

VOICES

MAGAZINE FOR ALL YOUNG PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD

may 2025





Dawid:

As my time in Skopje slowly nears the end, I find myself naturally becoming more reflective about my volunteering journey. Stumbling upon the opportunity, struggling to write an application, accidentally missing the interview (thanks to my poor judgement of time zones) and arriving at the airport, all of this seems like it happened a whole lifetime ago. Upon reflection, time can feel like it's disappearing in front of us. Even if we try to remain present in the moment it tends to be fleeting, and within the blink of an eye, we dissociate and find ourselves in a completely different reality.

It is easy to get lost and uncomfortable with the passage of time - but if you allow change to happen it can become something quite enjoyable and freeing. It is an inevitability, just like the turn of the seasons. So let yourself experience things, the fleeting and the constant, and try to appreciate them when the time feels right, even in retrospect.

Karolina:

I feel like it's a really easy-hard job to talk about the future. Every being has this power. It is the thought that I can construct and shape, as well as it's matter, in every possible form and colour. The key is, in order to let the process flow - you need to stop overthinking...

My journey in Macedonia is gonna be finished soon, so its shapes and colors start to show shadows in my mind. What's gonna happen after? What to do with the pressure of studies? How to shape my future? What colour should I choose? For months, I grew next to the Macedonian mountains. Now, the beauty of the plants that I grew with are slowly gonna show their flowers. Hopefully, when she's (Macedonia) gonna see me the next time I will be like a colorful bird with strong wings.

Dawid Kościelniak & Karolina Kubera

Давид:

Како што моето време во Скопје полека се приближува кон крајот, природно почнувам повеќе да размислувам за моето волонтерско патување. Сопнувајќи се на можноста, борејќи се да напишам апликација, случајно пропуштајќи го интервјуто (благодарение на мојата лоша проценка на временските зони) и пристигнувањето на аеродромот... сето ова изгледа како да се случило пред еден живот. Кога ќе размислам, времето може да се чувствува како да исчезнува пред нас. Дури и ако се обидеме да останеме присутни во моментот - тој има тенденција да биде минлив, и со само едно трепкање, се дислоцираме и се наоѓаме во сосема поинаква реалност.

Лесно е да се изгубите и да се чувствувате непријатно со текот на времето - но, доколку дозволите да се случи промена, таа може да стане нешто навистина пријатно и ослободувачки. Тоа е неизбежно, исто како и пресвртот на годишните времиња. Затоа, дозволете си да ги доживеете работите, минливите и константните, и обидете се да ги цените кога времето ќе се чувствува како вистинско, дури и ретроспективно.

Каролина:

Чувствувам дека е навистина лесна-тешка работа да се зборува за иднината. Секое суштество ја има оваа моќ. Тоа е мислата дека можам да конструирам и обликувам, како и нејзината материја, во секоја можна форма и боја. Клучот, за да го оставите процесот да тече, е дека треба да престанете да размислувате премногу...

Моето патување во Македонија завршува, па нејзините форми и бои почнуваат да покажуваат сенки во мојот ум. Што ќе се случи потоа? Што да правам со притисокот од студиите? Како да ја обликувам мојата иднина? Која боја да ја изберам? Со месеци растев покрај македонските планини. Сега, убавината на растенијата со кои растев, полека ќе ги покаже своите цветови. Се надевам дека кога таа (Македонија) ќе ме види повторно, ќе бидам како шарена птица со силни крилја.

Давид Кошчиелњак и Каролина Кубера

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Erasmus+

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FINDING SOLACE

BETW/XT THE PEAKS AND TROUGHS



I have become accustomed to a rather mundane paysage. Green and yellow fields stretch as far as the eye can see, trying to fight against the monochromatic, alabaster clouds on the horizon that dominate the sky for most of the year. This is what characterises the East Midlands - a stretch of flat land with villages, towns and cities dispersed throughout the landscape. It is an area I have called home for the past eighteen years, after my parents decided to emigrate to the United Kingdom.

No emigration journey is spared of emotional and existential baggage. Growing up Polish in the UK meant that my social and cultural identity, to varying levels of extent, has inevitably become plural and entangled. The abstract feeling of nostalgia for a memory of a continuously shifting place lingers in the background whilst you try to negotiate not feeling one hundred percent in either place. There is always something that differentiates you from your home and host setting, even if it's just a subconscious feeling of distance. It's like bouncing back and forth in a state of boundless liminality.

At the start of my adulthood I have eventually found consistency by focusing on the known. Not everything needs to be defined by struggle and difference, which are often fuelled by a lingering and abstract sense of fear and anxiety. If anything, I would say I have managed to assimilate well enough to be both proud of my heritage and my own life built in the UK. Inevitably, this sense of stability is not always constant. But one thing that has managed to secure my sense of consistency and ground my identity is my connection to mountains. Perhaps they are rooted in the comfort of my childhood memories, or some abstract force existing as a figment of my imagination. Nonetheless, mountains help me transcend any identity boundaries and help me develop an identity of my own.

Like the UK, most of Poland is actually relatively flat - which came to my surprise as a child. From the few memories I held onto living in Poland and the frequent visits to my family home over the years, my image of the country was well and truly shaped by the abundance of peaks and hills dominating the landscape. My hometown, situated in the *Podhale* region of Southern Poland, is characterised by a strong ethno-cultural link to this mountainous terrain. As a *Podhalanin* (Polish Highlander) it is something that is ingrained and reflected in my history and experiences. I still enviously reminisce about the beautiful wood carvings decorating my grandad's bedroom and being greeted with *Oscypek* (mountain cheese made from sheep milk) when we visited our family during the holidays. We have our own, thankfully more cheerful, versions of some Christmas carols which we used to sing throughout December. I also remember one time I was forced to play one of them on my violin - ironically, an instrument that is fundamental for folk music coming from this area. Even small differences in dialect - saying I'm going *na pole* (to the fields) instead of *na dwór* (to the court/yard) when going outside reminds me that mountains have the power to shape even the mundane.

Luckily, we managed to take some parts of this culture back to our new home. We would return the favour when coming back to the UK by bringing just as much *Oscypek* to our family friends, sharing a part of our identity with the people closest to us. My mum has also taken good care of documenting my childhood through photographs. Albeit infrequently, looking through the huge stack of photo albums in our living room reminds me of the times when we would hike through the *Gorce* mountains. One time, a family friend was casually walking with his horse from the valley and I always giggle when I see the photo of me sitting on it with a black highlander hat on my tiny head. Although I

was too young to remember, seeing my godmother's wedding in an ornamental wooden restaurant reminds me of how beautifully the culture fostered around our mountains has been preserved. Even my grandma, occasionally calling us to complain about the terribly dangerous *Halny* wind coming from the mountains brings me back to my origins for just that short moment.

My love for hiking has definitely come as a result of listening to my mum reminisce about *rajdy* (hiking expeditions) back when she was in school. She would describe how the whole class, led by her teachers, would hike together for a long weekend in different mountain ranges and bond over the experience. It made me reflect on how much I enjoy being in the presence of mountains and sharing the journey with others. But this feeling permeates beyond the context of my heritage. The act of hiking itself, the preparation of the route, waking up early in the morning to make tea in a thermos flask, cleaning my shoes afterwards - it is something that can luckily be experienced anywhere. Even before arriving in Skopje I was already planning hikes to complete during my time here. Although I have managed to use my hiking boots only twice, thanks to the unpredictable weather in March and April, I reminded myself of how pivotal they have become for my own identity. For me, mountains are so much more than just heritage and nostalgia - they have inevitably become a place of comfort, inspiration and reflection.

I will miss waking up and seeing Vodno in the shadows of the morning fog, or lit up by the beautiful sun, and sometimes soaking in the showery spring days, but it will always symbolise how I have changed and shaped myself during my three months here. It is one of many mountains that I will be able to find solace in throughout my lifetime.

Dawid Kościelniak



MY BOODY IS MY AVATAR

CUSTOMIZE



Three different people. Three completely different days. One thing in common...

Sasha has just moved to a new city. Feeling lost without her friends, challenged by looking for a new job, she needs a boost of confidence more than ever. The solution comes to her while looking into a bathroom mirror. With hair falling to the floor and the hair clippers going over her fresh soon-to-be-buzzcut, she has never felt more like herself.

Theo didn't get into his dream art school. After seeing the admission results, he doesn't want to leave his bed. Still, he pulls on his softest yellow hoodie – the one that feels like a hug – and slowly starts the day. The sadness hasn't disappeared, but it feels a little less sharp.

Marta is going on a date for the first time in a while. She's stressed, but fortunately, she knows the remedy – it's time for her

favourite red lipstick. One last look in the mirror and she's ready. Let's see if this is the day to meet the love of her life...

All of these people will never meet. Their stories may seem unrelated, but in reality, they're connected by the same thing – their days were shaped by the way they dressed or looked. Let it be a starting point to talk about how our appearance can shape the way we feel and how the world responds to us. And, most importantly, how it allows us to express ourselves.

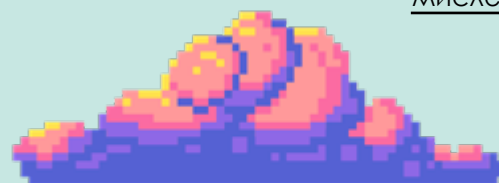
Outfits, haircuts, piercings, tattoos... all these things are a way to communicate people's identities, emotions and values. Think of your body as an avatar. Why leave it on default settings, when you can customize it? Obviously, for some people it'll mean bold body modifications, for others – styling hair in

a specific way. For me, to feel myself, I need to *look* myself. Over the past ten years, wearing only black and white clothes and mismatched shoelaces has become a part of my identity. It doesn't have any specific meaning, it's just something I started doing on a random day in middle school, and kind of... forgot to grow out of it. It grew into me instead.

