролетта, а со неа и ново издание на ВОИЕСЕС полно со инспиративни идеи.

За мене, пролетта е период за повторно поврзување со природата, да се излезе надвор, но и време полно со инспирација, размислувања и изненадувања. Чувствата, мислите и фантазиите се особено силни или појасни во природа, затоа што се поврзувате со себе, како и со околината. Вашиот ум е слободен и не мора да бидете под постојан притисок дека треба да ги исполните очекувањата.

Доаѓајќи во Македонија, навистина немав посебни очекувања или список на работи што сакав да ги направам. Барем еднаш сакав да се изненадам и да не се притискам премногу. Можеби малку се лажев, бидејќи очигледно сакав да стекнам нови искуства, да уживам во времето и да пораснам на секаков начин. Како и да е, како личност која често размислува премногу, мислам дека ова, сепак, беше добар начин на поставување на работите. Мојот план беше да оставам да видам каде ќе ме однесе текот на настаните. Дефинитивно не го очекував местото каде што сум сега, но без сомнение е прекрасно, секако со позитивни и негативни страни што ми овозможи едно незаборавно патување.

Да оставиш работите да се случуваат е, исто така, начин да си верувате себеси, а понекогаш и на другите, бидејќи уверени сте дека каде и да завршите - ќе биде добро. Замислете дека седите во чамец. Се разбира, понекогаш треба да ја земете лопатката во рака, малку да ја прилагодите насоката или да завртите за 90 степени. Меѓутоа, понекогаш кога нешто е добро, дозволете да видите каде ве води потокот, бидејќи тоа место може да биде изненадувачки убаво. Затоа, качете се и верувајте му на чамецот или користете ја лопатката - како и да е, зависи од вас!

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Erasmus+

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# WEAVED IN TRADITION



The idea for this article came to my mind while I was doing the design for my previous article titled “A Linguistic Tapestry of the Balkans”. I have always been drawn to traditional clothing from different countries, especially to the often colorful and intricate designs embroidered on them. So, this was the perfect occasion to interview Damjan and Sara. They’re two young and passionate people who also happen to be the owners of Народни Носии/ Narodni Nosii (Folk Costumes), a store, which is located in the heart of Skopje. Thus, Damjan and Sara spoke with us about the ancient and delicate technique of weaving on a loom and their love for preserving traditions and traditional Macedonian clothing.

When you enter the store, you may first notice the presence of several mannequins dressed in full traditional outfits. While preparing the questions for this interview I found out that Damjan is also a collector of such outfits, so naturally, I asked them if they were part of their private collection, and Damjan explained: “Well, no, the work is divided into two parts. One part is my private collection that we have at home, which has nothing to do with this store”.

Some may be surprised by Damjan and Sara’s young age, especially when you discover that they know how to weave. However, everything starts to make sense once you know that Damjan grew up in an environment that really focused on traditions, and thus on their preservation. From seeing pictures of relatives in traditional clothing to inheriting pieces that were made and worn by relatives and that are now part of a private collection.



About this collection, I wondered if there was any piece that was more valuable than the others. "To be honest all the pieces are valuable but the most valuable are the ones that are from our ancestors, that is, from my family" - Damjan explained.

It is quite interesting to know that weaving was more of the starting point of this now passion for traditional clothes. It is even more interesting to know that what is now a business started as a random discovery. Indeed, despite starting to be taught at 15 how to weave by his grandmother, we found out that he was the one who asked her to teach him, after a random discovery. "Honestly, she didn't want to teach me. However, it happened spontaneously, after seeing some YouTube video, about women in Serbia, who weave rugs, and are known worldwide". While at first she may have been a bit reluctant to teach him, she eventually helped him learn all the complex processes of weaving step by step.

Now one might wonder how the idea to turn this passion finally became a business. Well, Damjan and Sara always sort of had the idea that if weaving really became a serious thing they should start a business, "to show to not only young people, but to everyone that weaving is not extinct, that young people are learning and practicing it". This dream became a reality in part thanks to a grant from the Employment Service Agency, which helped them to start a business from scratch. That is from renovating the place to materials such as fabrics or even a second weaving loom.

On the topic of business, I was also really curious about who the public for the store was, as a traditional costume business is a really niche thing. At first, I thought that foreigners could be the main clientele. However, it turns out that Macedonians are actually the main customer base, especially folk ensembles, as they order the costumes in bulk. Moreover, I think everyone will be surprised to learn that Narodni Nosii is actually the only store in Macedonia that sells traditional costumes in which you can see how they are made. Since the pieces are handmade, each one of them is unique. As Damjan showed us, some will have additional colored details or have wider elements.

Apart from ensembles, some locals, or Macedonians that live abroad also buy some things because they want to preserve traditions and wear traditional costumes. While tourists mostly just buy the small souvenirs that the store sells, or small elements like belts, scarves, or vests that can be worn more easily in everyday life.

But "Narodni Nosii" is not just a business. Somehow, it's also a way, especially for young Macedonians like Damjan and Sara, to remember their traditional clothing and most importantly their cultural significance. As Damjan told us, maybe some families don't have gold or money to pass on to new generations, however, they may possess some piece of folk clothing which in a way is a direct connection with their ancestors. And that's the most valuable thing, as it is always essential to remember your roots and heritage. This point is also

connected with the little piece of wisdom Damjan chose to share with us on traditional Macedonian clothing. Which is that everyone should make an effort to preserve their own tradition, whether it is clothing, music, instruments, or even oral tradition. If everyone were to work on this common goal, then it would not only be better for us as individuals, but also as a whole.

This interview, especially the last part, encourages us to reflect on our country's traditions and folklore. Indeed these cultural elements are too often taken for granted, in the way that we don't necessarily realize that we collectively have to make efforts to preserve and transmit them. However, if no one passes on this knowledge it risks being forgotten. So maybe we could all use a bit of time to reflect on the traditions of our countries, and how we could contribute to their passing on.

Finally, I'd like to thank Damjan and Sara once again for agreeing to do this interview! And I'd also like to thank my fellow volunteer Jakub for accompanying me to the interview. For me, it was an interesting challenge to conduct it in Macedonian despite not being fluent in it. And I hope this article will make you want to visit their store.

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Chloe Gaschy

Find them at:  
Narodni Nosii,  
ul. Dimitrie Cupovski 2A, Skopje  
Instagram: @narodninosii33



# The Art of Critical Thinking

Part one =  
Is this true?

I have approximately 5 seconds to catch your attention, so I will go straight to the point—we live in a polarized society. People are angry about what is happening around the world and want to speak up. But we are drowning in an overwhelming amount of information. Everyone has access to information, but what is reliable, what is fake, and what is manipulated? These questions are popping up and are not so easy to answer. Now that I have your attention, I will introduce you to the art of critical thinking.

Let's not be abstract and start from the very beginning—what is critical thinking? The ability to think critically allows you not only to search for and gather the information you need but also to carefully examine it and determine whether it is reliable. It means questioning the source of the information you receive. Let's use an example: You see a TikTok video of a famous influencer passionately explaining a new method for losing weight, or you receive an email newsletter with news about a political party. It could be anything. Before blindly sharing this TikTok with your friends and reacting emotionally, would you stop for a moment to research and check if there is a reliable source or a trustworthy expert on the topic that supports the statement? Do you read the full article or only the catchy headlines? In short, critical thinking is the ability to think rationally and understand what you consume. And you understand by questioning, researching, and double-checking.

Sometimes, it may be tricky to understand what people are trying to tell us. Influenced by their tone, emotions, choice of words, or even emojis, we may get confused and misinterpret their message. One can easily get lost, but it is important to critically question whether what we are reading or hearing is a fact—a proven piece of information—or someone's opinion and assumption.

The next time we hear someone's statement, let's ask: "Is this true?" Facts are rational and can be verified.

Facts don't tell us what is good or bad or what we should do. For example, when we read that Skopje is a capital city, we can ask, "Is this true?" and easily research the answer. However, if I say that Skopje is a city everyone must visit, that is my own opinion. This is the key action required to critically engage with the information we consume every minute.

Let me sum it up for you:

- 1. Always question the validity and reliability of the statements you hear.** The more you question, the more you learn about the world and how to recognize true information.
- 2. Check multiple sources.** Even sources we trust can manipulate us, and it's not always easy to notice when this starts happening. Checking multiple sources helps us step back and assess information objectively.
- 3. Research and translate.** People often use foreign words or professional terms to confuse their readers or listeners. Simplify and translate difficult statements—complex language can sometimes be a tool for manipulation. Also, double-check the sources of images, as they may not be relevant to the statement (for example, they may have been taken at a different time than what is being discussed) or could even be AI-generated.

Will you benefit from this article? Maybe. The way you judge, perceive, and understand the world evolves throughout your life. But if, the next time you hear a politician, influencer, author, or even a friend or family member, you pause to question what they said, that will be your first big step toward critical thinking. The next step will be learning how to respond—how to think critically in discussions, avoid logical fallacies and engage in meaningful debates. Let's explore that in the next edition!

