



As the air grows cooler and the leaves begin to fall, I'm reminded that my time here is also slowly but surely coming to an end. Indeed, while it still does feel surreal to say it, I've been here for almost 11 months already. Living in Macedonia is something that I would have never believed to ever happen even just a few years ago. Yet, now I am revisiting all the memories from the time I've spent here, while trying to make the most of the few weeks I have left.

The thought of returning home soon, along with all the emotions that come with it, is slowly starting to scare me. But there's at least one comforting thought I can hold onto. I'm uncertain about most things in my life, but there's one thing I'm sure of. And it's that I will come back in the future. So while my time here as a volunteer is entering its final chapter, my time in Macedonia, or the Balkans in general, is only in its opening act...

Chloe Gaschy

Јако што воздухот станува **П**поладен и лисјата почнуваат да паѓаат, се потсетувам дека и моето време тука полека, но сигурно завршува. Всушност, иако сѐ уште ми се чини нереално, тука сум веќе речиси 11 месеци. Живеењето во Македонија е нешто за кое никогаш не би поверувала дека ќе се случи, дури и ако ме прашавте пред само неколку години. Сепак, сега ги преиспитувам сите спомени од времето што го поминав тука, додека се обидувам да максимално искористам неколкуте недели што останаа.

Помислата за скорешно враќање дома, заедно со сите емоции што доаѓаат со тоа, полека почнува да ме плаши. Но, има барем една утешна мисла на која можам да се држам. Всушност, не сум сигурна за повеќето работи во мојот живот, но има едно нешто за кое сум сигурна. А тоа е дека ќе се вратам. Значи, додека моето време тука како волонтер влегува во своето последно поглавје - моето време во Македонија, или на Балканот воопшто, е само во својот почетен чин...

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The hardest part of living abroad? Well, sometimes it's coming back.

Instead of comforting, being back home can be frustrating, confusing and depressing, especially if you didn't miss a single thing there. Obviously, everyone goes through it differently, and I'm quite an extreme example. Despite that — or maybe because of that — I want to share my experience. We'll talk about my feelings, random thoughts, reverse culture shock and ways to deal with it, so I hope you're ready for a ride.

There's so much advice on the internet about moving to a new place... but not many people mention how hard it is to come back home after a while. Your hometown has changed, but you have changed even more, and it feels like you both grew apart like childhood friends who followed their own paths. You walk the familiar streets with a kind of distance, as if you're only half there. And worst of all, the café you used to visit regularly doesn't have your favourite caramel toasts on the menu anymore...

All of this made my brain bring back a phrase I heard a while ago — reverse culture shock — and motivated me to look into it, hoping to find some explanation. While most people are aware that moving into a new place and culture will require some adapting, the need for readapting doesn't seem that obvious.

Coming back is not just feeling like you don't belong. Reverse culture shock comes with being more critical about your home — maybe because you remembered it as better than it was, or maybe because you're comparing it to your abroad life. You might get exhausted with doing basic things, because you have to pay attention to the way you're doing them, especially if the culture is significantly different. The thing I noticed the most is that places hold memories extremely strongly, and they try to bring back the old versions of me that I want

to leave behind. Sometimes it feels like a constant battle to not lose the newly discovered me that I want to keep. What's the reason behind all of this, then?

First of all, you've changed. Being in a new environment means you probably had to rearrange your routine, social circle or even such simple things like eating habits. To give an example, living in Balkans made me much more social. Of course, it took some time, but from an introvert having two friends in my hometown, I turned into a person who goes out several times a week. Suddenly being around people and constantly meeting new ones – even just for a small talk or one-time coffee - became my daily life. I think there's truly something about southern European sun that has a power to open up people, but that's a topic for another day.

Second of all, your home has changed. You've probably experienced a lot during your time abroad, but through this whole time your family and friends have also been living their lives. Maybe they've discovered a new favourite way of making pancakes. Maybe some of them aren't there anymore. Your hometown has changed, too. You'll notice new places and realize you lost some of the ones you knew like the back of your hand.

If you want to add more issues to this mess, you might find yourself being more excited about sharing your abroad life stories than people are about listening to them, and the opposite – not being interested in finding out what happened home. Being a foreigner comes with a kind of 'celebrity' treatment, because you're more intriguing to local people than you are in your own country... and it's definitely something to miss. It's also easier to become friends with other foreigners, as you immediately have something in common to begin with. All of this means you might feel like you

don't belong back home, and have to readapt.