Though I don't always wear makeup, especially on lazy weekends, I think I wouldn't feel fully like myself if I were forbidden to wear it. – Chloe, 22

Sometimes the way we dress is just a way to feel more like ourselves, but other times it can influence our emotions, or even behaviour. This concept is called *enclothed cognition*. Remember when during





the pandemic people said you should get fully dressed up even while working from home? The reason behind this advice is that it helped bring the structure to the day and increased motivation. Your brain associates work clothes with, well, working, so it goes into the 'working' mode more easily when you're wearing them. An elegant outfit can make you more confident, a lab coat can make you more attentive. It's not some kind of dark magic that always works, but definitely a trick worth trying when you want to make yourself feel a certain way.

I love to match my earrings to my current mood or to the way I want to feel in a particular moment. For some reason, this is the final bit to feeling like myself. – Sophia, 19

What we wear can also be a way to express something deeper. In fact, entire fashion subcultures have formed around this idea. From punks rejecting the system, to hippies embracing peace, to queer communities claiming visibility by wearing carabiners or stacks of rings. Through clothes, hair and accessories, people have found ways to say what words couldn't.



I feel like I had almost every possible phase. Passing through chav, alternative, metal and emo. Now, for a long time, it stopped, and I feel like I'm in a good place. I think that I needed this journey to find myself in the world of colorful birds. My subculture is like family. I'm punk, so expressing myself through style is really important, and it connects me with other people. – Karolina, 19

Nowadays, fashion is more and... less personal than ever. The past few years were all about DIYing, thrifting, upcycling and customizing your clothes. It's great to see people get creative, and more environmentally friendly on top of that. Not that it's something new, now it's just more *trendy*. Well, if we're talking about trends... this is where things start to go wrong. It feels like something new gets popular every month, or even every week. We stripped everything of its personality, and put the word 'aesthetic' or 'core' after. When does the self-expression end, and blindly following the current trend start? If this tattoo style really speaks to me, but everyone is getting it now... am I listening to my heart or the trend? Maybe it feels like it's perfect for me, but it's just my mind influenced by social media tricking me? Well, the line is thinner than your new fine line tattoo, that's for sure.

Social media and trends have definitely had an influence on my style, but also age. Even between 18 and 23 my style completely shifted to something more mature, but maybe even more experimental. With age, I feel less concerned about other people's opinions, and I'm mostly focused on what makes me comfortable and happy. – Dawid, 23

The link between the style and society is inevitable. Unfortunately, often it's a weird mix of stereotypes, judgement and made up rules. *Don't wear it, it's too feminine for a guy. Don't get tattoos, you'll never find a job. Don't wear so much makeup, men like natural beauty more.* Sometimes it comes in a less harsh form, like dress codes or uniforms. One way or another, the world we live in affects our fashion

choices almost every day – and I don't mean it just temperature-wise.

I would say my style changed due to social expectations – as a little child I only wore skirts and dresses, and I loved it. At some point I stopped doing it, maybe because I thought I had to do it to grow up... Now I try to get back to asking myself what I like, not what society likes. – Maike, 18

The top I'm wearing right now was thrifted two years ago. Too revealing for some, perfect for Macedonian sun and my self-confidence. The handmade bracelet saying 'R U Mine' on my hand reminds me of my Arctic Monkeys phase, the sneakers – with one black shoelace and one white one, of course – are the same pair I've been buying for years. They are all the choices I made, whether consciously or unconsciously.

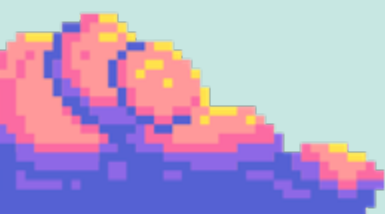


My body is my avatar – and I choose to press 'customize'.

Anna Wojdziak

Sources:
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Special thanks for VCS volunteers from Germany, France and Poland, who shared their stories for this article.





Umarèl, from Dialect to Cultural Phenomenon

We've all seen them at least once in our life, you know those old men that randomly observe construction sites. You're most likely to see them with their hands crossed in the back. And if you were to ask them what they're doing they would probably tell you that they're just making sure that the work is done properly.

While I'm sure that you're all visualising what I'm talking about in this short description, most of you probably don't know yet that there's a word to describe them. You'll be even more surprised to learn that this word is not just a word anymore, over the years it has become a cultural phenomenon.

So, what is this mysterious word that I'm talking about?

umarell [from the bolognese 'omarello, ometto' (a man of little height, a little man/guy)] s.m (pl. inv or pseudo english. umarells) - (bolognese) pensioner who prowls, mostly with his hands behind his back, at construction sites, asking questions, giving suggestions or criticising the activities that take place there

(definition is from the 2021 edition of the Zingarelli dictionary, quoted in the Treccani article, the translation into English was made by me)

Now, you might ask yourself how did a simple word from bolognese dialect like umarell, managed to reach international audience, to the point of ending up being included in the 2024 edition of the Språkrådets nyordslista - the annual list of new Swedish words - published by the Language Council of Sweden.

Well, we have to thank Danilo Masotti for this neologism, as he was the one to craft precise descriptions of umarells through the years and across different mediums. From a blogpost that started everything in 2005, umarells have now become the protagonists of several books written by Masotti, and the subject of his interviews. In 2018, they even got their own square in Bologna "Piazzetta Degli Umarells".

In some cities umarells are even employed to keep an eye on

construction sites, for example in 2015 the city of Riccione, on the Riviera Romagnola, assigned a budget of 11,000€ to pay a wage to umarells. Furthermore, and still in Riccione, a so-called "Operazione Umarell" was created by the organisation "Uniamo Riccione" (Let's Unite Riccione). The goal of this operation is to create a sense of community between the citizens of the city, and to allow citizens to be more involved in the daily life of the city. Some other cities also hosted "Umarell of the Year" competitions, and probably some other similar actions as the ones that Riccione put into place.

However, I feel like an article about umarells cannot be complete without at least mentioning their female counterparts: le zdaure. Because as Masotti mentioned in one interview, "behind a great umarell, there's always a great zdaura".

zdaura/arzdora/azdora originally (the word seems to have some "countryside" roots) the ruler of the household, also in charge of feeding it

Though less comes up when you search about the word, or similar neologism to umarell, you can still find some pretty interesting articles describing them (like the ones in my sources), or see Masotti referring to them in his interviews once in a while. And who knows, maybe one day the word zdaure will know the same cultural phenomenon as umarells.

During my research for this article, I was surprised to find many musical projects named after these two words. First, I came across the post-punk/ underground duo "Umarell & Zdaura" (though I'm not sure it still exists today). Then, I found the UK based indie band Umarells. Later, I also found another electro/ post-punk artist named Umarell, but this last one is based in Italy.

I was really surprised to discover that some bands that aren't based in Italy would be named after this "random" dialect word that became popular. As it's very random, at least in my opinion, to name your

project after umarells if the project has no connection with italianness. Though I think the most random thing I found that is related to the presence of umarells in music was the parody of a Måneskin song that was made on one program of the "Swiss Radiotelevision of the Italian Language" (RSI).

In a way, we could say that it's things like this that keep dialects alive. Sure, some might say that now the word has lost its original meaning, however, it has also gained new appreciation even outside of Italy. Though I would have never expected to discover so many little facts and anecdotes about such a simple word, that I randomly discovered on some Instagram post.

P.S: Shortly after writing this article I went to Bologna, and as you can imagine I had the idea that maybe I would see some umarells out in the wild. But, to my great disappointment, I didn't see any umarells in their natural environment.

Chloe Gaschy

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la zdaura col trucco - mogliedaunavita

L'Arzdora romagnola ... | le portrait inconscient

Chi sono gli Umarells: vecchi dentro, giovani per sempre

Riccione, campagna elettorale con gli umarell: «Ne cerchiamo 200 per segnalare i problemi» - CorrierediBologna.it



BETWEEN CULTURES, BETWEEN WORDS, BETWEEN PEOPLE...



“When you step away from the familiar, you often return closer to yourself.”



Sometimes, a journey gives you more than just a new destination. It gives you space – to ask the questions you’ve been carrying for months, to hear voices different from your own, yet somehow so familiar. And that’s exactly what the Erasmus+ training course **“Let’s Get Intercultural”** gave me – an experience that lasted seven days in Slovenia, but continues to live within me far longer.

The theme – intercultural dialogue and social inclusion – invited us to dive deeper into how we can create truly welcoming spaces. Spaces where people from marginalized communities are not only **included**, but **accepted** and **heard**. Through workshops, open discussions, and team challenges, we learned how to recognize invisible barriers – and more importantly, how to break them.

Participants came from Macedonia, Slovenia, Croatia, Spain, Turkey, Finland, Germany, Italy, Armenia, and Jordan – and each country brought something unique. Diversity wasn’t just a fact; it was the essence of every day. Each morning began with a different cultural perspective, and each evening ended with a shared moment of understanding. In those small details, in what made us different, we found each other.

The Macedonian and the Croatian teams connected instantly. We spoke the same language, but more than that – we shared the same energy. That Balkan warmth that can’t be faked – it can only be felt. One smile, one spontaneous joke during a session, and we just knew – we understood each other. A friendship was born, and I know it won’t end with the last day of the project.

We stayed in a youth hostel in Velenje – a peaceful place with a warm atmosphere, perfect for new ideas and inspiration. One of the memories that stays with me the most is the walk along Velenjsko jezero – the artificial lake, like a blue mirror reflecting our thoughts and conversations. Somewhere by that water, I began to connect all the things I had been hearing and feeling during the week. I believe the deepest lessons didn’t come from the training rooms – they came during those informal moments when we shared stories by the lake or cooked meals together in our cultural groups.

As part of the program, we also explored Ljubljana. But this wasn’t just a touristy walk – we experienced the city from within: through conversations, street art, the scent of coffee from local cafés, and

the music of street performers by the river. Every corner of Ljubljana felt like a quiet invitation to stop, slow down, and truly feel the present moment.

If I had to summarize this experience, I wouldn’t do it with numbers or a list of activities. I would tell it through the people. Through the new friendships I built – honest, deep, and real. Those conversations that begin with “Where are you from?” and end with “Come visit me sometime.” Those small gestures – shared chocolate, a hand on the shoulder, late-night talks about life – that stay with you long after.