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Lucia Marciová

Sources:  
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dennikn.sk  
Thinking Fast and Slow by Daniel Kahneman  
gre.ac.uk - What is critical thinking?  
thesquaremagazine.com - Critical Thinking



# reflections

All these mirrors around me  
reflecting what's inside.

These parts I wish to hide.

All these mirrors around  
me, reflecting.

Magnify.

All these people around  
reflecting me.

These fears of being left behind.

I go.  
One step at a time.

Knowing that the competition is only imaginary, the thoughts are  
loud. I sit. Observe.

Let  
the sun set over the hills for a moment  
guard my mind.

I will be okay  
at my own pace.

*Lukáš Sabol*





# Poznań

## The City of Goats and Croissants

Taking the last bite of a toast with caramel and banana, you move an empty coffee cup out of the way and get up to leave the café. After stepping outside, you look one last time at the sign above the door – *Czarne Mleko* ('Black milk') – and feel the excitement of exploring a new city kicking in. It's going to be a long day, but don't worry, I'll make sure you make the most of it. Consider it my invitation for a walk through Poznań – the city running through my veins.

Let's go back to the café where you had your breakfast at. It's located on Dąbrowskiego street, my favourite place for thrifting, as it gathers a lot of second-hand stores close to each other. Put your newfound treasure in the bag, grab some fresh fruit at the Jeżycki Market you're passing by, and you're ready to go to the city center.

To get there, you'll have to cross the Theatre Bridge. If you turn right before the bridge, you'll see Poznań International Fair. It's the largest trade fair space in Poland, with over 100 years of history and various events taking place constantly. Usually in June, you'll find me somewhere in the colorful crowd

of cosplayers, uniting for three days at Pyrkon – the biggest fantasy convention in Poland held right there. But since it's only April so far, we'll keep moving.

Instead, we'll walk straight ahead, to the Grand Theatre with the pegasus proudly crowning its roof. Maybe you'll have a chance to see an opera or a ballet there, or just snap a quick picture with the sculpture of a woman on a lion guarding the entrance. The park in front of it is a great place for a picnic in summer... I mean, if you find any free spot among all the other people who had the same idea.

Following the street with the theatre, a right turn takes you to the Imperial

Castle. On the other hand, going straight will lead you to one of Poznań's most famous buildings, *Okrągłak* ('The Round House'). Unfortunately, seeing its stunning staircase isn't as easy anymore, so taking a look at the glass walls and – you guessed it – the round shape of the construction will have to be enough.

If you go left, you'll get to my favourite café *U Przyjaciół* ('At Friends'). The table of Sherlock Holmes will be waiting for you, keeping you company while you try to choose one out of the many flavours of hot chocolate. Or perhaps you prefer the Dorian Gray's one together with the peach tea I usually order?





No matter which one you decide on, don't forget to leave a note in one of the miniature drawers, filled with memories and feelings that strangers poured onto the paper. Mine are somewhere there too. Walking a bit further along 23 Lutego street, you'll find the best cinnamon rolls in the city. Trying them is a must... but only if you're prepared to be disappointed by every other cinnamon roll you'll ever eat.

Next you'll walk through Freedom Square. It's empty now, but it fills up with people for a Christmas market every year, and sometimes also for silent discos or other events. Don't forget to look up to see the *Wolność* ('Freedom') neon!

And finally, you get to the Old Market Square, the most representative place in Poznań. Walk around and take a moment to admire the colorful tenement houses – each one of them is unique. Recently the whole square's surface has been renovated, replacing the big paving stones with the ones you can walk on in heels without twisting your ankles. The only price we paid was waiting two years and – in my opinion – losing some part of the charm of this place, but it's still undoubtedly beautiful.

What's up with the crowd gathering in front of the town hall, though? Well, it's 12 o'clock. You made it just in time for the Poznań Goats, the symbol of the city. According to the legend, when the town hall was rebuilt after a fire, a huge feast was organized to celebrate

the new clock. A young cook, Pietrek, was in charge of roasting a deer leg, but curiosity won – he left the kitchen to take a peek at the clock. By the time he returned, the meat was burnt. In panic, he grabbed two goats from the nearby meadow. Unfortunately for Pietrek – and fortunately for the animals – they escaped, climbed the tower and locked horns in front of the crowd. The show amused everyone, and instead of punishing Pietrek, the mayor ordered the clockmaker to add two mechanical goats to the design – making sure their famous duel would be remembered forever. Now they gather a crowd every day, exactly at noon.

If we're talking about the legends, there's one more you need to know. This one starts with Saint Martin, a Roman soldier. One winter day he saw a freezing beggar. In the act of compassion, he cut his cloak in half and gave one part to the man. Years later, in 1891, a baker named Walenty got inspired after hearing this story in a church in Poznań, and wanted to do something kind – just like Saint Martin. That night, after praying for guidance, he saw a mysterious knight on a horse, who left behind a horseshoe in the snow. Taking it as a sign, Walenty spent the night baking crescent-shaped pastries filled with white poppy seeds and nuts. He gave them to the poor after the church service, and the tradition caught on. To this day, on November 11th, Poznań celebrates with the said pastries – *rogale świętomarcińskie* – keeping the spirit of Saint Martin alive. No worries, you don't have to come on this day to try them – you can find them in some bakeries all year round, or even see how they are made in Poznań Croissant Museum.



Obviously, we don't eat just sweets. Did you really think I'm not going to mention potatoes while writing about Poland? Joke's on you, we have a museum for this as well. In this region of Poland, we don't call them *ziemniaki* – the basic Polish word for 'potatoes' – but *pyry*. It's one of Poznań's symbols, right next to the goats. If you don't believe how serious we are about them, check our police mascot... yes, it's a huge potato man. Oh, and remember the fantasy festival I mentioned before, Pyrkon? The name also comes from *pyry*. In Potato Museum of Poznań you'll learn more about the history of this vegetable, and even prepare your own one to eat.

After all the new information, let's jump back into the city life. Półwiejska Street, always busy with street performers and customers, will lead you straight to Stary Browar – one of the most unique shopping centres in Poland. If you're lucky, somewhere around here you might spot a person dressed up as a pigeon, recording TikToks... well, I guess it's a topic for another time.

To truly feel Poznań, grab a drink in the evening, head to the Warta River, and join the students chilling on the grass. With the sky turning golden at sunset, take it all in. You're part of the city now.

Anna Wojdziak

Sources:  
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Region Wielkopolska – Legenda o rogalach świętomarcińskich





# ***A full glass of optimism***



**INTERVIEW WITH SIMONA SOLEVA**  
psychology graduate



In general, optimism is defined either as the belief that in the end everything will be alright or as the conviction that there is always the possibility of positive change. Which one do you prefer?

I think, in the core of these two beliefs lies the same thing. That if we are looking for the positive ray of light in a dark time, it will eventually lead us out of the tunnel. I like the saying “reversal to the mean”, which means no matter how bad or how good things get, you will eventually reverse back to the mean, back to a content version of yourself.

In psychology, these definitions manifest themselves in two major theories about optimism: the dispositional model of optimism and the explanatory model of optimism. Could you give a brief introduction to both and explain which is the most accurate?

The easiest way to introduce these models is by saying that one is a genetic trait and the other is a learned cognitive style. The dispositional model refers to optimism as a personality trait that stays consistent throughout different situations. These kinds of personalities do not dwell or feel despair because of negative past situations, but they stay with the belief that things will always turn out okay. The explanatory model, on the other hand, is learned optimism, it is a cognitive style of explaining positive and negative events. They see good events as something like a constant, like a long-lasting state, whereas the negative state is a situation-specific temporary event. They also do not believe that the bad situation happened because of their shortcomings, but because of an external factor. I don't think that one model

is more accurate than the other, because they both believe in the same thing and that is that the bad situation has to end eventually. I would just say that the explanatory model is more achievable because it's a skill that can be learned.

**What are the benefits of being optimistic on an individual level as well as on the societal one? How can we use optimism as a tool for better mental health and social progress?**

In the same way that manifestation works, so does optimism. Manifestation works in a way where if you borderline obsessively think or speak about something, you will perceive it more frequently in your everyday life. Let's say you made an agreement with your best friend that if you spot 10 red cars you will quit your awful job and start pursuing your dream. When you see those 10 red cars, it doesn't mean you made them appear just because you wanted to, but because you were hypervigilant of that specific-colored car. The same goes for optimism. If you try to find the positive spark in every situation, even as a joke,





eventually your mind will train itself to look at every outcome a little lighter. For example, if you have a tummy ache, that is obviously a bad situation, but you can choose to look at it as a situation that forced you to take a break and rest in bed. The benefits of being optimistic is that it lowers stress. These individuals see a stressful situation as something temporary and manageable which helps them keep their positive mood. Because they are more resilient to negative situations, these personality types have a better immune system and lower risks of heart diseases because it's not constantly burning out the body by fighting negative thoughts. They are also clearer minded and better at problem-solving situations, because they are not clouded by panic. Additionally, the societal benefits of being more optimistic is that optimism is contagious, and you will always choose to be surrounded by positivity rather than negativity. Also being less stressed and panicked makes you a better partner and a better employee because you are better at thinking on your toes and getting out of difficult situations.