Of course, I can't leave you without solutions, so here are some ideas. Connect with others who have similar experience. whether it's meeting international people in your city or keeping in touch with friends you made abroad. Some of the things you can do are mentoring, starting a language exchange group or sharing your story online. Find a way to integrate your new habits and skills into your daily life, from the way you prepare breakfast, to your next career choices. This way, you'll keep the transformed version of yourself alive. One more advice that I heard before leaving is to stay busy. Make plans you're excited about - organize your next trip, sign up for new classes, start that hobby you've been postponing.

What about me? Well, I'm starting a new job in an international team this week, and a master's degree next month. My muscles are sore from the yoga classes I found close to my home. The concert ticket to see one of my favourite artists is waiting in my inbox. I've looked into driving courses, and I'm thinking of volunteering at the cat shelter. I feel down most of the time, but I know I can't pause my life because of that. And I can just hope that it gets better, because it always did in the past.

And if that feeling doesn't go away – you can always leave again. Whatever it takes, find yourself again.

Anna Wojdziak

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# A PATH TWARD FREEDOM F THOUGHT

INSIGHT INTO "THE FOUR AGREEMENTS" BY DON MIGUEL RUIZ



Some things in life move us so deeply that they change the way we see the world. They shake our perspective, make us pause, and invite us to breathe differently. For me, that moment came with a book: "The Four Agreements" by Don Miguel Ruiz.

This book is not just a piece of writing. It feels like a wave of wellness, a subtle call to the soul. It doesn't give direct answers, but instead encourages us to ask ourselves the right questions. It is not about telling you what to do or how to live: it is about planting seeds of awareness so that you can discover your own way. That, I think, is why it touched me so deeply.

The book entered my life through a gesture of kindness. It was a gift from the mother of my best friend. She told me that "The Four Agreements" is a book you don't keep for yourself: you offer it to someone else. At first, I didn't fully understand why. But after reading it, I realized the truth of her words. This book carries the kind of wisdom that begs to be shared, because its lessons are not possessions; they are doors, opening one after another.

### Agreement One: Be Impeccable with Your Word

The first agreement seems simple, almost obvious: be impeccable with your word. But the more you sit with it, the more you realize its depth. Words are not just sounds in the air; they are seeds. They have the power to heal or to wound, to create beauty or to destroy trust.

When I first reflected on this, I saw how careless I could sometimes be with words: toward others, and even more often toward myself. The voice inside my head was not always kind.

"The Four Agreements" reminded me that language is magic. To be impeccable with our word is to choose truth over poison, compassion over harm. It is about recognizing the creative power hidden in the way we speak.



This agreement taught me to slow down before I speak, to treat words as offerings. It is not about being perfect but it is about being conscious.

### Agreement Two: Don't Take Anything Personally

The second agreement might be the most liberating one: don't take anything personally. Life is filled with misunderstandings, projections, and mirrors that do not reflect who we truly are. People act and speak from their own world of beliefs, fears, and wounds. Their judgments are rarely about us because they are about them.

This insight helped me accept the absurdism of life. So much of what hurts us does not truly belong to us. When someone speaks harshly, it is their storm, not our sky. By not taking things personally, we step outside of the prison built by others' opinions.

During difficult times, when I felt misunderstood or judged, this agreement became a shield. It allowed me to forgive more easily, to let go of resentment, and to walk lighter. It is not always easy, but it is a practice that softens the heart.

### Agreement Three: Don't Make Assumptions

The third agreement is deceptively simple: don't make assumptions. Our minds are restless storytellers, filling in gaps with narratives that often lead to pain. How often do we invent reasons for someone's silence, or imagine hidden meanings behind someone's words?

This agreement asks us to replace an assumption with clarity. It reminds us to ask questions, to communicate, to be brave enough to say, "I don't know, can you tell me?"

When I began practicing this, I noticed how much mental space it freed. The endless circles of "what if" began to fade. Instead of being trapped in invented scenarios, I started embracing truth: even when it was uncomfortable. In that, there is peace.

#### Agreement Four: Always Do Your Best

The last agreement ties everything together: always do your best. It may sound like advice we've heard since childhood, but "The Four Agreements" gives it a gentler, more compassionate meaning.