This journey reminded me that when you step out of your comfort zone, you actually become more yourself. And when you open up to the other – culturally, empathetically, with respect – you open up to your own self as well.

“Some encounters are not accidental – they are the soul’s way of calling for what it needs, long before the mind understands.”

Anastasija Gjorgjievska

МЕЃУ КУЛТУРИ, МЕЃУ ЗБОРОВИ, МЕЃУ ЛУЃЕ...



„Кога ќе се тргнеш од познатото, често се враќаш поблиску до себе.“

Понекогаш едно патување знае да ти подари повеќе од само нова дестинација. Ти дава простор да ги поставиш прашањата што си ги носел со месеци, да слушнеш размисли различни од твоите, а сепак толку блиски. И токму такво искуство ми донесе обуката за „Еразмус+-проектот: „*Let's Get Intercultural*“, кој седум дена се одвиваше во Словенија, а живее во мене многу подолго.

Темата: „Интеркултурен дијалог и социјална инклузија“, нè повика да погледнеме подлабоко во тоа како да градиме простори што прифаќаат. Простори каде луѓето од маргинализирани заедници не се само **вклучени**, туку **прифатени** и **слушнати**. Преку работилници, отворени разговори и тимски предизвици, учевме да препознаеме невидливи бариери и, уште поважно – да ги срушиме.

Учесници имаше од Македонија, Словенија, Хрватска, Шпанија, Турција, Финска, Германија, Италија, Ерменија и од Јордан, и секоја земја внесе нешто свое. Разновидноста не беше само факт, туку сржта на секој ден. Секое утро започнувавме со различна културна перспектива, а завршувавме со заедничка

точка на разбирање. Баш во тие мали моменти, во она што нè одделуваше, всушност, - се најдовме.

Ние од македонскиот тим веднаш си кликнавме со хрватскиот. Имавме сличен јазик, но и повеќе од тоа – носевме слична енергија. Онаа балканска топлина што нè се глуми, туку се чувствува. Доволна беше една насмевка, една импровизирана шега среде сесија за да знаеме дека се разбираме. Се создаде пријателство што знам дека нема да заврши со последниот ден од проектот.

Сместени бевме во младински хостел во Велење – мирно место со топла атмосфера, совршено за нови мисли и инспирација. Особено ми остана во сеќавање прошетката покрај Велењско езеро (Velenjsko jezero). Вештачко езеро, како сино огледало што ги рефлектираше нашите мисли и разговори. Таму, некаде покрај водата, почнав да ги поврзувам сите нешта што ги слушав и чувствував претходните денови. Ми се чини дека најмногу учевме - не во самите сали - туку токму во тие неформални моменти кога си споделувавме приказни покрај езеро или додека заеднички готвевме по групи.

Како дел од програмата, имавме можност да прошетаме во Љубљана. Но, ова не беше

обична туристичка тура, бидејќи градот го доживеавме одблизу: низ разговори, преку уметноста на улиците, мирисот на кафе од локалните кафулиња и звуците на музичари покрај реката. Секој агол на Љубљана ми изгледаше како тивок повик да застанам, да забавам, да го почувствувам сегашниот миг.

Ако морам да го сумирам ова искуство, не би го сторила со статистика, ниту со список на активности. Би го раскажала преку луѓето. Преку сите нови пријателства што ги стекнав: искрени, длабоки, вистински. Тие разговори што почнуваат со „Од каде си?“ и завршуваат со „Те чекам да дојдеш кај мене.“ Тие мали гестови: споделено чоколадо, рака на рамо, ноќен разговор за животот... што остануваат под кожата.

Ова патување ме потсети дека кога ќе излезеш од својата удобна зона, всушност, стануваш повеќе свој. А кога ќе се отвориш за другиот – културно, емпатично, со почит – тогаш се отвораш и за себе.

„Некои средби не се случајни – тие се повик на душата, која знае што ѝ треба пред умот да сфати.“

Анастасија Ѓорѓиевска

УМЕТНОСТА НА СПОРТО ЖИВЕЕЊЕ

Зошто е време за крајот на хасл културата?



Сте се запрашале ли некогаш дали трудот што го вложувате ве води некаде?

Почнувајќи го денот во шест часот наутро, проследувајќи го со десетчасовен работен ден и дополнителни два часа посветени на втората работа се загарантиран начин да станете „машина за пари“, да превземете контрола врз сопствениот живот, да бидете сам свој „газда“ и други синоними кои со секој поминат ден ви делуваат подалечни од минатиот.

Хасл културата потекнува од „Американскиот сон“ и идејата која го нагласува напорното работење како патоказ кон успехот. Културата потоа се шири низ остатокот од светот поради различни фактори. Овој став е поврзан со домашното воспитување, социјалното опкружување и желбата за повисок статус, но и со вистинскиот притисок од реалните трошоци и проблеми.



Разгледувајќи ги огласите за вработување и читање рецензии за фирмата во која бевте на интервју на форуми - најверојатно нема да ве направи посреќни, но ви одзема голем дел од секојдневното внимание.

Дали културата која нè наведува да размислуваме на прекумерната работа како единствен начин за евентуална финансиска слобода е вистинскиот начин кон успех, или дали оваа идеологија е погрешно пренесена со цел да ни биде дистракција од работите кои се вистински важни?

Секако, одговорот на ова прашање е релативен и зависи индивидуално од мислењата на секој поединец. Генерацијата Зед е прва која ги воочува токсичните шеми кои доведуваат до психофизичка исцрпеност и која се обидува да го врати трендот на спорото живеење.

Пренапорната работа може да го зголеми стресот, но и да ги влоши симптомите на депресијата. Може да има штетни ефекти и врз здравјето на работното место. Со други зборови, лошо е и за здравјето и за перформансите на работа, објаснува проф. Др. Лори Сантос која е когнитивен научник и професор по психологија на Универзитет „Јејл“.

Таа вели дека имаме интуиција која нè наведува да мислиме дека ќе бидеме среќни кога ќе заработиме одредена сума, но кога тоа ќе се исполни, поставуваме поголема сума и настанува заблуда во која постојано сме несреќни.

Од друга страна, спорото живеење има одлики на свежо утринско кафе, попладневни прошетки во парк и релаксирано време поминато со најблиските. Слободни викенди, простор за активности кои ве исполнуваат по завршувањето на работниот ден, кои можат да се креативни, можат да се двочасовен тренинг во теретана, но можат и да се мирна вечер помината со серија или книга под ќебе. Но, пред се, уметноста на спорото живеење е во балансот.



Поставувајќи баланс меѓу нашите цели и желби, меѓу деновите кои се целосно поминати во исполнување обврски и слободните денови, и најважно, меѓу немирот и спокојот.

Секое размислување на оваа тема не води до дополнителни и подлабоки прашања, како на пример како да определиме кој стил на живот е повеќе во склад со нашите вредности.

„Ви треба сон, ви треба одмор и ви треба конекција со други луѓе за да бидете среќни. Тоа се работите кои ќе бидат важни“.

„Правењето паузи на работното место и почестото поврзување со семејството и пријателите, исто така, може да има големо значење“, вели Сантос.



Истражувањата ја поддржуваат и тука: „Социјалната кондиција е клучот број 1 за среќен живот“, напишаа Марк Шулц и Роберт Валдингер, директори на Харвардската студија за развој на возрасните.

Дополнително, за да дојдеме до тој одговор, прво мора да разбереме дека во повеќето случаеви, успехот не потекнува од непресиени ноќи и поминување дванаесет часа на ден на работа, туку од квалитетни корени на образование, долгогодишно искуство и желба за постојано надоградување.

Можеме безброј денови да го повториме истиот напорен ден, но доколку нема ништо ново во нив, како што може да

биде прилика за учење од ментор, или пак, дополнително студиско надоградување, дали навистина правиме напредок или тоа е нешто што си го повторуваме себеси упорно, убедувајќи се дека еден ден ќе дојдеме и ние на ред?

Додека од другата страна, приоритизирањето на честиот одмор доведува до зголемена продуктивност и подобро ментално здравје.

Прошетките во природа и викендите поминати на патување со пријателите или партнерот се спомени што секогаш ќе ви бидат драги за паметење, но дали истото можете да го кажете доколку целиот живот трчате да постигнете поголем успех, повеќе пари, повисока титула и поголем статус?

Трендот на прекумерно работење е токсична идеологија, која е воглавно таргетирана кон младите кои немаат адекватно работно искуство или се на почетокот на својата кариера. Романтизирањето на психичкиот замор и физичката исцрпеност се крајно контрапродуктивни активности, кои можат да направат огромна и непоправлива штета.

Поради тоа, од денес ја одбирам уметноста на спорото живеење. А вие?

Марија Зотиќ



Message to Her

Makedonijo, vecna Makedonijo

Slowly,
I must begin
to say goodbye to you.

Strong winds of your streets,
the sun burning high in the sky,
they allow me to find
a quiet gratitude inside me.

Gratitude for your people,
whose hospitality is second to none,
and which I came to love deeply.

Gratitude for Romani songs,
and melody from the towers of mosques,
that woke me up from too short dreams.

Good, caring Mother,
during the months
I spent at the foot of your mountains,
I grew
so beautifully...

Since the first day
I opened my eyes here,
you strongly hugged me
and explained
the colours of your landscapes
and concerns.

Like a good mother,
you whispered to me
the truth of your soul.

Karolina Kubera

Four walls with TOMORROW inside



Let me take you on a journey across the Mediterranean sea, on the coast side of the Iberian Peninsula, arriving at a colorful school in the beautiful barrio of Cabanyal, in the city of Valencia. It is not just any school, it is a Learning Community.

At this school, students and parents are closely intertwined with an open minded teaching team to accommodate the understanding of a new educational model. And it is fascinating to see it work, in the pillars of dialog learning and collaboration with the objective of building confidence and knowledge in the leaders of tomorrow.

You can enter the class and from the start, you will notice the close relation with the teacher as an authority. However, it is not the authority that comes from fear, instead it is all about respect, trust and encouraging good values and attitudes.