**Is it possible to always look on the bright side of life to say it in the words of the famous Monty Python song? How can we maintain or even obtain a positive**

**outlook on life especially in face of a time shaped by many global challenges and increasing mental health concerns?**

I think Monty Python had the right idea but was perhaps a bit too ambitious. I don't think you can ALWAYS look on the bright side because we're not always in the same emotional state and that is okay. The way to obtain it and maintain it is by practice. Fake it till you make it and be a little delusional. Once the brain gets the hang of it and accepts it as a routine way of thinking, even if you are sad or in a negative situation, and you cry it out and get it out of your system, you will eventually start to think of the positive outcome again. Spreading the positivity is best done through the domino effect, if you are positive the people around you will also be positive.

**It is often heard that optimists are people that lack real information. Would you say this perception is accurate? Is optimism in fact opposed to realism or can both be aligned?**

I don't agree that optimistic people are lacking real information. Just because you chose to direct your focus on something positive does not mean you don't know enough. In the same logic, looking at only the negative aspects of a situation can mean you're lacking information. The important part is being aware of what is happening, having the whole picture in front of you, from there on you are the one choosing on what part you are going to shift your focus to. Being aware and being optimistic can coexist because you can be conscious of the world around you, but you will always turn your focus on a specific part more, so why not the positive part?

**To sum it up, why is it especially important to practice optimism in today's world?**

Life gives us enough challenges and burdens; we don't have to make it harder on ourselves by being miserable every second of it. Maybe Sisyphus would've had fun pushing the boulder up the hill if he made it an ongoing game, by trying different techniques, beating his own personal records, carving things into the boulder etc. :D

As I mentioned previously, being positive has amazing benefits on your mental, physical and emotional health, it also makes you a better friend, partner and worker. People always gravitate towards the shiniest star.

**And finally, do you personally see the metaphorical glass as half empty or half full?**

If it's filled with rakija, it's definitely half full. ;)

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Sophia Abegg





# TRAVELING ALONE

THERE WERE CRISIS MOMENTS

## BUT NEVER LONELY

### Alone or not alone?

As I write this article, I've been living in Skopje, Macedonia, for 8 months. During this time, I started reflecting on how I ended up moving abroad alone without knowing anyone... It made me question whether traveling alone is really being alone?

Since I have never been afraid to travel or do stuff by myself, my parents allowed me to be as independent as possible. From childhood, I spent a lot of time away from home, either spending holidays with my grandparents or going to teenage camps in Poland or abroad.

The first time I traveled completely solo was for my 18th birthday in Rome. I wanted to experience independence and to test myself. I planned basically everything. I also think I am more into planning than being spontaneous but I gave myself a bit of space to adjust the plan over time. My goal was to spend the trip mostly alone, but as it turns out, Polish people are everywhere.

On the eve of my birthday, after a full day of sightseeing, I decided to buy a bottle of sweet wine from a local supermarket. In Italy, that's not as easy as you'd think. While searching, I ran into a couple from Warsaw, and we ended

up celebrating my birthday together. Another time, when I was coming back from Sofia to Skopje, I wanted to rest but after small talk with the driver, he asked me to sit in the front to help him write something. Then we spoke for like an hour. Was it unplanned? Yes. Was it nice? Absolutely!

Experiencing these moments made me realize something: when you travel alone, you actually open yourself up to talk with new people. During my solo trips I could observe more, either in a cafe, or walking. Many times I haven't revealed my Polish identity because I haven't spoken with people. Sometimes it happened that some Polish people were talking, so I could speak with them or observe. When I was in Malta, directly after Rome, I went to a restaurant to buy pizza. I was ordering in English, but I recognized her by saying "super" with a characteristic accent, and then we started to talk. She was going to Poland with the same plane so we could change seats with her husband.

Before, I focused more on the positive sides of traveling alone. But, of course, I can say there might be some moments of boredom, tiredness or loneliness.



### POLISH PEOPLE ARE EVERYWHERE

The trips that we usually see on Instagram are not that perfect. Sometimes, bad moments also happen, at those times, I usually try to call somebody to talk, chill and reset. When I am too tired I stop the activities because traveling for me is not only taking pictures, tick and go... It is something more - experiencing. That's why sometimes I choose to take a nap rather than being exhausted and not enjoying the trip.

From my experience, I can say that traveling solo and traveling with someone are two very different experiences.

Before I started, I saw many influencers posting perfect pictures in Instagram spots, only good moments which seemed to me unrealistic. After all my travels, I can say that not everything is perfect. There were crisis moments, but despite this I would call solo traveling or basically independent travel a form of freedom. Also, I think solo traveling is not being alone. After all, even when traveling alone, you are surrounded by people you don't know, and there is always an opportunity to meet someone new.

Jakub Pokuciński



# TË UDHËTOSH VETËM

KISHTE MOMENTE KRIZE

## Vetëm ose jo vetëm?

Teksa shkruaj këtë artikull, kam 8 muaj që jetoj në Shkup, Maqedoni. Gjatë kësaj kohe, fillova të mendoja se si përfundova duke lëvizur jashtë vendit vetëm pa njohur askënd... Më bëri të pyesja veten nëse të udhëtosh vetëm so të thotë që vërtet je i vetmuar?

Meqenëse nuk kam pasur kurrë frikë të udhëtoj apo të bëj gjëra vetë, prindërit e mi më lejuan të jem sa më i pavarur. Që nga fëmijëria, kam kaluar shumë kohë larg shtëpisë, ose duke kaluar pushime me gjyshërit e mi ose duke shkuar në kampe adoleshentësh në Poloni ose në vende tjera.

Hera e parë që udhëtova tërësisht vetëm ishte për ditëlindjen time të 18-të në Romë. Doja të përjetoja pavarësinë dhe të provoja veten. Në thelb kisha planifikuar gjithçka. Unë gjithashtu mendoj se jam më shumë pas planifikimit sesa të qenit spontan, por i dhashë vetes pak hapësirë për të rregulluar planin me kalimin e kohës. Qëllimi im ishte ta kaloja udhëtimin kryesisht vetëm, por siç rezulton, polakët janë kudo.

Në prag të ditëlindjes sime, pas një dite të plotë vizitash, vendosa të blija një shishe verë të ëmbël nga një supermarket lokal. Në Itali, kjo nuk është aq e lehtë sa mund të mendoni. Ndërsa kërkoja, u përplasa me një çift nga Varshava dhe përfunduam duke festuar ditëlindjen time së bashku. Një herë tjetër, kur po kthehesha nga Sofja në

## POR ASNJËHERË I VETMUAR



### POLAKËT JANË KUDO

Shkup, doja të pushoja, por pas një bisede të vogël me shoferin ai më kërkoi të ulesha përpara për ta ndihmuar të shkruante diçka. Pastaj folëm për rreth një orë. Ishte e paplanifikuar? Po. Ishte bukur? Absolutisht!

Përjetimi i këtyre momenteve më bëri të kuptoj diçka: kur udhëton vetëm, në fakt hapesh për të folur me njerëz të rinj. Gjatë udhëtimeve të mia si i vetëm mund të vëzhgoja shumë më shumë, qoftë në një kafene, qoftë duke ecur. Shumë herë nuk e kam zbuluar identitetin tim polak sepse nuk kam folur

me njerëz. Ndonjëherë ndodhte që disa polakë flisnin, kështu që unë mund të flisja me ta ose të vëzhgoja. Kur isha në Maltë, menjëherë pas Romës, shkova në një restorant për të blerë pica. Po porosisja në anglisht, por e dëgjova një grua duke thënë "super" me një theks karakteristik dhe më pas filluam të bisedonim. Ajo po shkonte në Poloni me të njëjtin aeroplan që të mund të ndryshonim vendet me burrin e saj.

Më parë, fokusohesha më shumë në anët pozitive të udhëtimit vetëm. Por, sigurisht,

mund të them se mund të ketë disa momente mërzie, lodhjeje apo vetmie. Udhëtimet që zakonisht shohim në Instagram nuk janë aq perfekte. Ndonjëherë, ndodhin edhe momente të këqija, në ato momente, zakonisht përpiqem të telefonoj dikë për të folur, për tu qetësuar dhe ardhur në vete. Kur jam shumë i lodhur i ndërpres aktivitetet sepse të udhëtosh për mua nuk është vetëm të bëj fotografi, të shënoj dhe vazhdoj shëtitjen... Është diçka më shumë - përjetim. Kjo është arsyeja pse ndonjëherë zgjedh të marr një sy gjumë në vend që të lodhem dhe të mos e shijoj udhëtimin.

Nga përvoja ime, mund të them se të udhëtosh vetëm dhe të udhëtosh me dikë janë dy përvoja shumë të ndryshme. Para se të filloja, pashë shumë influencues që postonin foto perfekte në spotet në Instagram, vetëm momente të mira që më dukeshin joreale. Pas gjithë udhëtimeve të mia, mund të them se jo gjithçka është perfekte. Kishte momente krize, por pavarësisht kësaj, unë do ta quaja një formë lirie udhëtimit e vetëm ose në thelb udhëtimit e pavarur. Gjithashtu, mendoj se të udhëtosh vetëm nuk është të jesh i vetmuar. Në fund të fundit, edhe kur udhëtoni vetëm, jeni të rrethuar nga njerëz që nuk i njihni dhe ka gjithmonë një mundësi për të takuar dikë të ri.