Doing your best does not mean exhausting yourself or chasing perfection. It means showing up with

honesty, giving what you can in each moment, knowing that your best will change from day to day. Some days, your best will shine; other days, it will simply mean surviving. Both are valid.

This agreement taught me to forgive myself for not being flawless, to see value in effort rather than outcome. It broke the chains of self criticism and allowed me to accept my own humanity.

#### A Mantra for Life

Over time, "The Four Agreements" has become one of my mantras. Not in the sense of rigid rules, but as a rhythm I return to whenever I feel lost. It helps me take a step back from the noise of the world, from the absurd loops of thought that often trap us. It reminds me that freedom is possible: not because life is simple, but because our perspective can change.

This book is not about offering easy answers. It is about reminding us that we already carry the answers within us, if only we dare to look. It encourages us to ask questions, to unlearn, and to rebuild.

That is why I can only recommend it. "The Four Agreements" is a gift, one that continues to unfold long after you close its pages. It is a guide toward forgiveness, self awareness, and liberation of thought. It is not a map with a single route, but a lantern you can carry as you wander through the unknown.

#### Conclusion

Life is absurd, beautiful, painful, and unpredictable. We are all searching for ways to navigate it, to soften its edges, to breathe through its storms. For me, this small book has been a companion, a reminder that change begins not outside, but within.

And perhaps that is why people say "The Four Agreements" is a book to give. Because once it touches you, you want others to feel that wave of wellness too. You want them to find their own lantern.

I know I did. And I will keep offering it, just as it was once offered to me.

Cassandre Journoud



# BRAJCHINO Where Silence Speaks of the Future

Ten days, four countries, one shared idea – young people becoming ambassadors of the rural spirit. The "Rural Youth Ambassadors" project took us to Brajchino, a village that at first glance seems frozen in time, yet quietly holds answers for the future.

Brajchino welcomed us with stone paths and houses carrying the weight of generations. But it was there, in the heart of silence, that the loudest conversations began: how to keep life in rural areas alive, how to encourage young people not to leave the village, but to transform it into a place of new opportunities.

Our daily walks became lessons. We saw Lake Prespa – majestic, yet receding, like a mirror reflecting our responsibility. We learned that nature does not disappear on its own – we are the ones pulling it away. And it was there that we felt the weight of our role as young people: not only to be witnesses, but also to be actors of change.

From those discussions came visions – festivals to revive the cultural pulse, green initiatives to restore balance with nature, ideas for social enterprises to keep the spirit of youth alive in the villages. Every proposal felt like a small seed planted in fertile ground.











And that is where the essence lies: the rural is not the past, but an untapped resource of the present. Brajchino showed us that the future is not measured only in tall buildings and fast streets, but also in clean water, an open sky, and in young people choosing to stay and create where others see only silence.

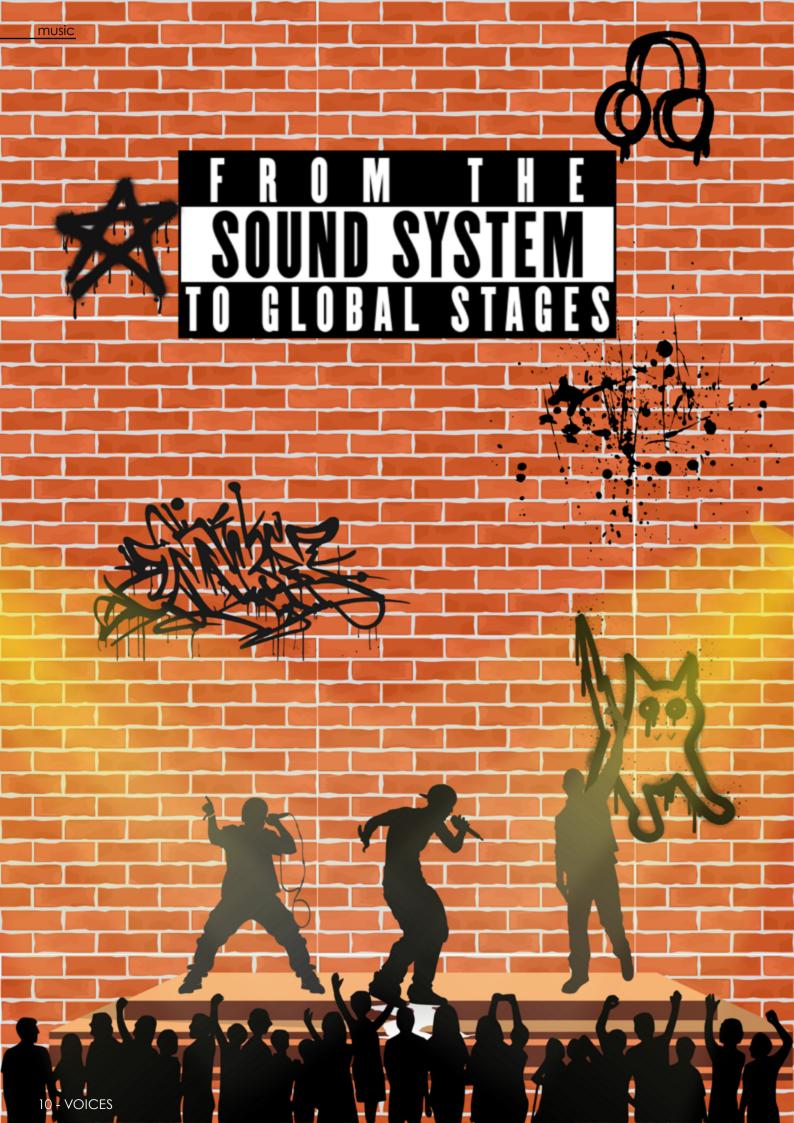
"Roots do not pull us down; they give us support to grow upward." Perhaps this thought best describes our experience: that to stay in a village, to invest in the place where you were born, is an act of courage. And courage always moves history forward.