You might be surprised to encounter four adults in one classroom, but that is quite normal, we are having interactive groups. Our role is just to dynamize the group, while the students find the solution together moving through different tasks. Even if they can't see the impact now, we smile at the thought of how this environment enables them with social skills and easy adaptation to any group that they might be a part of in the future, both professionally and personally.

If you stay until the end of the class, you will hear some colors in Spanish with the younger students and some numbers with the older students. It is the evaluation, but is it not something the teacher does, it is actually the students. They evaluate how the group worked and

collaborated, what activities they liked, congratulate or constructively criticize someone and evaluate themselves individually in two categories: work in class and attitude. What a way to encourage getting to know yourself, practice self-control and learn to be honest! As an incentive, if most of the evaluations are good, it will also increase their mark at the end.

This approach stretches from an eight years old child who begins to learn how to express themselves, to a teenager who comes to a realization that knowledge is not a possessive noun, rather something that can be shared.

You might feel I keep gushing about the school but once you get the idea of my environment, I will move on to my experience. Walking these hallways every day, being surrounded by teachers that inspire you, feeling like you learned how to react with kids and then something happens that leaves you confused, is truly rewarding and humbling. Although sometimes I feel like my actions might seem insignificant, even the smallest "grains of sand" can become the building blocks of the identity of these young people. And if I took my pink glasses off for a second, I will tell you that there are days I am practicing patience, days I feel like every filter-less remark from a kid can get to me and even with that, it would still be a pink world.

Sashka Stefanovska

ESC "Supporting Learning Communities"
– Valencia, Spain

FEUILLETON

In the Net of Novelist Fishermen

If you dive too deeply into the murky waters of everyday life's troubles, you risk drowning; therefore, it's better to grasp onto the nets of novelist fishermen. Phantom titles resemble that fattened worm that blindly tempts you to sink your teeth into the hook with all your might, as if tomorrow didn't exist. Woven with various dreamy emotions, in the multicolored net, there is no place for pessimistic gray logic.

Soured mouths salivate for just a crumb of that happiness sugar, that dramatic authors promise to sell. Collections of emotions packaged in blocks of paper, bound and tightly secured with magical imaginings, transform the fish into a hunter of nets and hooks. The pitch-black ocean cannot compete with the cunning novelists; it offers no such wonder.

To abandon routine, the only floating thing in stagnant waters, one pays with blood, not gold. Salvation from the tragic communion with decomposition at a triangular table at the ocean's bottom makes you forget being served as a course to third parties. Any price, however insatiable and predatory, seems trivial when it comes to killing monotony.

Hidden beneath hollows of dark circles, the corny eyes have grown weary of the black-and-white monochrome existence. Such extinguished eyes surrender unconditionally to intoxication in illusory elixir, be it toxin, poison, or acid. The addict will beg to drink, even a single sip of deception, needed to subdue the vampiric rationality.

Intoxicated by the syndrome of a Stockholm love set against roasting flames, the fish trade fantasy for reality. Just as the sparkling drops of overheated oil jump and spread everywhere across the pan, so does the heart of the prey leap and twist under the adrenal effect. Delirious sensations can only find refuge in fatality.

Yearning for a fairy tale, lovers of love, the miserable Bovarians, don't know how to calculate. The future stops breathing when the utopia of an ideal world takes the throne of the kingdom of consciousness. Holding tightly to a tragic-romantic novel, ending up on the plate of some barbarian seems like an absurd joke.

Dipping into the fictional net, instead of saving them from the endless darkness of troubles, led them straight into the digestive system, deep in the stomach of cannibal life. Side by side with the gastric juices of dissolution, bone and tainted spirit get disintegrated among dreams. The naivety of escape, instead of quenching their torments, degraded them into gas, excretion, and urine.

Jona Cenameri

FETTON

Në rrjetën e peshkatarëve romancier

Nëse zhytesh së tepërmi në zezonën e telasheve të jetës së përditshme rrezikon të mbytesh, ndaj të leverdis më mirë të kapesht pas rrjetave të peshkatarëve romancier. Titujt fantazëm ngjajn me atë krimbin e majmur që verbërisht të josh t'i ngulësh dhëmbët në grep me sa forc të mundesh, si të mos ekzistonte dita nesër. Thurur me tyrli emocione shëndërrimtare, në rrjetën shumëgjyreshë, s'ka vend për logjikën pesimiste gri.

Jargavitet e thartuara gojë qoftë edhe për një grimë nga sheqeri lumturor, që premtojnë të shesin autorët dramarik. Koleksione ndjenjash pakëtuara në blloqe letre, lidhur e kapur fort me përfytyrime magjike, e kthejnë peshkun në gjuetar rrjetash e grepash. Oqeani i nxirë pus s'konkuron dot me romancierët finok, kurrfarë çudie s'ofron dot ai.

Për të braktisur rutinën, të vetmen pluskuese të ujërave të ndenjsh, paguhet me gjak, jo me flori. Shpëtimi nga kuvendimi tragjik me dekompozimin në një tryezë trekëndore në fund të oqeanit të bën ta harrosh servirjen si vakt për të tretë. Çdo çmim, sado i pangopur e grabitqar, për të vrarë monotoninë duket fare pak.

Të fshehur nën zgavra rrathësh të zinj, të rëndomtët sy janë ngopur me jetesën monokrome bardhezi. Sy të shuar si këta i dorëzohen pa kushte dehjes në elikzirin iluziv, qoftë toksinë, helm a acid. I varësuar do lutet të pijë, sikur vetëm një gllënk mashtrim, që lipset të zbus racionalitetin vampir.

Të droguar nga sindromi i një dashurie stokolmjane kundrejt fjakëve të pjekjes, peshqit këmbëjnë fantazinë me realen. Siç kërcejnë e përhapen vend e pa vend stërkalat xixëlluese të vajit të tej nxehur mbi tigan, ashtu hidhet e përdridhet zemra e presë nën efektin adrenal. Ndjesitë delirante veç në fatalitet mund të bujtin strehim.

Të dëshiruar pas një përralle, dashuronjës të dashurisë, të mjerët bovarianë, s'dinë të bëjnë llogari. E ardhmja ndalon së frymuari kur utopia e një bote ideale merr fronin e mbretërisë së ndërgjegjes. Kapur fort pas një romani tragjiko-romantik, përfundimi në pjatën e ndonjë barbari duket shaka e trilltë.

Kredhja në rrjetën fikzionale, në vend t'i shpëtonte nga terri i pafundëm i hallevë i shpuri drejt e në aparatit tretës, thellë në stomakun e jetës kanibale. Krah për krah me lëngjet gastrike të zhbërjes, shkrihet kock e shpirt i molepsur ndër andrralla. Naiviteti i arratisjes në vend t'ua shuante mundimet i denatyroi në gaz, jashtëqitje dhe urinë.

Jona Cenameri

Наоѓање утеха

ПОМЕЃУ ВРВОВИТЕ И ПАДНИНИТЕ



Се навикнав на прилично секојдневен пејзаж. Зелените и жолтите полиња се протегаат до каде што окоето може да види, обидувајќи се да се борат против монохроматските облаци на хоризонтот што доминираат на небото поголемиот дел од годината. Ова е она што го карактеризира *Источен Мидлендс* - дел од рамна земја со села, градови и гратчиња расфрлани низ целиот пејзаж. Тоа е област што ја нарекувам дом во последните осумнаесет години откако моите родители решија да емигрираат во Обединетото Кралство.

Ниедно патување за емиграција не е поштедено од емоционален и егзистенцијален багаж. Растењето како Полјак во Велика Британија значеше дека мојот социјален и културен идентитет, во различен степен, неизбежно стана множина и испреплетен. Апстрактното чувство на носталгија за сеќавање на постојано менувачко место се задржува во позадина додека се обидуваме да преговараме со себе дека стопроцентно не припаѓаме на ниту едно место. Секогаш постои нешто што ве разликува од другите во старата дома или во новата, дури и ако тоа е само потсвесно чувство на дистанца. Тоа е како да скокнете напред-назад во состојба на бескрајна граница.

На почетокот на мојата зрелост, конечно најдов конзистентност фокусирајќи се на познатото. Не мора сè да биде дефинирано со борба и различност, кои често се поттикнати од трајно и апстрактно чувство на страв и вознемиреност. Ако ништо друго, би рекол дека успеав да се асимилирам доволно добро за да бидам горд на моето потекло и на сопствениот живот изграден во Велика Британија. Неизбежно, ова чувство на стабилност не е секогаш константно. Но, едно нешто што успеа да го обезбеди моето чувство за конзистентност и да го зацврсти мојот идентитет е мојата поврзаност со планините. Можеби тие се вкоренети во удобноста на моите спомени од детството или во некоја апстрактна сила што постои како плод на мојата имажинација. Сепак, планините ми помагаат да ги надминам сите граници на идентитетот и ми помагаат да развијам свој идентитет.

Како и Велика Британија, поголемиот дел од Полска е всушност релативно рамен - што ме изненади како дете. Од малкуте спомени што ги задржав од животот во Полска и честите посети на семејниот дом во текот на годините, мојата слика за земјата беше добро обликувана од изобилството на врвови и ридови што доминираат во пејзажот. Мојот роден град, сместен во регионот *Подхале* во Јужна Полска, се карактеризира со силна етно-културна врска со овој планински терен. Како *Подхаланин* (полски планинар), тоа е нешто што е вкоренето и одразено во мојата историја и искуства. Сè уште со завист се сеќавам на прекрасните резби во дрво што ја украсуваат спалната соба на мојот дедо и на тоа што ме пречекуваат со *Осципек* (планинско сирење направено од овчо млеко) кога го посетувавме нашето семејство за време на празниците. Имаме свои, за среќа повесели, верзии на некои божијни песни што ги пеевме во текот на целиот декември. Исто така, се сеќавам дека еднаш бев принуден да свирам една од нив на мојата виолина - иронично, инструмент кој е фундаментален за народната музика што доаѓа од оваа област. Дури и малите разлики во дијалектот - велејќи „*Одам на поле*“ (на полињата) наместо *на двор* (на дворот) кога излегувам надвор, ме потсетува дека планините имаат моќ да го обликуваат дури и секојдневното.