Jakub Pokuciński  
Përktheu: Dora Arifi



# SKOPJE

## MODERNIST

## NARRATED THROUGH CARTOGRAPHY

“Sadly, the past decade has seen a dubious rise of neo-classical [...] architecture in the heart of Skopje’s Modernist centre. Ultra kitsch gold-trimmed facades have been erected on the face of many of Skopje’s finest Modernist buildings, and fears of destruction are not unfounded. This map seeks to identify the finest examples of Modernist architecture in Skopje before an international audience, and to help ensure the survival of one of the world’s great Modernist urban spaces before it disappears.” (Blue Crow Media 2018)



**1** Пошта на Македонија **Central Post Office** **2** Железничка Станица Скопје **Skopje Railway Station** **3** Телекомуникациски центар Скопје **Telekom centre Skopje** **4** Универзитет „Св. Кирил и Методиј“ во Скопје **Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje** **5** Музеј на современа уметност Скопје **Museum of contemporary art Skopje** **6** Државен студентски дом „Гоце Делчев“ **Goce Delčev Student Dormitory**



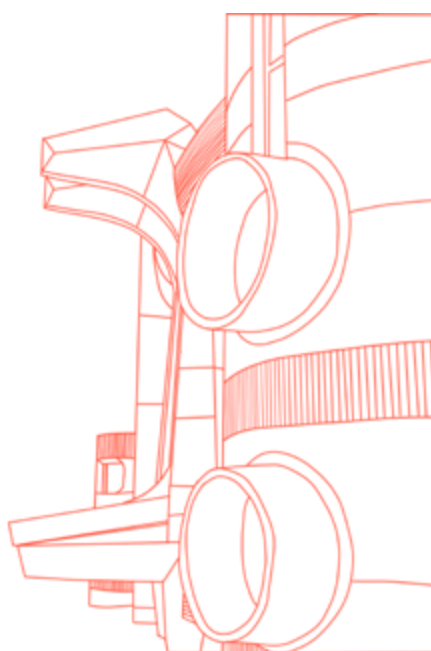
Skopje's architectural landscape is far from modest. It is no surprise that its location in the heart of the Balkans manifested a confluence of various timelines existing adjacent to one another. We can see towering prefabs next to Ottoman hammams and new neo-classical façades and statues lining the Vardar. Some call it 'kitsch' as the city's urban fabric proves to break any existing boundaries of inconsistency. In spite of any emerging criticism, one particular map focuses on celebrating Skopje and attempts to redefine its urban appeal - as a pearl of European modernism and brutalism. Given the Skopje 2014 metamorphosis and the derelict state of modernist structures in the city - can we use design and cartography to endorse a neglected architectural legacy?

Maps are neither neutral nor objective. We are conditioned to believe they are independent entities merely relaying information that already exists 'out there'. They represent a simplification of reality, a way to deduce important data from everything else. Therefore it should be no surprise that they are subject to many distortions and biases, prioritising certain narratives over others. The history of cartography emphasizes this, embedded in the imperial quest of mapping the Earth. Executed under Western definitions of space, Indigenous ontologies were often rendered as alien and trivial. Mapping the land as 'empty' (terra nullius) constructed an absence of claim to territory, as was the case with Australia. This justified British settlement on the island in spite of Aboriginal presence and their strong relationship between society and land.

How is this relevant in the context of Skopje? Because maps continue to form our understanding of space, they emphasize particular contexts much stronger than others - and this comes with very tangible results. Maps are just as much about what they show as what they ignore. They are tools that facilitate the construction of narratives, negotiating our relationship with space and landscapes without first-hand engagement.

The 1963 earthquake saw eighty percent of Skopje destroyed. The city needed radical redesign and reconstruction to meet the needs of its citizens. Efforts to revitalize Skopje were led by the Japanese architect Kenzo Tange, along with a

team of Yugoslavian and international architects, who collaborated to create a master plan backed by the government and the United Nations. The tragedy mobilized international aid to support the construction of a modern Skopje, reframing the city as a symbol of 'Yugoslav and of global solidarity' for centuries to come. It was a striking and raw concept, balancing efficiency with contemporary aestheticism which has defined the city's progressive character. Prioritizing accessibility and community space, Tange's plan was molded to fit the needs of the city rather than to erase what remained in an homage to Skopje's surviving historic and cultural landscape.



It only took six decades for another reinvention of the city's character to occur. Contemporary imitations of neo-classical buildings now dominate the urban core, leaving many modernist structures to be destroyed, replaced or simply decay in the shadows of their Skopje 2014 replacements. In spite of emerging controversies, the concept emerged to recall the ancient past and visibly show that Skopje is not just another city built in a socialist spirit. The new image of Skopje brings an enormous number of tourists. However, the critics would say that in contrast to 1963, the urban redesign was neither urgent nor essential, and the abrupt nature of reconstruction overrides the legacy of solidarity and community upon which modern Skopje was founded.

The Modernist Skopje Map (Модернистичка мапа на Скопје) is

unique in its approach because it shifts the focus towards the fragile state of the remaining post-earthquake legacy in the city. Described by The New York Times as "part design manifesto, part urban architecture guide", maps created by the independent British publisher Blue Crow Media negotiate the relationship between architecture and contemporary cartography. Their vision of urban space is guided by "seek[ing] to celebrate the underappreciated and reveal the overlooked", resisting aesthetic orthodoxy and emphasising the value of the forgotten. In other words, resistance comes through counter-mapping - using the same powerful tools of representation to highlight something otherwise transparent. In this instance, it highlights that there is more to Skopje's urban heritage than meets the eye.

Relying on the vested interest of its audience, the Modernist Skopje Map attempts to emphasize the importance of modernism and why it should be situated at the forefront of Skopje's identity. This narrative, utilizing the power of international appreciation towards brutalism and modernism, hopes that the protection of Skopje's neglected jewels can be reinforced by uniting a diverse assemblage of enthusiasts. Mapping Skopje's modernist legacy could be the catalyst needed for a larger momentum of resistance against the inevitable destruction of its not-so-distant past. It is not just about architecture, but what it symbolizes in the patchwork of Skopje's urban landscape.

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Dawid Kościelniak

#### Sources:

Failed Architecture - How Skopje's Makeover Alienated Locals  
Blue Crow Media - Modernist Skopje Map  
Real Life Mag - Colonial Cartography  
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Quake

*Pictures are drawn by the author based on a real map and monument*



### They don't believe in genres.

"It's just bad music or good music. If it's good, it's good, if it's not good, then we try to make it good".

Band based in Skopje that started making music as a group in January 2023. They first came together for a My Chemical Romance tribute concert in December 2022. After that, they decided to start creating their own music. Since then, the band had a lot of changes in the group, especially on drums.

They released their first studio album "Flowers for Your Grave" on December 5, 2024. They wrote the material within 6 months and the production took them about a year. "We are friends, but we are individualists. Every one of us has a different style of learning and playing music. When we write, everybody brings something to the table, and the final product is something that we are all proud of."

Lost In Reverie has already played concerts in Skopje and Dojran (opening the Dfest last year). Their next planned gig is in Kumanovo. This summer we can also see them at the Hills of Rock festival in Bulgaria. "The Skopje scene is pretty small, but we are all part of the same movement, so we promote each other. We just know some people, and that's how it works. Basically, Alex, who produced our album, also plays drums in Conspiracy (MK)."

For them, being in a band is an experience. "It allows us to meet new people who might like our music. Then we get the chance to go somewhere and play, just be there, experience new places. We don't care if it's in front of five people, every gig is important for us."

As artists they are all really creative and experiment with different styles, which is why some of the band members also have side projects (LVŠT, Luke Levin, Sol Nocivo). "When you have an idea, you develop it, and then you see - 'Oh, this one is for the band' or 'This one is for my solo project'. You need to know how to manage that".

Screams, varied vocals, instrumental tapestry, and a mix of genres, that is what makes them special. "It's special because it's ours. It's special because we are a band of friends. We love and are grateful for each other."

So, if you want to experience some hardcore local noise made with passion, just turn up the volume on Lost In Reverie in your headphones!



LOSTINREVERIE



As you can see, the local scene has a lot to offer. Just take a look around, search on social media, and ask people. Don't limit yourself to just listening to radio hits. The best thing you can do is wander into Skopje's concerts and events. Hope to see you at the next gigs!

Karolina Kubera

**ALL OF THE QUOTES COME FROM MY INTERVIEWS WITH MEMBERS OF THE BANDS LOST IN REVERIE AND ZANADU.**

Soon they plan to publish a new album. The songs BPOTHE, OUM, and HE CAKAM are already available with music videos on YouTube. Martin Chichovski is responsible for the visual part and creative process of the videos. They make their videos without strict scripts, relying on core ideas, improvisation, and fun. "Right now, we're deciding how we want to release our album. It's a bit expensive for young bands to produce an album. So, instead of splitting the money we earn from gigs and festivals, we save it to pay for producers and video production."