The group that took part in this project is proof that there are young people with a voice, with a desire for change, and with the strength for achievement. They are not just participants in an exchange, but an example of a generation that believes every step — no matter how small — can leave a mark. "Rural Youth Ambassadors" was not just a project, but a testimony that young people can be the driving force behind great stories.

Compliments to the Association Brajcino 2011 for the excellently organized project, and Volunteers Centre Skopje will continue to be here for any help and support in the future.

Anastasija Gjorgjievska





You first have to create the hip-hop movement. And how do you create the Hip-Hop movement? Poverty, drugs, and the Afro-Caribbean community. Now you have Hip-Hop. End of the article, see you in the next VOICES edition.

I'm joking. Let's be more serious. It was the desire to leave poverty and the world of drugs that pushed them to promote their culture and propagate it, which allowed them to capitalize on it. Everything started in the Bronx, where the Afro-Caribbean community lives. When I'm saying Afro-Caribbean community, I mean Puerto Ricans, Jamaicans, Dominicans, Trinidadians, Barbadians... For example, Cardi B is from the South Bronx, and her mother is from Trinidad, while her father is Dominican. I think it will make more sense for you now.

#### **Creation of Hip-Hop**

So, the expression of Hip-Hop started here, but what is Hip-Hop? That's a cultural movement born during the 1970s, with five pillars. Breakdancing, MCing, DJing, Graffiting, and Beatboxing. Around this world, you also have the mode, and the Caribbean cultural and values influence, which will become another culture afterwards.

And ALL this Caribbean melting pot, created the PLACE TO BE for music culture in the Bronx, with the Salsa, Funk, Merengue, Bachata, Reggae, Dancehall... Literally, worldwide music is a bombshell. And now this is the moment when Clive Campbell, aka Kool Herc, will appear.

Kool Herc is from Jamaica, and music had a very big place in his life. Basically, he brought the Jamaican Sound System to the Bronx and started to call them Block Parties. Where the whole community can forget their situations, with breakdance and graffiti. And the party is everywhere. Kool Herc just needed a car, 2 big speakers, and his DJ Deck to mix music in the street.

BUT, every nationality wants to be exposed, so MCs started speaking in rhymes, during breaks (the solo drum at the end of the music), with their own influences, accents, etc., and that's where we witness the birth of the first rappers. They spread this all over New York, and that's how rap was born. However, at this time, people were not rapping; they were "toasting". That's how they used to call it in Jamaica.

Now you know how rap was born, but you still don't know how rap became a real genre. Of course, you can guess, just toasting during breaks is not enough. Hence, they started to add scratching, create the real DJ desk (the one without cuts during music), and the last touch, the sampler. To add pieces of riddims in a composition. No break needed anymore.

It took one decade to create the musical genre "RAP"; we are now leaving the 70s to the 80s. We had the MCs, now we will get the rap music.