За среќа, успеавме да однесеме некои делови од оваа култура во нашиот нов дом. Ќе им ја вратиме услугата кога ќе се вратиме во Велика Британија, носејќи им *Осципек* на нашите семејни пријатели, споделувајќи дел од нашиот идентитет со блиските. Мајка ми, исто така, добро се погрижи да го документира моето детство преку фотографии. Иако ретко, разгледувањето низ огромниот куп фото албуми во нашата дневна соба ме потсетува на времињата кога пешачевме низ планините *Горце*. Еднаш, еден семеен пријател лежерно шеташе со својот коњ од долината и секогаш се кикотам кога ќе ја видам фотографијата од мене каде што седам на него со црна шапка на мојата мала глава. Иако бев премногу мал за да се сетам,

гледањето на свадбата на мојата кума во украсен дрвен ресторан ме потсетува колку убаво е зачувана културата што се негува околу нашите планини. Дури и баба ми, повремено повикувајќи нè да се пожали на ужасно опасниот ветер *Хални* што доаѓа од планините, ме враќа на моето потекло, макар само за тој краток момент.

Мојата љубов кон планинарењето дефинитивно се појави како резултат на слушањето на мајка ми како се сеќава на „*рајду*“ (планинарски експедиции) кога беше во училиште. Таа ќе опишеше како целиот клас, предводен од нејзините наставници, пешачеле заедно за време на викенд во различни планински венци и се зближувале на тој начин. Тоа ме натера да размислам колку уживам да бидам на планина. Но, ова чувство продира надвор од контекстот на моето наследство. Самиот чин на планинарење, подготовката на рутата, будењето рано наутро за да направам чај во термос, чистењето на чевлите... тоа е нешто што, за среќа, може да се доживее насекаде. Дури и пред да пристигнам во Скопје, веќе планирав планинарења што треба да ги завршам во текот на мојот престој. Иако успеав да ги користам планинарските чевли само двапати, благодарение на непредвидливото време во март и април, се потсетив себеси колку тие станаа клучни за мојот идентитет. За мене, планините се многу повеќе од само наследство и носталгија - тие неизбежно станаа место на удобност, инспирација и размислување.

Ќе ми недостига будењето и гледањето на Водно во сенките на утринската магла, или, пак, осветлен од прекрасното сонце, а понекогаш и уживањето во дождливите пролетни денови, но тоа секогаш ќе симболизира како се променив и обликував себеси во текот на моите три месеци овде. Ќе биде една од многуте планини во кои ќе можам да најдам утеха во текот на животот.

Давид Кошчиелњак

Превод: Горан Адамовски

GOING INTO A GREEN FUTURE

Interview with Angela Zimbakova the Youth Erasmus Coordinator and Assistant of GoGreen

This month I visited the GoGreen office in Skopje and talked with their Youth Erasmus Coordinator and Assistant Angela to learn more about their NGO

Can you briefly introduce GoGreen and your main mission?

GoGreen is a non-profit organisation. Its mission is to protect the environment and raise awareness about climate change and related topics. "But it's more than just raising awareness, it's working together". The NGO additionally works for raising awareness for health. "Because that means we need first to protect ourselves and then the environment. So we can all live in a free space, in a safe space, a space that everybody needs".

Climate change and environmental pollution is affecting the whole world. What are some of the biggest challenges Macedonia faces?

Angela defines air pollution as the biggest challenge in Macedonia. In the summer, it is not that present, however, according to her, that is the time where action needs to be taken and the pollution in the winter is a consequence of the inaction during the rest of the year. In general, inaction is a big challenge for them also when it comes to water pollution or garbage. I think our non-consciousness is the root of our inactivity to solve the climate change problems".

What role does GoGreen play in fighting these challenges?

GoGreen has a huge amount of activities and projects about various topics related to their mission. An important part of their work is to include the local community in their projects. "We want to connect the volunteers, the youth, the older ones, the population in Macedonia to be part of our (projects and mission)". At the moment, for example, they are working on food waste projects as well as on a project about Lake Prespa, which is mostly about raising awareness of environmental protection. Raising awareness is a fundamental part of their work. "Focusing on the positive sides of Macedonia, that we need to keep[...] as a treasure for our country". Additionally, they support sustainable transport, for example, adapting more bike roads in Skopje. Angela's main field is connecting mental health and environmental health "[...]First, we need to be conscious about ourselves. Our mental well-being, our well-being

to protect ourselves. So we can see that we need to protect the environment. [...] Environmental consciousness is nothing without self-consciousness, and the other way around. Self-consciousness is nothing without the environment". The environment directly affects our well-being e.g. through air quality and the nature around us.

Nature and climate protection are deeply connected to social inclusion, equality and justice, as well as community. Can you explain in which way that is, why it's important and where you see it in your work?

"Justice is something that we must implement as a society, as individuals [...] First our own justice and then the countries and the world justice". To implement it, Angela explains that first you have to have moral priorities. She gave an example of river pollution. If it's polluted now by some people, it's gonna also have a negative effect on the next generation in regards to physical and mental health.

When it comes to inclusion, it's part of a lot of projects of GoGreen. On the one hand, to include everybody in their projects, but also to work for everybody, having the same resources. For example, they are trying to include people outside from city areas, on the



one hand, to include them in their work, and on the other hand, to work for their villages and e.g. save resources there.

Dealing with climate change can be very frustrating, scary and depressing. How can people, especially young, deal with those feelings?

Angela is a psychology student. She explained to me that there is a terminology often used nowadays that is called climate anxiety. "Fear is an emotion that protects us in some kind of way [...] I need to run from something and I need to take action". In this case, action is the way to deal with those emotions and maybe slightly shorten the problem. Those feelings are also the fuel to climate activism. "First you need to accept them [the feelings], and let's find a solution". "You take action. That's how you become the solution". This sounds very easy in theory, but can be very difficult to actually do and implement.

You also work on climate mitigation, especially for vulnerable groups.

What are some projects regarding this and how can mitigation work?

Angela described the mitigation work as risk management in the meaning of reducing the risks of climate change. "Again it all comes to action and our projects and our mission, aside from the project, is to take action for the things that we want to find a solution (for) and to solve them". This is an everyday process in which it can be very easy to lose yourself in it e.g. in the administration. It is important to keep in mind your vision to not let certain tasks like administration stop you.

What do you say is the biggest challenge for you in your work for your mission?

"Administration definitely, and when you have to be on the computer for like five hours straight". However, the other part of the work is very rewarding and fun. "When you have an event, when

you meet people [...] when you see how people feel what you work and what you do it's an accomplishment for me. [...] Last year when we did an Erasmus youth exchange, it was all about the areas of health [...], and it was a precious project of mine. We had the exchange for ten days and the kids were crying in the end, because (they didn't want to leave) [...] It was fantastic and that was an accomplishment. So that's how you love your job. I mean nothing is perfect and it shouldn't be perfect. Those kinds of things are the motivation".

Why did you decide to do a lot of things especially with young people?

GoGreen started as a youth organisation. "You always put young people and it's how you build the generations after you".

Why did you personally decide to work for GoGreen? And what does the vision of the future of GoGreen mean personally to you?

"Actually, that's a funny story", said Angela. After an invitation from her high school teacher, she applied for a youth exchange of GoGreen in Croatia and got accepted. "And the first youth exchange motivated me so much and gave me so much love, acceptance, freedom". After that, she continued volunteering in GoGreen e.g. at events. "I loved hanging out, the work, the logistical things, the organisations". Then they asked her to join their team. "And I was like: okay, yeah. And now I am part of the team and it's fantastic to be". There are also things that she personally grew in and it is still a journey of learning and growing.



"It's not something you get, like, from today to tomorrow. It's something that you work everyday with".

How can people get involved with your goals? Either with GoGreen or on their own?

GoGreen is still working on the way to communicate to new volunteers or interested people, because they are a new team. However, at the moment there is a group chat on Viber and everybody who is interested can join the group. Right now it is not that active but that's gonna change in 3-4 months, after working on some things inside GoGreen. Also, you can follow them on Instagram @gogreen.mk. You can also take action on your own and find your way of being active in those topics. "If you don't try you'll never know. I call it not trying out, but doing an experiment with yourself. Do it not only for the environment but for yourself.[...]. And if you don't do it, who will?".

Maïke Seuffert





Mental health journey to mystical Ohrid lake



Volunteers Centre Skopje hosted Erasmus+ training course “Mental Health Matters” from the 4th to the 12th of April 2025, co-organized with Stowarzyszenie Europa Iuvenis (Poland).

There is a stereotype that Balkan people are more relaxed, live slower, and enjoy life more. Our daily life is usually a rush, we don't have time to pause, find out why we are in this place right now, think about quality and how to improve our daily mental health. This time, we tried to take a moment. To reflect. To actually focus on well-being, balance work and life, develop our soft skills, and build meaningful connections.

We stayed next to Ohrid lake, one of the oldest and deepest lakes in Europe, with a rich history that has influenced the Balkans for centuries. Through the centuries the lake was a place where different religions, cultures and nations were living. As Kapka Kassabova writes in her book “To the Lake: A Balkan Journey of War and Peace” the lake is a mystical place, where people are deeply connected to the lake.

The training was held in Struga, where diverse cultures meet, but despite differences people coexist together. The same spirit of togetherness was present in our project, which brought together participants from Armenia, Poland, Macedonia, and Romania. We came to

learn about ourselves and to exchange good practices in the field of mental health.

Despite many differences, people are similar. We could find common language and reflect together. We learned that “humans are not robots” and that “we contain multitudes”. Every project brings new experiences and learning, and this one was no different. Many of us recognized aspects of our daily lives reflected in what we discussed. As our trainer put it: “I am tired, but at the same time I want to meet with other people” and that duality is okay.

Over the week, everyone learned something different. A participant from Romania said that she learned “how we should embrace vulnerability rather than run away from it”. For a participant from Poland the session on how to manage burnout was especially useful. Meanwhile, a participant from Armenia pointed “to take your time, to take your rest and not to rush” as an important lesson. The diversity of our backgrounds led to a beautiful variety in what each of us took away from the experience.