Zanadu is also part of a collective of bands called Gola Planina - a "so-called liberal union". "If someone finds a festival, we inform each other. Everybody knows everybody." In 2024, this movement launched an independent record label called Mrtov Konj (Dead Horse), an underground young band producer in Macedonia. The label has already published music from bands in Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia, gaining recognition on the Balkan scene.

Zanadu has performed in Bitola, Strumica, Tetovo, Kumanovo, Prilep, Belgrade, and Sofia. Some of you can also know them from music festivals like Pin or So Alive.

The freshest news? Zanadu is planning a Balkan tour this April, with stops in Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana, and Mostar!



ZANADU\_\_





# SKOPIE



# YOUTH SCENE

## #1



**Lost In Reverie**  
(post-hardcore/emo/melacore/extreme noise)

### Zanadu (indie/funk with rock and psychedelic moments)

This Skopje-based band has been active since 2022. Their songs flow with freedom, funky guitar sounds, and a vibrant energy. Why the name Zanadu? Because of a song by the band Rush. Their musical background is diverse, ranging from metal, rock, and jazz-funk to popular music and '70s/'80s rock.

How did they meet? The guitarist had the idea, and then they randomly met at an English language school. Zanadu creates songs in Macedonian. "Locally we have a lot of people who help young bands. Being a band in Skopje, especially in our style is cool because we are all close together, we play together at festivals like Dfest and around the country". However, their beginnings weren't easy. "Terrible times, we changed singers twice, but they were part of our early journey."







# ИСТКАЕНИ ВО ТРАДИЦИЈАТА

Идејата за оваа статија ми дојде на ум додека го изработував дизајнот за мојата претходна статија насловена „Лингвистичка таписерија на Балканот“. Отсекогаш ме привлекувала традиционалната облека од различни земји, особено разнобојните и сложените дизајни извезени на неа. Па така, ова беше совршена можност да им направам интервју на Дамјан и Сара. Тие се двајца млади и амбициозни луѓе кои истовремено се сопственици на „Народни Носии“ - продавница лоцирана во срцето на Скопје.

Дамјан и Сара зборуваа со нас за античките и деликатни техники на ткаењето на разбој и нивната љубов за зачувувањето на традицијата и традиционалната македонска облека.

Кога ќе влезете во продавницата, прво може да го забележите присуството на неколку кукли облечени во целосно традиционални облеку. Додека ги подготвував прашањата за ова интервју, дознав дека Дамјан е и колекционер на ваква облека,

па природно, ги прашав дали тие се дел од нивната приватна колекција, а Дамјан појасни: „Па, не баш, работата е поделена на два дела. Едниот дел е мојата приватна домашна колекција што нема никаква врска со продавницата“.





Некои може да бидат изненадени од младата возраст на Дамјан и Сара, особено кога ќе откриете дека тие знаат да ткаат. Како и да е, сè почнува да има смисла кога ќе дознаете дека Дамјан е израснат во средина која вистински е фокусирана на традицијата, и нејзиното зачувување. Од гледањето слики на роднини во традиционална облека до наследувањето на парчиња кои биле направени и носени од роднините и сега се дел од неговата приватна колекција. Се прашував дали постои некое парче кое има поголема вредност од останатите. „Да бидам искрен, сите парчиња се вредни, но со најголема вредност се оние од нашите предци, односно, од моето семејство“, појасни Дамјан.

Навистина е интересно да се знае дека ткаењето било некаква појдовна точка за пасијата кон традиционалната облека. Уште поинтересно е да се знае дека сегашниот бизнис почнал како случајно откритие. И покрај тоа што ткаењето почнал да го изучува од баба му на 15-годишна возраст, дознавме дека, всушност, тој самиот го побарал тоа. „Искрено, таа не сакаше да ме научи. Но, сепак се случи спонтано откако гледав некое Јутуб видео, за жени во Србија, кои ткаат килими и се познати ширум светот“. Иако отпрвин одбивала да го научи, сепак му помогнала да ги усоврши сите комплексни процеси на ткаењето.

Сега, веројатно се прашувате од каде идејата оваа страст да се претвори во бизнис. Па, Дамјан и Сара отсекогаш размислувале дека ако ткаењето стане сериозно, треба да започнат бизнис, „да им покажат не само на младите луѓе, туку на сите, дека ткаењето не е изумрено, дека младите луѓе учат и го практикуваат“. Овој сон стана реалност благодарение на грантот кој го добиле од Агенцијата за вработување, која им помогнала да започнат бизнис од нула. Од реновирање на местото, до материјали како ткаенини, па дури и уште еден разбој.

Бев многу љубопитна околу профилот на посетителите, имајќи предвид дека зборуваме за традиционална облека. На почетокот, мислев дека странците би биле главна клиентела. Сепак, се чини дека Македонците се главната база на потрошувачи, особено фолклорни ансамбли, кои нарачуваат на големо. Понатаму, мислам дека сите ќе бидат изненадени кога ќе дознаат дека „Народни Носии“ е, всушност, единствената продавница во Македонија која продава традиционална облека за која може да видите како е изработена. Со оглед на тоа дека парчињата се рачно изработени, секое од нив е уникатно. Како што ни покажа Дамјан, некои имаат додатни обоени детали или пошироки елементи. Настрана од ансамблиите, некои мештани или Македонци што живеат во странство купуваат работи за да ја зачуваат традицијата и да носат традиционална облека. Од друга страна, туристите најчесто купуваат мали сувенири или продукти како ремени, шалови, или елеци



кои може полесно да се носат во секојдневниот живот.

Но, „Народни Носии“ не е само бизнис. Покрај тоа е и начин, особено за младите луѓе како Дамјан и Сара, да ја запомнат нивната традиционална облека и најважно - нејзиното културолошко значење. Како што ни кажа Дамјан, можеби некои семејства немаат злато или пари да им остават на новите генерации, но сепак, можеби поседуваат некое парче фолклорна облека која на некој начин е директна оврзаност со нивните предци. И тоа е највредното нешто, бидејќи секогаш е најважно да се запомнат корените и потеклото.

Ова е поврзано и со мислата на Дамјан во врска со македонската традиционална облека. Тоа е дека сите треба да се потрудат да ја зачуваат нивната традиција, без оглед дали е тоа облека, музика, инструменти, па дури и усна традиција. Ако сите би работеле на оваа заедничка цел, тоа би било добро не само за нас како индивидуалци, туку и како целина. Ова интервју, особено последниот дел, нè охрабрува да рефлектираме околу традицијата на нашата држава и фолклорот. Овие културни елементи многу често се земаат здраво за готово, на начин на кој не сфаќаме дека заедно треба да вложиме труд да ја задржиме и шириме. Како и да е, ако никој не го пренесе знаењето, ризикува тоа да биде заборавено. Можеби сите треба да земеме малку време да рефлектираме на нашите традиции, и како може да придонесеме да се пренесуваат. За крај, би сакала уште еднаш да им се заблагодарам на Дамјан и Сара што се согласија да го направат ова интервју! Исто така, да му се заблагодарам на мојот колега Јакуб, кој ме придружуваше на интервјуто. За мене, беше интересен предизвик да се направи на македонски јазик, иако не го зборувам течно. И се надевам дека оваа статија ќе ве натера да ја посетите нивната продавница.