"Rapper's Delight", from Sugarhill Gang. You don't know? I think you know, it's the first worldwide rap hit. They put all the best punchlines in one song to promote rap across the world. And that's how they also created the first label, Sugarhill Records.

At the same time, an emerging rapper, who was also one of the pioneers of hiphop culture, decided to add value to rap, which was to add a little philosophy and peace. His name is Afrika Bambaataa. His best friend died in a shooting; therefore, he decided to use words rather than weapons to attack, creating the Zulu Gang Nation to promote peace. We are now witnessing the creation of the rap battle, one of the most important elements of rap culture.

#### The Golden Age

Grandmaster Flash wrote "The Message" which was the first Conscious rap, and GMF gave birth to a lot of sons, the first lyricists in the rap. Egotrip is not over, but now conscious rap has more influence. Welcome to Public Enemy, KRS-One, or Big Daddy Kane. They will start to denounce White Supremacy, Self Defense, Police Brutality, for example, to advocate for the security and protection of Afro-Caribbean and, more broadly, Afro-American communities. But when you are opening your mouth too much, you will start to have problems...

There will be a lot of copyright lawsuits, politicians will start saying that black people advocate violence, and it's also the creation of the "parental advisory explicit content" logo and the record company sharks will come and tell them, if you want money, you have to make easy listening, so mainstream music that doesn't shock the "population" (that is to say, white people in the USA).

It's going to annoy the new rappers who are overflowing with creativity, who are going to invent the new school. Rappers very attached to the roots of rap, who prefer to play with their flow rather than writing. Welcome Snoop Dogg, NAS, Wu Tang Clan, Eminem, 50 Cent Tupac, Notorious B.I.G., and also, welcome to

the fight between West Coast Rap vs. East Coast Rap.

From the 90s to the 2000s, rap didn't evolve that much; new labels like Young Money or ROC Nation, former rappers again gave birth to new rappers like Tyga, Drake, Chris Brown, Mac Miller, Nicki Minaj, Kanye West, Big Sean, etc. We are nowadays, and the rap culture is the most dominant in the world, in the cinema, on the internet, in the way we dress, everywhere. And we have now different types of Rap: Trap, Drill, Cloud... All of this is influenced by your own culture, and everybody can find their favorite genre. Even you, who doesn't listen to rap, influence probably hit you in some way. Long live Hip-Hop and the Caribbean culture, which still influences everything around you.

#### Terry Ruart

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Wikimedia commons: Photobra Adam Bielawski, Thesupermat, Mika-photography, Los Angeles Police Department, Nicolas Völcker, Mikamote user "E-Trill" at Twitter



When the Spark Leaves You



For the first time in months, something that I kinda dreaded before coming here finally happened. That is not having the motivation to write an article. It's not so much that I don't have ideas of what I can write about, as I have a list with a few ideas that I collected over the past few months, with some ideas of articles that I could write.

However, for the first time in months, not one of these ideas spoke to my mind enough to push me to actively start writing about them. That being said, writing articles is something that I really enjoy doing. So now that I finally pushed myself to start writing something, I would like to reflect on the different possible reasons behind this writer's block.

Apart from the changing weather, which quite honestly doesn't bother me that much, the main difference with the previous months is the absence of a random "revelation", whether it was some niche linguistic topic or just some other niche topic that would suddenly interest me. In the past months I also was inspired by some personal reflections influenced by some existential crisis, which also fueled my creativity for writing articles.

In my opinion, the main reason behind my inspiration deficiency is somewhat a consequence of the intense summer, during which many volunteers arrived and went away. While there were a lot of people, now that everything is kinda empty it feels like something is missing.

Moreover, all the people that were here before I arrived are now gone, which still feels quite strange. It's not about the new responsibility that I feel like I now have, as this is part of the job. I don't even know how to describe the feeling properly. It's a bit as if I lost some point of reference, in some ways friends that I could look up to. I remember during my first few months here I would count the time that I've been here by counting how much time I have left with them here. To some extent I had already prepared myself to have a weird summer.

Usually, especially when you're still in school, summer holidays are a fun time you're waiting for the whole year. For me, I knew that this summer would be the time in which I would see my friends progressively leave Skopje, the office and thus the flat. So while I was looking forward to it, I was also apprehensive about this period, as I knew it meant that not only my friends would leave soon, but also that I had myself a limited time left here.