It is hard to take every advice, or a good practice and put it into our routine at once. A lot of practical information but also reflections will benefit us during our lifetime. What matters most is continuing to strive for personal growth

and recognizing the benefits over time, especially when it comes to avoiding issues like chronic stress or burnout.

Sometimes everything gets too much... One of the most important topics that we touched upon was burnout. This issue remains somewhat taboo, especially in youth work. Being an activist is often associated with tireless commitment, as if burnout was a sign of weakness. One sentence that stuck with us: “Trained monkey could do it” struck a nerve, because it reflected how mechanical and dehumanized our efforts can sometimes become. We went deeply into the topic of how to diagnose and how to prevent burnout.

Spending time in the closeness of Ohrid lake was a true experience of reflection about ourselves, and through connecting with the place we also felt this connection with each other. Everyone will definitely take something valuable from this experience into the future. Time flew by quickly, and alongside the knowledge we gained, we also built meaningful connections. We could relate our own situations to those of others and feel a true sense of community. With the strong bonds we formed, we can now cooperate and support each other moving forward.

Jakub Pokuciński



BE THE Change

“Change is the only constant in life”

- this bit of ancient wisdom, which can just as easily be found on a motivational pinboard as in a philosophy textbook, bears some fundamental truths about the essentiality of change in life. In fact, it is not only the case that each individual life is shaped by constant changes but also and especially in regards to the greater frame of society and the human interrelations within. The dynamics of the common life together, better known as social change, are all around us affecting our lives in all the small and big ways possible.

In sociology, social change is understood as the change in social interactions and relationships that leads to change in social and cultural institutions resulting in a shift in social norms. Or to put it in the words of Ania, “social change means that we are making progress as a society - for example, we are more aware of certain issues (old ones and new ones that appear with time and development of society) and the mindset of people is changing.” Ania is one of four young people from Poland, Germany and the UK that shared their takes on social change for this article.

As a transformation of the societal structure and shift of

direction in development, social change is essential for society as a whole - but it is of special significance in regards to the youth since young people are not only profoundly affected by social change but are also one of the driving forces behind it. Causes for social change range between the unviability of and dissatisfaction with the status quo, scientific and technological innovations as well as economic development. In other words, social change is all about challenging preconceived notions to design new worlds and futures – a matter many young people are especially concerned with. Ania Sara describes this special link between youth and social change as follows: “I mostly think about how young people have the courage to say “no,” to say “I will not go along with it.” For me, that is what social change is all about. We do not just follow the mainstream, but we know how to stand against it. That is an incredible strength I see in my peers, and I am proud of it.”

Speaking in terms of the societal power organisation, social change can be induced top-down or bottom-up but either way the effects of social change manifest themselves both as continuous development and a circular phenomenon. Indisputably, progress does not always happen

linearly without disruption. Where there is progress there is also regress freely following the motto of “two steps forward and one back”. “Often, we see that social change goes back and forth, and it is very different in each country and/or context” as Dawid remarks.

The different shapes and forms of social change are rooted in the fact that there are diverging and even opposing ideas and ideals of what positive social change looks like. Positive social change intends to improve people’s life but how this improvement is supposed to look life is a matter of each individual subjective perspective. Ania notes a positive impact of social change on her life and well-being. “For example, I would say that I grew up with a very unhealthy mindset regarding body image (something I’d call ‘diet culture’) that caused me to be hateful towards the way I look for most of my life. These days I see way more body positivity content and messages that played a big role in helping me accept my body,” she explains. But social change does not necessarily lead to positive outcomes for everyone. As a result, the positive social change in someone’s perspective can be a negative social change in someone else’s. Maïke states for example that she has recently been scared of social

change because society does not always change for better but also for worse. Moreover, Ania's observation that "the society - or at least the social bubbles [she] lives in - is becoming more open-minded and 'normalises' more things (which, in [her] opinion, should have never been considered as bad or weird, but again - it probably also applies to things that actually should not get normalised)" adds to the notion that there is no clear-cut answer to the question how positive social change should look like.

Maybe, the closest approximation to answering the question regarding positive social change is to stick to the directive to "be the change you wish to see in the world". Embodying the change one strives for, seems to be quite an obvious solution considering that social change is the manifestation of the collective's power to advance social life together. Even the most profound changes start on the smallest level – the way we act and interact with one another. Consider Ania Sara's experience: "I feel the effects of social change every day. Growing up in a small village, I never thought I would feel such a deep emotional connection to global issues or be moved to tears by what is happening in the world. But the social changes we are witnessing today, everything from the climate crisis to political unrest, force me to reckon with my place in it all. I find myself more aware and sensitive to the realities around me. It also motivates me to take action, even in small ways." Only when searching for one's place within the dynamics of society and taking even

the tiniest of actions towards what one deems to be positive, changes in the organisation of social power structures can be achieved in the long run.

These shifts are of utmost necessity in order to empower more and more people to participate actively in the enhancement of social life together – an effort that thrives the fullest when as many different perspectives are brought together as possible. Consequently, the key to truly positive social change is building relationships of trust and respect that join all these unique viewpoints. Change starts in the little things like listening and learning from one another and concludes in the large effort of compromising on a common way and accepting its constant need for adjustment. Tools and methods to build the foundation for these relationships of trust and respect are discourse, education and networking but also volunteering and activism as Maike especially points out. Dawid on the other hand indicates: "It is extremely important to not ignore the mundane, everyday actions which can create a positive change. Even challenging someone's mindset in a casual way to open their eyes to a different perspective can really make a difference. There is also power in subtlety." Furthermore, Ania Sara adds to these points: "I believe in change within local communities. I do not have power over the whole world, and I never will. I do not even have power over Poland. That is something young people often forget. We may not change the whole world, but we can

change the world for one person or one community. And that is powerful. [...] I try to lead by example. Actions speak louder than words, and I believe that by living my life in a way that reflects my values, I can show others that it is possible to live differently."

Social change is neither inevitable nor straightforward. Although it may not be halted, it can and must be shaped and transformed actively. Social change takes a hold of human relations, and society as thus, like a pebble dropped in a lake ripples the water – creating waves that continuously cause bigger waves until the whole lake is in movement. In other words, social changes take place in accordance with the ripple effect. As is already to be derived from the sociological definition of the term in question, the way we interact with each other transcends different levels of society and societal organisation to eventually transform social structure and shift social norms. So, let us all act as the pebbles for our own community and take an example of Ania Sara: "Young people are hungry for change, but they need to see that it's possible, and I try to be that example in my own small world. Whether it's through how I interact with others, how I make sustainable choices, or how I advocate for change in my community, I make it my mission to contribute in any way I can."

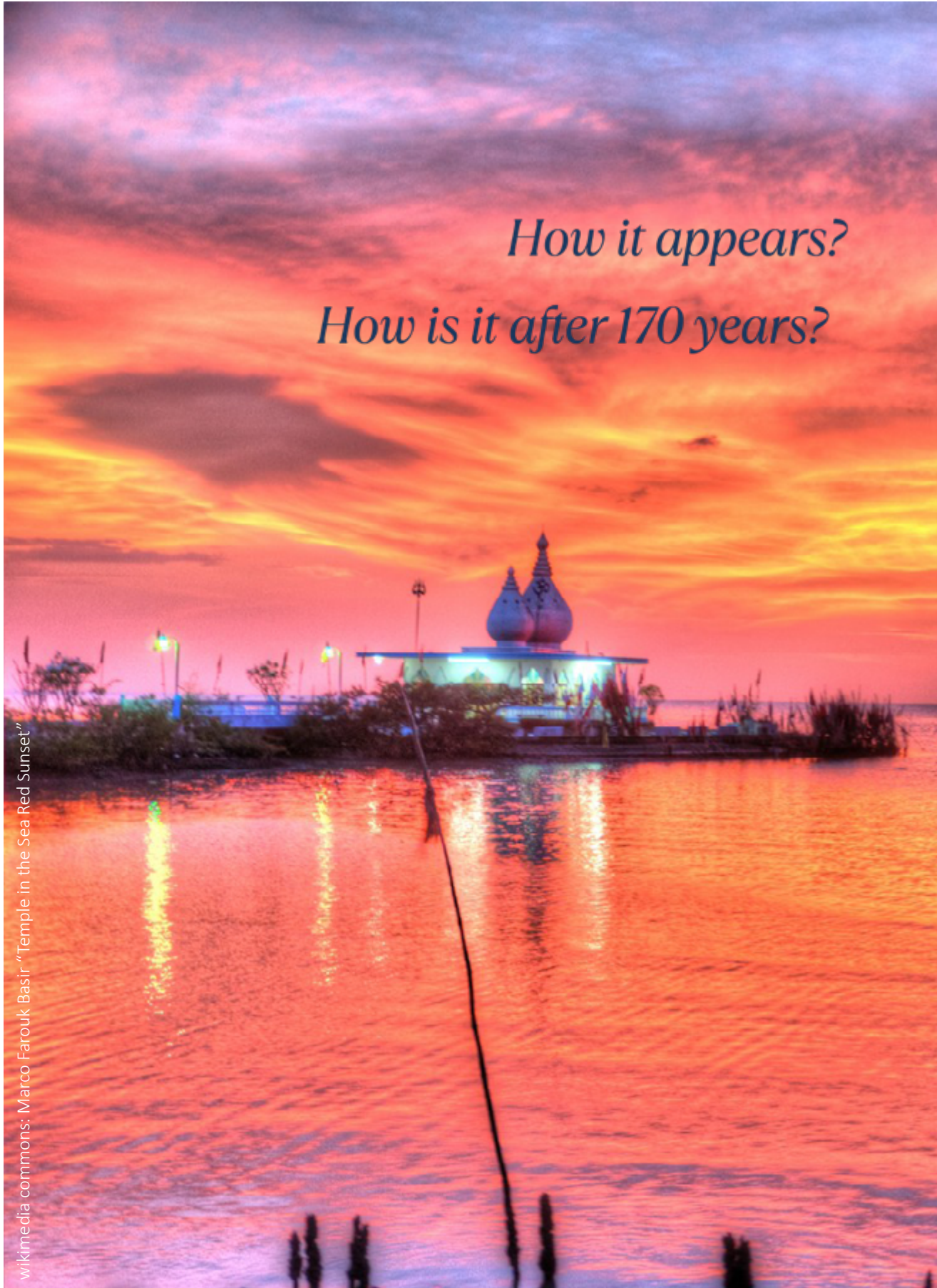
Special thanks to Ania, Dawid, Maike and Ania Sara for providing their very precious insights for this article!