Клое Гаши

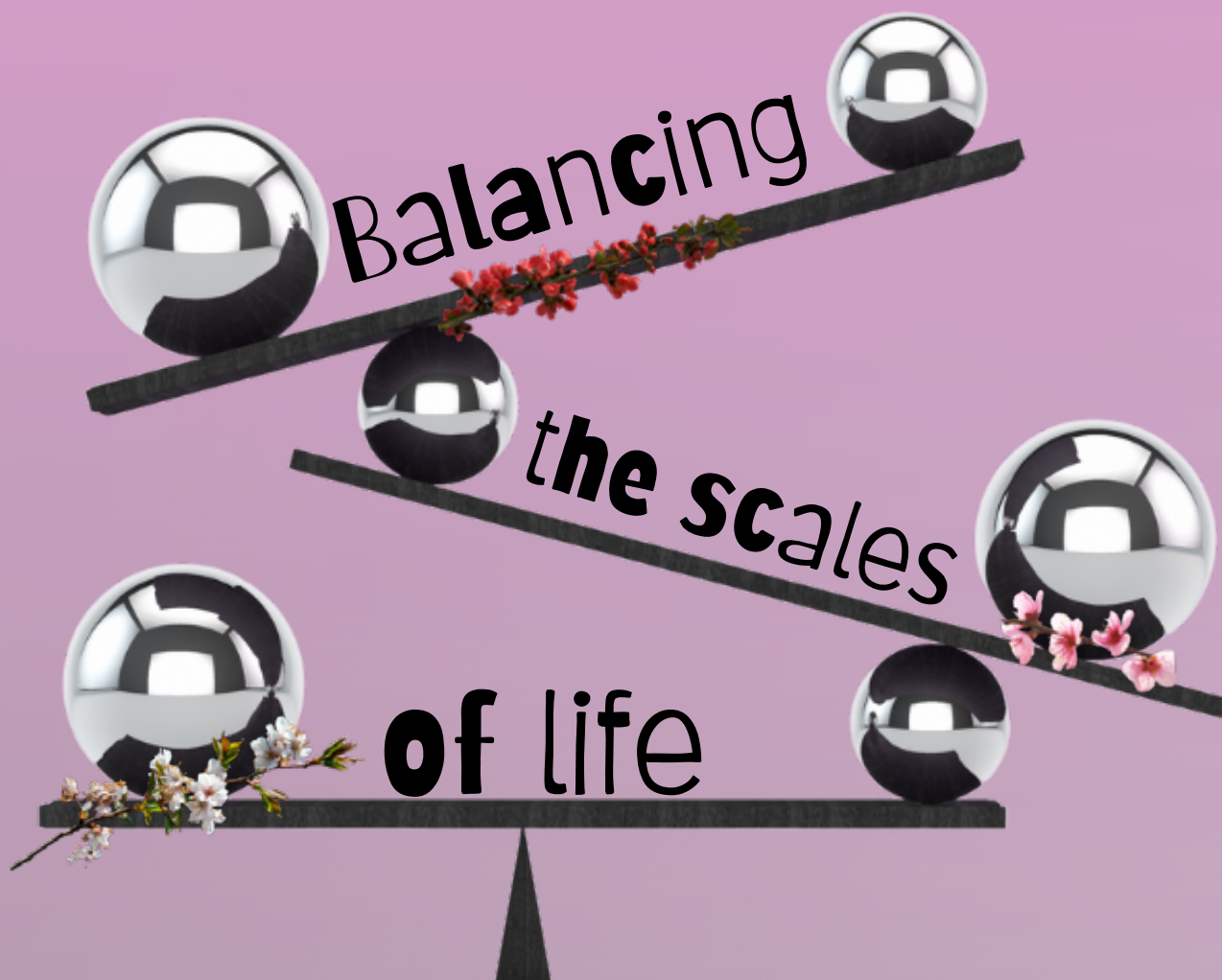
Превод: Мартина Даниловска

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**A**lone time vs. social time, overthinking vs. underthinking, and work vs. life... All these things require a certain balance in your life. In my view, life is a lot about finding balance: if it's regarding spending time, thinking, features, or social interactions. For most people, none of the extremes work or are good for them. Of course, there are exceptions for some things for everyone. Also there are many different scales in which you can find balance... you don't need to do it in all of them, and each and every one of them can look different. During this article, I will use the word balance for all of these very unique and different scales, where you can also locate yourself differently. As a person who is often located somewhere on a spectrum of balance, how do you find your place on it and then feel comfortable acting as you like it in spite of possible expectations?

**Balance is a task for a lifetime.**

On the one hand, you have to free yourself from the expectations of other people. On the other hand, at least for me, sometimes it is hard to figure out what specifically I want or need. Lately, for example, I have been struggling with finding a balance between time spent alone and social time. Still, I haven't quite found a solution, however, I am trying to make compromises and set time aside for myself. To find my balance I mostly try to listen to my body as well as my mind. In case of the decision whether to go out or have a chill evening in my bed I try to ask myself: What do I really want? What does my body feel like and what does my mind feel like?

Sadly, this doesn't always work though because you also need to find a balance between comfort and trying out new things or

challenging yourself. There, we have our precious balance again. If I just ask myself what I want to do at that specific moment... well, it's often gonna be crocheting in my bed rather than going out. But sometimes you need to push yourself to try out new things or get out of your comfort zone and then maybe you will also want to do them more and your balance will differ.

Before you start to question how to balance something, you need to become aware that a balance exists there and may be imbalanced. I think often in our life we don't even recognize a certain balance as such because it's not often unbalanced or we just don't care that





much about it. I think that is really nice and we should appreciate our already working balance. Sometimes balance in specific things or in general comes and goes naturally without us being aware of it – it's a natural flow that you can go with. That also can be a way to find a certain balance. Sometimes we also just don't care about imbalance... if there are many nice opportunities to spend time with people... I will take them even though I maybe don't feel that social. But as long as I like it, there is nothing wrong with it and maybe my middle point of balance is shifting a little bit.

Imbalance often shows itself in specific things that you don't necessarily recognize as a balance. I tend to overthink a lot. I always see it as a bad thing, that I definitely need to stop and I still do. However, I can try to see it as a balance on a spectrum between overthinking and underthinking, meaning not to care at all. I just need to go a bit more in the middle between those two while not demonizing overthinking completely. From this point of view, acknowledging a balance also means stopping to think in an all-or-nothing kind of way, but rather thinking of a spectrum where everything and everyone is located somewhere. In this context, we can add to the definition of balance, that once you've found a preferred place on the spectrum, you're probably never gonna be there completely. Reality is just

gonna oscillate, sometimes with bigger swings, sometimes with smaller ones around your perfect balance and that's fine. There's also gonna be times when you need the oscillation to be smaller (more balance/stability) or times when you like it bigger (less balance/stability) – this in itself is a balance again.

Probably in your head balance is closely linked to the concept of stability. Having found your place in a spectrum you feel comfortable and belonging, this part of your life is balanced and stable for now. But isn't your preferred level of stability itself a balance? Where do you locate yourself when it comes to your desire for stability or adventure and spontaneity?

Regarding balance, it is important to accept that your perfect balance can change. Just like your personality and preferences, your balance will always change and it is not bad if it does. I think a change of a preferred balance is often connected to new experiences or personal development and change. In general, our place on scales of balance shows our personality and is part of it. If the balance changes it just means you prefer something else now and you can (just) adjust your behavior and be comfortable again. There is not one balance but various things you can

balance. And you can balance those differently and be located somewhere else on the scale of balance.

With the expectations on social media to find your balance and be happy with it, the pressure to do so is high. However, don't let it get to you. It is a never-ending process connected to your personality and self-development. Just being aware of yourself and your wishes as well as needed challenges as much as you want is completely enough. And even not being aware and just going with the flow can lead to a new balance and be good if it is right for you. Also, you don't have to be completely happy where you are with your scales of balance... Everybody is just trying to figure it out for themselves. It is a never-ending circle of adjusting that hopefully always gets you to a nicer state for you. It is sometimes annoying, but there is also beauty in it.

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Maike Seuffert





# COOKING AS A LOVE LANGUAGE

Some people feel like it's a chore, while others will love to do it, but it's always something very intimate. You show your culture, your personality, your skills, and also your feelings. Sometimes, it reminds your childhood, the time you spent with your family. Especially at big family meetings.

What am I talking about? FOOD.

COOKING. In my opinion, the best way to learn about the people you've just met is to eat with them or cook with them. You will learn about this person's history or the country's history. For example, why do Macedonians eat burek or kebapi? We can have this answer in the history of the country.

Why doesn't your family eat beef, pork, or seafood? Probably there is a link between your religion or your political beliefs. And depending on how it works in your family, you can express your feelings across food.

For example, in my culture, we don't really show our feelings/emotions, but when you do something nice, your mom, dad, or grandma will probably cook your favorite meal. An argument happened between you and your parents, you were right, they knew you were right, but they will never apologize. They will propose you eat something you like, some sweets, fruits, or whatever. And most of the Caribbean people can relate to this.

I also learned that in Japan most of the time it's the wife who prepares the children's and husband's lunch, traditional bento. So, when they want to say something to their husbands, they will do it with the bento. If you have a beautiful bento, with a lot of different food, and a nice presentation, it means that everything is going well. But after an argument, you will probably have only white rice with umeboshi (pickled plum), basically a tasteless food with acid condiments. It's a good way to express your feelings, it means we should talk, something is wrong.

But also, when everything is nice, we should share more.

Cooking is a kind of non-verbal communication, especially when you are not comfortable expressing your feelings through conversations, it can help you. You want to do it as well as you can. Sometimes you will take the whole day to prepare something nice, choosing the best ingredients. When you love somebody, I think it's the best way to show it.

And that's also how I want to share, I love to cook, I love to eat, and I love to share meals with people who are important to me.

So, if I already cook for you, that means I really appreciate you. And if you want to share a meal with me, I will be glad to do it with you.

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Terry Ruart





# MASKED TAKOVER OF STRUMICA

Did you like going to carnivals as a child? Well, in Strumica you don't have to be a child to do that. At the beginning of March, we had a chance to witness the 35th Jubilee Strumica Carnival in all its glory. As the presenter mentioned at the beginning of his speech, the Strumica carnival is a symbol of history and culture. It is for the young and the old and knows no religion, political party or nationality. In other words, Strumica Carnival is for everyone without exception. So how did it all begin?