Coming back to my lack of motivation, inspiration, or even creativity I suppose my main obstacle is that as you've probably noticed I may have started to think too much. But not quite exactly thinking too much about my tasks and whatnot, no, simply overthinking for the purpose of overthinking. While self-reflections and introspections can have many benefits on your self-awareness, personal growth, emotional stability, etc. It can also have some drawbacks, in my case, it hinders my creativity as I'm creating mental blocks for myself, for no apparent reason.

However there's still hope. Because as you can see, I managed to write an article about my creative drought. So hopefully this article will help me regain the spark I had for writing niche articles, and will encourage myself to get outside of my head again.

Chloe Gaschy

# Not too late

The last waves
Have fled the shore
Into a thousand droplets
Dissolved, crumbled
Against neighboring coasts

They aren't gone
They aren't dried
Densed in nameless
Salts
Bitter or tasteless

They exist
They gulp
They slither
Beneath newborn rays
In shifting lights

They reflect
Another shard of sun
Scorchingly
The very same sun
...Perhaps it's not too late

Jona Cenameri

# S'është vonë

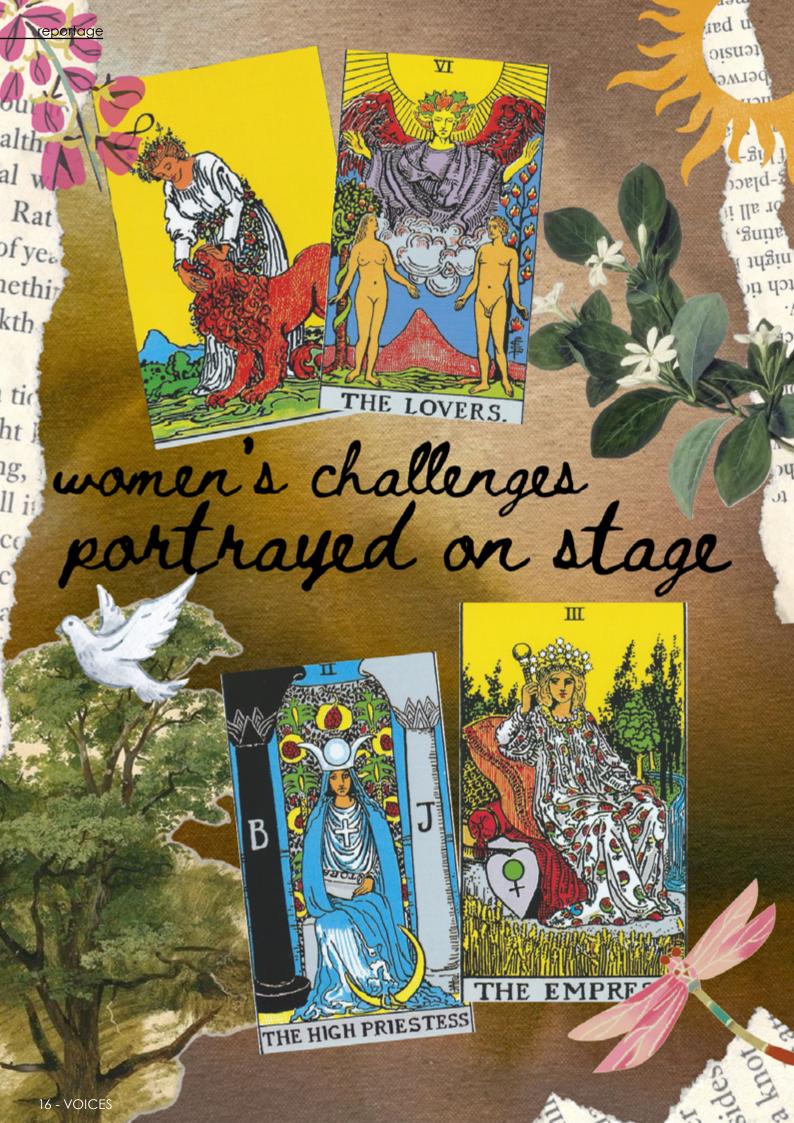
Dallgët e fundit I janë arratisur bregut Në njëmijë pikla Shpërbërë, grimcuar Pas brigjeve fqinje

S'janë zhdukur S'janë tharë Dendur në kripëra Pa emra Të hidhta a pa shije

Ekzistojnë
Gulcojnë
Gjarpërojnë
Nën rreze të reja
Në drita të ndryshme

Reflektojnë
Një copë tjetër diell
Përvëlueshëm
Të njëjtin diell
...Ndoshta s'është vonë

Jona Cenameri



Throughout history, women were often silenced. Yet the stage gave them a way to speak, to protest, and to resist.