Sophia Abegg

Hinduism **INSIDE THE CARIBBEAN**

How it appears?

How is it after 170 years?



wikimedia commons: Marco Farouk Basir "Temple in the Sea Red Sunset"

I've talked a lot about the Caribbean already and mentioned that Hinduism is the second-largest religion in this area. How is that possible?

How does Hinduism appear in the Caribbean?

During the second part of the XVIII century, the British and French brought South Asians to the Caribbean and the Mascarenes to replace enslaved Africans and Indigenous laborers. They received the same treatment as the slaves, facing harsh conditions: forced labor, conversion attempts to Catholicism, and physical punishment. But unlike enslaved Africans, they were allowed to keep their religion, except for the practice of cremation.

Despite the hardships, many of these migrants found ways to adapt. They accepted Catholicism, but at the same time, they built kovils (Hindu temples) and began blending Hinduism with Catholic elements, a form of religious syncretism. They call it Caribbean Shaktism because of the mix between Shakti Kali and Amma, Tamil deities in Hinduism. In the French Caribbean in particular, the worship of Murugan and Amma became central, especially among Tamil communities. Shiva and Lakshmi also became popular.

Hinduism is widely practiced in parts of the Caribbean, though often infused with Catholic tones, especially in places like Trinidad, Guadeloupe, and Martinique, where French colonial influence was strong.

You might be thinking, "Wait, isn't Trinidad an old British colony? Don't they speak English?" You're absolutely right. But before the British took over, Spain colonized Trinidad and Tobago, and then France. Even the capital, Port of Spain, reflects this colonial history. And yes, they also speak Creole there.

Similar blends of Hindu and local traditions can be found in Mauritius, Réunion Island, and South Africa, largely due to the Tamil diaspora. The form of Hinduism practiced in the Caribbean differs significantly from Indian Hinduism. Even within India, practices vary by region, and the caste

system still plays a major role. However, in the Caribbean, many of the Indians brought over were Dalits, those outside the traditional caste system, who faced severe discrimination back home. For some, migration was also a form of escape from colorism, violence, and systemic exclusion. Ironically, while their situation was initially very difficult in the Caribbean, it offered a chance to rebuild a religious and cultural identity on different terms.

Even if it was worse at the beginning.

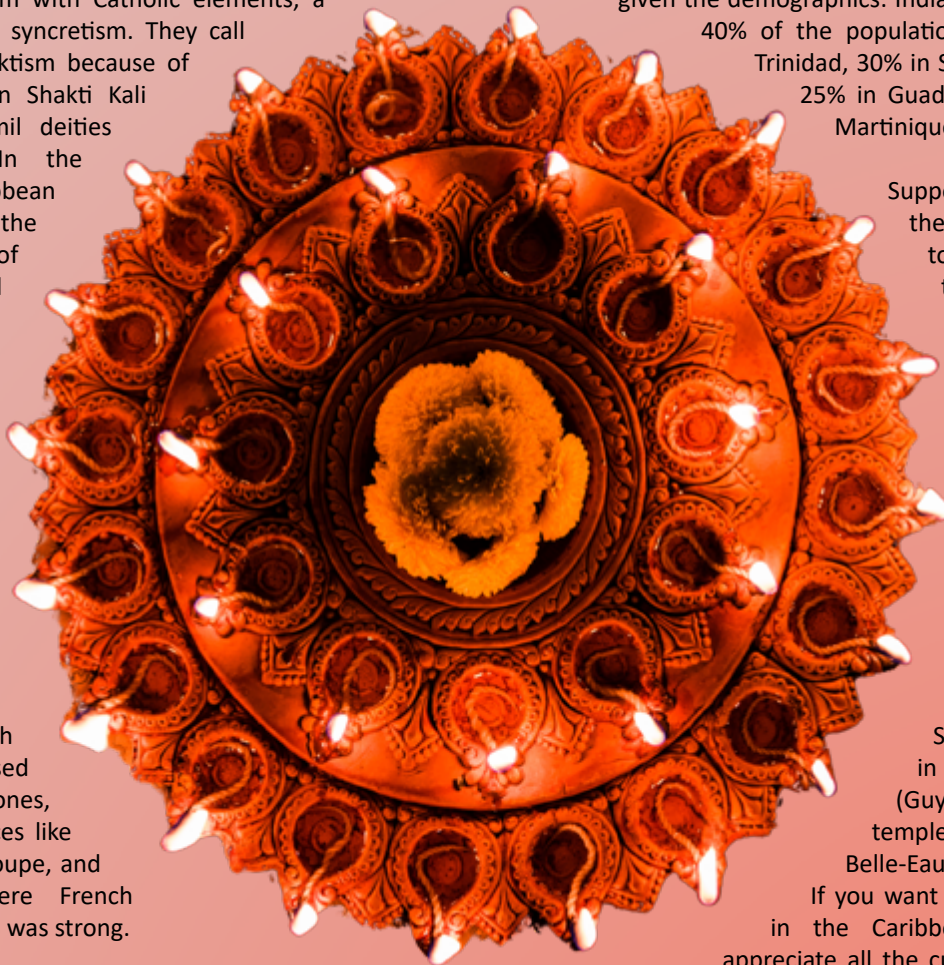
Today, in Guadeloupe alone, there are over 500 kovils. We celebrate Deepavali, Holi, Pongal, and Samblani, Caribbean style. These festivals have grown so much that they may soon become official public holidays, just like in Réunion and Mauritius. In Trinidad, Guyana, and Suriname, they already are. That makes sense given the demographics: Indians make up about 40% of the population in Guyana and Trinidad, 30% in Suriname, but only 25% in Guadeloupe and 9% in Martinique.

Suppose you have the opportunity to travel across the Caribbean. In that case, I recommend that you visit the Temple in the Sea in Carapichaima (Trinidad), Arya Diwaker in Paramaribo (Suriname), Sri Sri Gaura Nitai Ashirvad Mandir, and Hare Krishna Study Centre in Georgetown (Guyana), and Changy temple in Capesterre-Belle-Eau (Guadeloupe).

If you want to enjoy your trip in the Caribbean, you should appreciate all the cultural elements it offers: Caribbean, African, native American, and Indian. Try all the food you can, visit everything, and appreciate the vibe. You will thank me later.

Terry Ruart

Sources :
 Wikipedia - Caribbean Shaktism
 Youtube - Guadeloupe - Celui qui revendique la part hindoue de son identité
 Wikipedia - Hinduism in the West Indies



BETWEEN DREAM AND REALITY



THE LINK BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGICAL
CONDITIONS AND SLEEP DISORDERS

In the fast-paced world of modern life, many people are increasingly faced with sleep-related problems, unaware of the profound impact that poor sleep has on their physical and mental health. Sleep quality is closely linked to the occurrence and development of psychosomatic disorders — conditions where psychological distress is directly manifested through physical symptoms. But how are these two terms actually related and what are the consequences of this biological connection?

Sleep plays a vital role in maintaining physical and mental balance. During sleep, the body regenerates, hormones are balanced, and the brain processes daily events and emotions. Lack of sleep, especially chronic, can have serious consequences.

Research confirms that people who suffer from sleep disorders have an increased risk of developing anxiety, depression, and somatic symptoms. Sleep itself is divided into 4 stages: the first 3 stages are part of NREM (non-REM) sleep, while the last stage is REM (rapid eye movement) sleep. In NREM sleep, there is a transition from wakefulness to sleep, with an increase in melatonin levels and a slowdown in brain activity. REM sleep is a state of consciousness during sleep, and dreams occur in this stage. This stage gets its name from the rapid movement of the eyeballs while we dream. The REM stage occurs at intervals of 90 minutes, which means that during the night the REM and NREM stages alternate.

Psychosomatic disorders are physical illnesses that are the result of psychological factors, such as stress, anxiety or depression. Typical examples of such illnesses are: gastrointestinal problems (such as irritable bowel syndrome), heart disease, blood pressure problems, diabetes, arthritis and dermatological problems. There is no single specific cause for their occurrence, but it is believed that they occur based on genetics, a person's character, biological factors and the environment. Symptoms of psychosomatic disorders can seem like

everyday conditions, and they are most often: low immunity, chest and muscle pain, frequent headaches and dizziness, digestive problems, fatigue and anxiety. There is a complex, two-way connection between psychosomatic diseases and sleep. This connection was first noticed by Aristotle, who believed that dreams can be one of the first indicators of physical changes.

Research shows that people with mental disorders more often experience repetitive, intense nightmares that cause awakening and negatively affect the quality of sleep and daily functioning. Nightmares are often triggered by stress, trauma or certain substances, and their memory can prolong anxiety in the waking state. Nightmares are twice as common in people with depression, because during REM sleep their eyeballs move significantly faster. Various studies show that 20% of people with generalized anxiety disorder, and as many as 55% of people with psychotic disorders, such as schizophrenia, have persistent nightmares. However, in people with psychotic disorders, these dreams are much more bizarre, because after waking up the individual is delirious and cannot distinguish between reality and dream.

Another, different psychosomatic illness that affects sleep is insomnia itself. Insomnia manifests itself through problems falling asleep, sleeping only short periods of the night and feeling restless. Insomnia is a side effect of various mental illnesses and conditions, and can also be a product of excessive stress in everyday life. People who suffer from insomnia feel nervous, tired during the day, have low concentration and reduced memory, which can further result in the development of chronic diseases.