Even though this year marked only the 35th anniversary of Strumica carnival, its history begins centuries ago in pagan tradition that was later adopted by Christians. First written mention of carnival dates back to 1670. According to the Christian tradition, the carnival was celebrated on Tuesday after Clean Monday. Afterwards, masked groups of men would go to the houses of their betrothed where the woman would have to recognize her fiancé among the masked men.

In the 70's residents of Strumica attempted to make the carnival an official town event, but after a few successful years, the official event was suspended. Despite the halt of the event, citizens gathered for the carnival spontaneously and celebrated anyway.

Official Strumica carnival was resumed in 1991, marking the beginning of a new tradition lasting to the current days. Now, participants show the struggles between opposites like good and evil or realism and sarcasm. Thanks to the success of the event, the carnival became a member Federation of European Carnival Cities in 1994 and over the years has established cooperation and exchange groups with several countries. Today, it is one of the most popular carnivals and definitely an event you shouldn't miss when visiting Macedonia.

The modern Strumica carnival follows a certain procedure lasting a whole week. The carnival began on Wednesday with the ceremonial opening where the keys to the city were handed over to the carnivalists. Afterward, an exhibition of the renewed 35th annual Strumica carnival and carnival masks took place. The whole carnival was celebrated until next Wednesday. While on Thursday there were masked concerts and the results of the literary competition with a carnival theme were announced, on Friday a masquerade ball to crown the carnival prince and princess was organized. Finally, on Saturday, the main carnival day arrived, which we couldn't miss. Over 30 groups showed off their creativity and craftsmanship on that day in the parade through the main street ending in the main square. There they presented their extraordinary masks and costumes with a small dance to the carnival royalty and the public, who could later vote for their favourite costume online. If you get hungry in the meantime or need a last-minute costume don't worry. All over the main square you could get food, cotton candy or masks and carnival items. After celebrating the whole evening on Saturday, the kid's carnival takes place on Sunday morning. This is followed by Clean Monday where white beans are traditionally cooked and results of the mask competition are announced with a caricature exhibition taking place later in the day. Tuesday is reserved for traditional carnival promenades and awarding carnival prizes. Finally, on Wednesday the key to the city is returned to the mayor and sadly the carnival is ending.

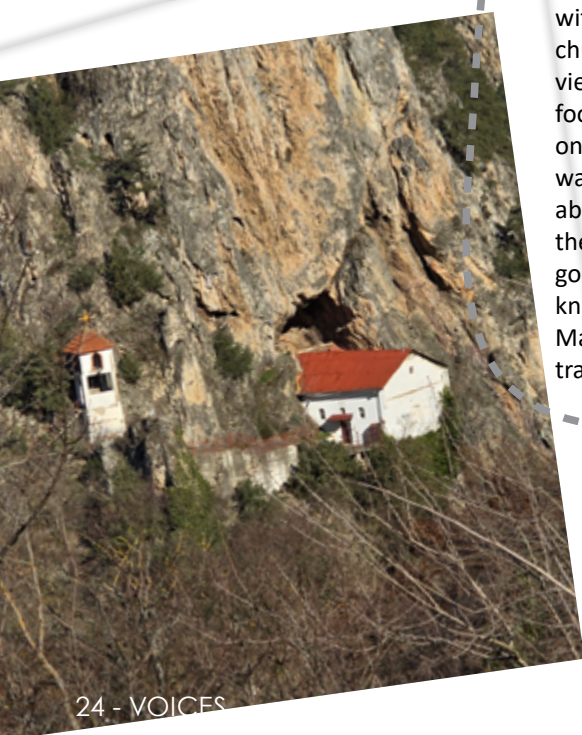


From our personal impression, the creative and skillfully made costumes were impeccable albeit a bit controversial/questionable at times including elements of different cultures. With funny or magical designs the participants were able to amaze the viewers and bring them into a carnival fantasy world. Masks were from simple to most intricate and some of the costumes stood out of the crowd with their unique look. Nevertheless, the amazing costumes had the counter-effect, that the dances couldn't be too interesting because of the limited movement abilities. Due to that, after some time the dances got pretty long and a little bit boring, so we would propose having shorter dance periods. Some of us, being used to the Cologne Carnival, enjoyed the dances from every group a lot and it was amazing to experience the Macedonian carnival. One thing we missed, though, was more specific Strumica Carnival songs. We would love to hear more than the "Strumica carnival" anthem and get even more the flair of a special Strumica carnival. If you ask us, we would recommend going there with all our hearts. To experience the outstanding costumes, spectacular dances as well as the fun, liveliness and dynamic of Strumica.

Maike Seuffert & Dáša Holecová

Sources:  
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# In Macedonia, don't be a tourist.

...be a driver. Or better yet, a passenger princess like my friend who I drove around highways, narrow alleys, uphill serpentines and lawless town streets for five days. Because hidden gems of Macedonia are sometimes random stops along the road between set destinations.

Coming to Macedonia, excluding Skopje, your first and possibly only stop is Ohrid. Shiny lake, charming old centre with traditional architecture, a different church for every day and incredible views, topped by delicious Macedonian food. Ohrid was one of the main stops on my trip around Macedonia. I knew I wanted to visit after hearing only praises about how endearing it is. After arriving there I was stunned, but not just in a good way. Following a road through lesser-known spots, Ohrid didn't even feel like Macedonia to me. It felt like a tourist trap.

Don't get me wrong, Ohrid is truly beautiful. Walking through narrow streets between asymmetrical houses to get on a wooden path on water leading to an old church surrounded by cherry blossoms in full bloom with a breathtaking view of Ohrid lake and mountains with snowy tips in the background was an unforgettable experience. Strolling a promenade in the morning to get to the old bazaar took me back to my childhood and family vacations in Croatia's beach towns. The sunburn my friend ended up with on that day only strengthened the experience. On the other hand, if you wanted to go for a relaxing vacation to a picturesque beachside town, you might share the experience with thousands of tourists even in early spring.

"So, where else can I go then?". Well, I'm glad you asked. While Ohrid or Skopje are a must-see for many, exploring some lesser-known gems might make up for interesting stories you will be telling your grandchildren years later. And thanks to the size of Macedonia, you can explore a lot even in just a day or two.

Wanna walk through historical streets with nice architecture? A stroll through Shirok Sokak in Bitola feels like you are in Prague or Paris. Veles built on the edge of hills lures you in with a maze of narrow alleys, and houses old and new just outside of centre. Krushevo on the mountain top wins you over with red roof tops one after another sticking out like mushrooms. You might even enjoy some brutalist moderna in Prilep right next to Old bazaar.







"But what about the churches?". No worries, dear traveler, with thousands of churches and monasteries around Macedonia, you will be over-churched for the rest of your days. To give you an idea, just outside of Veles is the monastery of St. Demetrius with a church full of old frescos that appear to emit light. The Church of Holy Metamorphosis in Prilep looks almost like a castle and the monastery of St. Archangel Michael welcomes you with a peaceful silence right outside of the town. St. Parasekva in Bitola surprises you with non-traditional modernist design even though you can't get in. If you truly want to be swept off your feet, monasteries near the small villages of Rostushe and Rajcica are out of this world. Intricate architecture, golden chandeliers with ostrich eggs, elaborate wood carvings on iconostas and so much more with barely any visitors and chance to buy bee's products produced by monks. Just make sure you don't accidentally end up attending someone's funeral when entering a church next to a cemetery. If I had a denar for each time it happened I would have two denars, which is not much but still weird that it happened twice.

"Okay, but what about the promenade and the lake?". Shh, I'm not done yet. If you want to take a nice walk on a promenade, Struga gets you covered. The town is basically cut in half by a promenade on Black Drin River or you can walk along the beach of Ohrid Lake as well. For the lake views there are so many options you could make a holiday just out of that. You can see Ohrid from Gorno Konjsko or the mountain passageway through Galicica. Or you can go to a church above Podmochani and enjoy a view of the equally stunning lake Prespa from a place where it will be just you, the view and a giant cross over your head. And if you have time, you might even go for some urbex in Hotel Evropa on the other side of Prespa.

When you get hungry on your trip, just enter any kafana where you see a group of men above the age of 50 drinking beer and smoking. That's where you can eat your fill of kebapi, pastrmalija, shopska salad and even gjomleze.

As for souvenirs, you can get the basic ones everywhere, even in monasteries, but if you find a small store out of site with weird opening hours like in Veles, or seemingly unattended stall with colourful ceramic souvenirs just a bit outside of the main square of Resen, you are in the right place for something authentic.

There is so much more to Macedonia that didn't fit in here. I could go on about random monuments scattered around the country or how there are cats and dogs at the most unexpected places, or the breathtaking views from mountain routes. Macedonia is a beautiful place on Earth and not even 5 days on the road were enough to see all of it, so if you get a chance to be here, try thinking bigger and open yourself up to more niche destinations.

Dáša Holecová





# FOUR MONTHS OF VOLUNTEERING. A lifetime of memories

The first four months of our six-month European Solidarity Corps (ESC) program in Aruba have been a once-in-a-lifetime experience!

Marija and I, from Macedonia, Despina from Greece, and Pascal from Germany were welcomed with open arms by our hosting organization - CEDE Aruba.

The four of us, along with other local and international volunteers, got involved in various initiatives on a weekly basis that contributed to the betterment of the local communities on this small island of less than 150,000 inhabitants. The volunteer opportunities here are endless. We volunteered at an animal shelter, a swimming tournament, nursing homes, a skateboarding school, and planted fruit trees in schools and kindergartens together with other altruistic and passionate individuals. And through these engagements, we were exposed to a cultural exchange with passionate individuals from Europe, the Caribbean, and South America.

In addition to local initiatives and projects, we were also involved in organizing an international Erasmus+ training course on mental health for youth, organized by CEDE Aruba, where youth workers from Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Italy, Slovenia, and Lithuania participated, as well as from the Caribbean islands of Curaçao, Saint Martin and Guadeloupe - which are overseas departments of the Netherlands and France. And as a highlight

of the event, I would single out the international evening where all of the participants represented their country through food and drinks, dances, quizzes and games, during which, Marija and I, together with the other 3 participants from Macedonia promoted the Macedonian ajvar, white cheese, and rakija. We were reminded of the delicious taste of ajvar and cheese on a slice of bread.

This exchange of ideas with locals and internationals created a vibrant, collaborative atmosphere, in which we all grew together.

Outside of our volunteer engagements, we used our free time to explore the island and gain new life experiences.

One of the most memorable, I would say, would be experiencing the 71st edition of the Aruban Carnival, which lasted throughout February and consisted of daily parades for children, students and adults and numerous beauty pageants for the 'Miss Aruba' in several age categories. We, as a group, experienced the four largest parades, where we also participated in the open parade that lasted from midnight until the early morning hours.

In addition to the carnival, as a group, we experienced New Year's Eve on the beach. Also, together with our international friends, we cruised on a catamaran and attended the Annual Aruba Open Beach Tennis tournament. And on ordinary weekends we enjoyed the beautiful sandy beaches and the warm turquoise sea.

Personally, I took the opportunity to learn recreational scuba diving with a professional instructor, where I experienced the underwater world for the first time and saw colorful corals and fish living in an ecosystem made on shipwrecks and sunken airplanes. In addition, we had close contact with an octopus, a moray eel, and a lionfish.

By organizing workshops and events to support environmental initiatives and efforts for social inclusion, I believe that we still have ample space to leave a significant mark on our 6-month volunteer journey. I can honestly say that through all these activities, the four of us learned new skills, embraced a new culture, and developed lasting friendships that transcend thousands of kilometers of ocean. We look forward to the new challenges and opportunities that will come our way during the rest of our time here in Aruba, and we expect just as many opportunities to learn, share and make a real difference in the community!

I highly recommend the volunteer experience through the European Solidarity Corps to all young people aged between 18 and 30 years old, who are seeking an unforgettable adventure through Europe, or as in our case through the Caribbean and South America. This experience has proven to be truly unique and unforgettable.

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Nikola Jovanovski  
(our long-term ESC volunteer in Aruba)



Првите четири месеци од нашиот полугодишен ЕСК-проект (Европски Солидарен Корпус) во Аруба се покажаа како едно неверојатно животно искуство!

Јас и Марија од Македонија, Деспина од Грција и Паскал од Германија, бевме пречекани со насмевки и прегратки од CEDE Aruba - нашата организација/домаќин.

Ние четворица заедно со другите локални и меѓународни волонтери се вклучувавме во разновидни иницијативи кои придонесуваа за подобрување на локалната заедница на овој мал остров со околу 150.000 жители. Тука, волонтерските можности се бесконечни. Волонтиравме во засолниште за животни, пливачки турнир, старечки домови, училиште за скејтбординг и пошумување на овошни дрвја во училишта и градинки заедно со други алтруистични индивидуи. А преку самите ангажмани бевме изложени на културна размена со живописни личности од Европа, Карибите и Јужна Америка.

Покрај локалните иницијативи и проекти, бевме вклучени и во организирањето на меѓународна „Еразмус+“ обука за ментално здравје кај млади, организирана од CEDE Aruba, а на кој учествуваа младински работници од Македонија, Полска, Романија, Србија, Италија, Словенија и Литванија, како и од Карипските острови Курасао, Свети Мартин и Гвадалупе, кои претставуваат прекуморски делови на Холандија и Франција. Би ја издвоил интернационалната вечер каде

сите учесници ја претставуваа својата земја преку храна и пијалоци, танцови, квизови и игри, при што заедно со другите тројца учесници од Македонија ги промовиравме ајварот, белото сирење и ракијата. Се потсетивме на прекрасниот вкус на ајвар и сирење намачкани на леб.

Оваа размена на идеи меѓу мештаните и странците создадоа живописна и пријатна атмосфера, во која сите уживавме и напредувавме.

Надвор од нашите волонтерски ангажмани, слободното време го користиме да го истражуваме островот и да стекнеме нови животно искуства.

Би го издвоил 71-то издание на карневалот што се одвиваше низ текот на целиот февруари и се состеше од дневни паради за деца, студенти и возрасни, како и натпревари за убавина - избори за 'Мис Аруба' во повеќе старосни категории. Ние како група учествувавме во отворена парада што траеше од полноќ до раните утрински часови.

Да, искусивме и топол дочек на Новата година на плажа. Крстаревме на катамаран, бевме на трибините на турнирот за тенис на плажа, а во вообичаените викенди уживавме во прекрасните песочни плажи и топлото тиркизно море.

Јас лично ја искористив можноста за часови за рекреативно нуркање со професионален инструктор, па за првпат го искусив подморскиот свет и видов како разнобојни корали и риби изградиле

екосистем на потонати бродови и авиони. А покрај нив, имавме близок контакт со октопод, морска муренска јагула и рибалав.

Преку организирање на работилници и настани до поддршка на еколошки иницијативи и напори за општествена инклузија, верувам дека допрва ќе го развиеме потенцијалот за да оставиме силен печат во нашето 6-месечно волонтерско патување. Можам да потврдам дека преку сите овие активности научивме нови вештини, ја прифативме новата култура и развивме трајни контакти кои надминуваат илјадници километри океан. И со нетрпение ги очекуваме новите предизвици и можности што ќе се случат во остатокот од нашето време во Аруба. Очекуваме исто толку многу можности за учење, споделување и правење суштинска разлика во заедницата!

Топло го препорачувам волонтерското искуство преку Европскиот Солидарен Корпус за сите млади кои се меѓу 18 и 30 години и се во потрага по незаборавна авантура низ Европа или, како во нашиот случај, низ Карибите и Јужна Америка. Ваквото искуство се докажа како навистина единствено и незаборавно.

Никола Јовановски  
(наш долгорочен ЕСК-волонтер во Аруба)





MEOW

GIVE VOICES  
TO THE CATS!



# BADEM

*Zdravo!* My name is **Бадем (Badem)**, which means almond in my native language. My favorite daytime activity is coming to the office for **cuddles** and expertly **distracting volunteers**.

Whenever people try to work, I make sure they maintain a proper work/cat balance, because that is very important. I will **nap on their lap** for hours, contribute to their tasks by **walking across the keyboard**, or run **between their feet** during energizers. Occasionally, I also use volunteers as a **foot mat**, though for some reason, they don't always appreciate that. I can't understand why humans don't dedicate their entire lives to me. I mean, why wouldn't they? Another one of my talents is **starring in TikToks**, but only on my terms. If it's spontaneous, I will become the movie star, if it's planned, forget it, that's way too stressful. As the volunteers' official mental **support cat**, they adore me so much that they even crowned me **King Badem the First** in some TikToks. So, come forth, offer cuddles, let me distract you... and don't forget to bow before your majesty!



# MACKA

*Meow!* I'm just a **Мачка (Macka)**. I'm a stray cat but at least five times a week I spend time with my people in VCS. I love to have **long conversations** with them, also take **long naps** on their laps and **pierce their souls** with my deep green eyes. I always want to make interactions with volunteers but most of the time I just need to **fight for attention** with **Badem**. What makes me unique? It's my **self-confidence** and wild go-ahead. I bring joy to my friends at almost every TikTok and process of creating articles. I think that it's also my beautiful fur with an orange-black-white color... **Scratching** and **squeezing** is my love language, so please don't be angry because of ripped jeans. I hope that you can get used to it! *Meow...*

# SCHNUCKI

I'm **Schnucki**. Even though I'm a Macedonian cat, my name is a German endearment similar to **sweetie** or **sweetie-pie**. I think it's very accurate since I'm also the main office cat at VCS and of **Kisela Voda** in general. I might not be around as much as the other office cat, but that's only because running the **whole neighborhood** is a full-time job. I've been friends with the volunteers for years now, one group even made an **Instagram account** for me. I've grown to love them and have even **introduced** my kittens to them on a few occasions. I love **cuddling** and **laying in the sun** on my breaks, but my free time is limited. I'm always up to something and on an important mission. I've gotten people from the neighborhood to **manage my food** so I can focus on important stuff in my life. For a cat like me having managers is crucial whether it's a **social media account**, **food** or **babysitting my kittens**. But I'm always on the lookout for what's going on and making sure everything stays put.





# 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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