Although the situation may seem complex, there are effective interventions that can help:

Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) is a form of psychotherapy that has shown

to be particularly effective in people with insomnia and psychosomatic symptoms. It focuses on identifying and changing negative thoughts and destructive habits that disrupt sleep. The treatment is structured and results are often visible within a few weeks.

Meditation and relaxation techniques are practices that reduce stress levels and improve the ability to fall asleep. They are especially useful for people who live under constant pressure.

Regular physical activity and a healthy diet contribute to better sleep and a better mood. At the same time, it reduces stress levels and strengthens the body's resilience.

The connection between sleep and psychosomatic disorders is deep, complex and essential for understanding modern health challenges. Poor sleep is not only a consequence, but often a cause of mental and physical disorders. As far as awareness, education and the application of scientifically supported methods go, we can restore balance and improve the quality of life.

Taking care of sleep is part of taking care of yourself. In a world where speed and productivity are often more important than rest, bringing quality sleep back into focus is one of the most revolutionary steps we can take for our health.

Dela Dodevska

Sources:

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Clevelandclinic – [Psychosomatic Disorder](#)

Vladimir Trajkovski – [Fiziologija na son](#)
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Stanford Medicine – [Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia](#)

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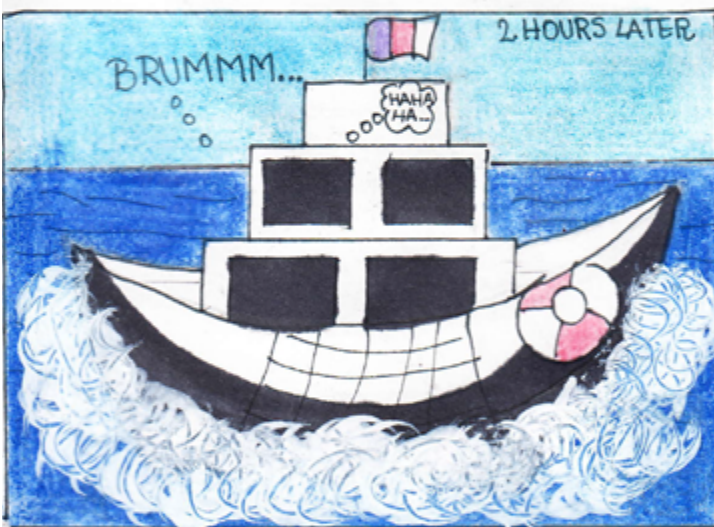
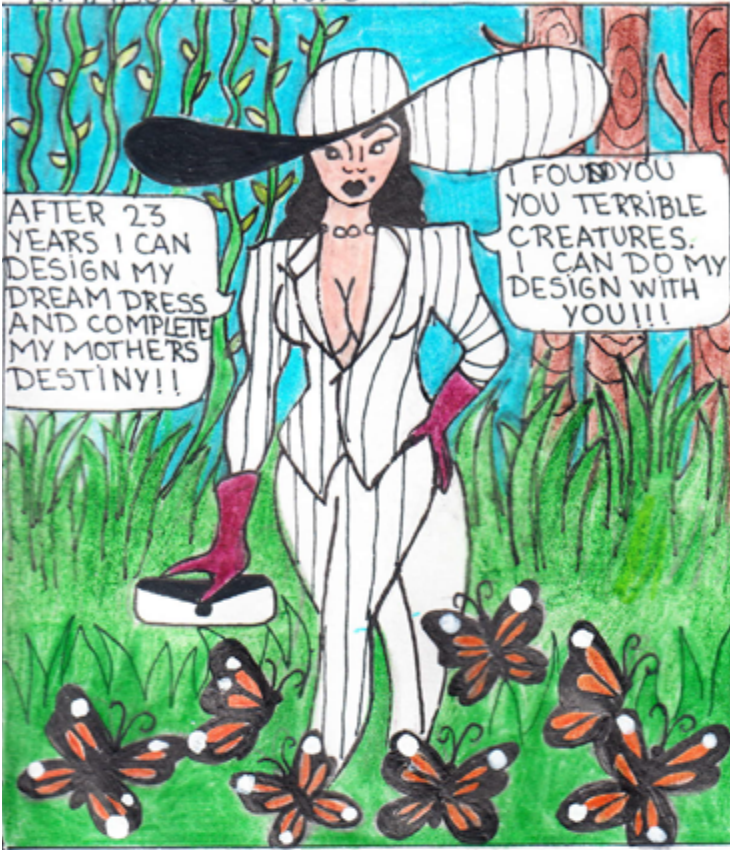
AMAZON JUNGLE



FREEDOM

BY VLERA CHICHE

AMAZON JUNGLE



THE END.

Surviving the Dark Winter

Three years ago, I arrived in Bremen for the first time. The sun was shining, a beautiful flower market filled the streets, and I instantly fell in love with the city. During my Erasmus+ exchange, we had time to explore. On our last day, while clearly lost and trying to find something, a kind lady approached my team leader and me to offer help. I was stunned not only because I understood her speaking German, but also because a stranger showed such genuine kindness. That simple act stayed with me and deepened my appreciation for Bremen.

Even though I fell in love with the city, I never imagined I'd one day call it home. But life leads us in unexpected ways. After three years, I returned and once again, the sun welcomed me. I smiled, remembering how people often describe Bremen as a rainy, gray place. And indeed, after a few months, the sun slowly disappeared, giving way to short, gloomy days and long, cold nights.

But I didn't come here because of the weather. If sunshine was what I was chasing, northern Germany wouldn't have been my first choice. I came because I didn't want to settle for a life, a job, or a version of myself that didn't feel right. I came to explore not just a new place, but the hidden corners of my own mind and heart.

Living in Bremen gave me countless moments I will always treasure. I witnessed sunsets that painted the sky in colours I didn't know existed. I found peace in long walks through quiet parks. I learned to sit with my thoughts, to be patient, to be still. This journey became my teacher, showing

me how to handle the unexpected, how to find creative solutions, and how to truly listen to others, even when we don't agree. I learned the power of routine, the value of community, and the strength in embracing discomfort.

Of course, not everything was easy. The winters felt long and dark both literally and emotionally. Learning the language tested my patience. There were moments of joy, and moments of deep frustration. But I've realized something important: sometimes, it doesn't matter how long the darkness lasts. The sun will rise again. And when it does, everything you've endured will feel worth it.

That's the lesson hidden in the gray skies and silent mornings. Just like the seasons change, so do we. Growth takes time. And even when we can't see the light, it's still coming. Slowly, surely, inevitably.



Not everyone chooses this path. But for those who do—for the dreamers, the seekers, the ones unafraid to step into the unknown, there is beauty in the journey. This story is for those who embrace change, open their hearts to new cultures, and find strength in the storm.

It's for the brave. The ones who understand that sometimes the darkest winters lead to the brightest dawns.

Sandra Dimkovska
Long-term ESC volunteer hosted by
NaturKultur e.V.

Преживувајќи ја мрачната зима

Пред три години, за првпат пристигнав во Бремен. Сонцето сјаеше, во тој момент имаше цветен пазар, па улиците беа преполни со луѓе и цвеќиња. Многу ми се допадна градот. За време на мојата „Еразмус+“ размена, имавме време да истражуваме. Последниот ден, јас и мојот тим-лидер баравме нешто низ градот и очигледно изгледавме изгубено. Ни пријде една жена и ни понуди помош. Бев изненадена не само затоа што ја разбрав, а зборуваше на германски (мојот труд да научам германски конечно се исплатеше), туку и затоа што непозната личност покажа желба да им помогне на двајца странци. Тој едноставен гест ми остави уште поубав впечаток за Бремен.

Иако многу ми се допадна градот, никогаш не замислував дека еден ден ќе го наречам свој дом. Но, животот нè води по неочекувани патишта. По три години, се вратив и повторно ме пречека сонцето. Се насмеав, мислејќи како луѓето често го опишуваат Бремен како сив и дождлив град. И навистина, по неколку месеци, сонцето полека исчезна, оставајќи кратки, мрачни денови и долги, студени ноќи.

Но, вистината е дека не дојдов овде поради времето. Ако сонцето беше тоа што го барав, северот на Германија немаше да биде мојот прв избор. Дојдов затоа што не сакав да имам живот, работа или верзија од себе што не ми одговараше. Дојдов да истражам не само ново место, туку и скриени агли од мојот ум и срце.

Животот во Бремен ми подари безброј моменти што ќе ги паметам засекогаш. Бев сведок на зајдисонца и бои кои никогаш претходно ги немам видено. Пронајдов мир во долги прошетки низ тивки паркови.

Научив да седам со своите мисли, да бидам трпелива, да бидам смирена. Ова патување стана мојот учител. Ме научи како да се справувам со неочекуваното, како да најдам креативни решенија и како вистински да ги слушам другите, дури и кога не се согласуваме. Научив колку е моќна рутината, колку значи заедницата и колку можеме да се смениме ако излеземе од својата удобна зона.

Се разбира, не беше сè лесно. Зимите беа долги и мрачни. Учењето на јазикот ми го тестираше трпението. Имаше моменти на радост, но и моменти на длабока фрустрација. Сфатив нешто важно: понекогаш не е важно колку долго трае темнината - сонцето повторно ќе изгрее. И тогаш, сè што си поминал добива поголема смисла.

Тоа е лекцијата што ја научив под сивите денови. Како што се менуваат годишните времиња, така се менуваме и ние.

За растот е потребно време. И дури и кога не можеме да ја видиме светлината - таа доаѓа. Полека, сигурно, неизбежно.

На крајот од денот, не секој го избира овој пат. Но, за оние што имаат храброст, за сонувачите, за истражувачите, за оние што не се плашат да зачекорат во непознатото - постои голема награда во патувањето.

Оваа приказна е за оние што прифаќаат промена, што ги отвораат срцата кон нови култури и што ја наоѓаат својата сила во бурата. Ова е за храбрите. За тие што разбираат дека понекогаш најтемните зими водат кон најсветлите зори.

Сандра Димковска
долгорочна ЕСК-волонтерка
во NaturKultur e.V.



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.

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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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