The theatre stage is more than entertainment. It shows hidden problems, social pressures, and unspoken dreams. Particularly for women, it became a place of rebellion. When they could not join public debates, they found their voices in plays. Sometimes through humor, sometimes through sadness, and sometimes with one strong act that touched whole communities.

This article looks at four famous women on stage: Lysistrata, Adela, Nora, and Emel. They are not real people, but their stories tell real truths. They represent women's search for freedom in Ancient Greece, 20th-century Spain, and 19thcentury Norway. Emel, however, was played by Afife Jale, the first Muslim Turkish actress. Her acting turned fiction into real resistance. Their stories also connect to women thinkers like Hipparchia, Federica Montseny, and Mary Wollstonecraft. All remind us that while times change, the fight continues. It reveals the essence of living within the struggle for freedom against oppression.

#### Lysistrata: Humor as protest

In 411 BC, Aristophanes wrote "Lysistrata". In the play, women refuse to be intimate with their husbands until the men end the war. It looks like comedy, but its message is serious: even without political rights, women together could influence history.

Lysistrata's brave declarations continue to resonate: "Women! The moment has arrived to put an end to men's endless wars. We will withhold our beds and our love until they lay down their arms. If they seek conflict, let them battle against their own desires! We possess the true power, and we will prevail!"

Lysistrata shows that turning private life into political power is a form of resistance. This idea also links to Hipparchia, a woman philosopher who rejected traditional roles and lived freely. Both women show that saying "no" to male control is a political act.

Similarly, the philosopher Hipparchia of Maroneia (c. 350–280 BC) embodied defiance in her own existence. Rejecting

the societal expectation of marriage, she lived as a Cynic philosopher and boldly declared: "You cannot compel me to conform to your definition of womanhood." Through distinct means, both Lysistrata and Hipparchia illustrate that a woman's refusal to accept maleimposed roles constitutes a form of political resistance.

#### Adela: Tragedy at home

In Federico García Lorca's "The House of Bernarda Alba" (1936), a mother forces her daughters into eight years of mourning. Adela refuses: she wants love, freedom, and life. She cries out against her prison-like home. But her fight ends in tragedy, as she dies for her rebellion.

"I cannot accept this! I cannot fade away within these walls! This house is not my grave! If a woman loves, she must truly love. If a woman lives, she must genuinely live! I will strive for my freedom, even if it means opposing my own mother!"

Lorca shows that oppression often comes not only from men but also from women who accept the system. Adela's words echo Federica Montseny, Spain's first female minister, who said: "Women who want freedom will be free." Adela's story proves the high cost of this desire.

#### Nora: A door closed, a new life opened

Henrik Ibsen's "A Doll's House" (1879) shocked audiences. At the end, Nora leaves her husband and children to find her own identity. At first, she acts like the perfect wife, but later she sees the truth: she was treated like a doll, first by her father, then by her husband.

When Nora slams the door, it is more than theatre. It is a call for independence. It started debates about marriage and women's rights across Europe. Nora reflects Mary Wollstonecraft's idea: "Women do not need power over men, only over themselves."

#### Emel and Afife Jale: fiction meets reality

In early 20th-century Istanbul, Hüseyin Suat's play "Yamalar" told the story of Emel, a woman trapped by family and society. But the character gained real power through Afife Jale, the first Muslim Turkish actress. At that time, women were not allowed on stage, yet Afife performed. By acting as Emel, she turned

fiction into real protest. She opened the way for future actresses in Türkiye.

Despite being distanced by time and culture, all heroines embody a shared truth: the struggle for women's freedom is ongoing, even as its expressions differ. For Lysistrata, liberation meant united opposition to warfare; for Adela, it signified breaking away from suffocating familial expectations; for Nora, it involved self-realization and independence; and for Emel, it was about unveiling the societal "stitches" that restrained women.

Their narratives also illustrate the variety of results: comedy, tragedy, liberation, and experiential resistance. Some acts of rebellion blossom while others hesitate, yet each leaves a mark. Every defiant gesture contributes to a broader historical range of women's struggles.

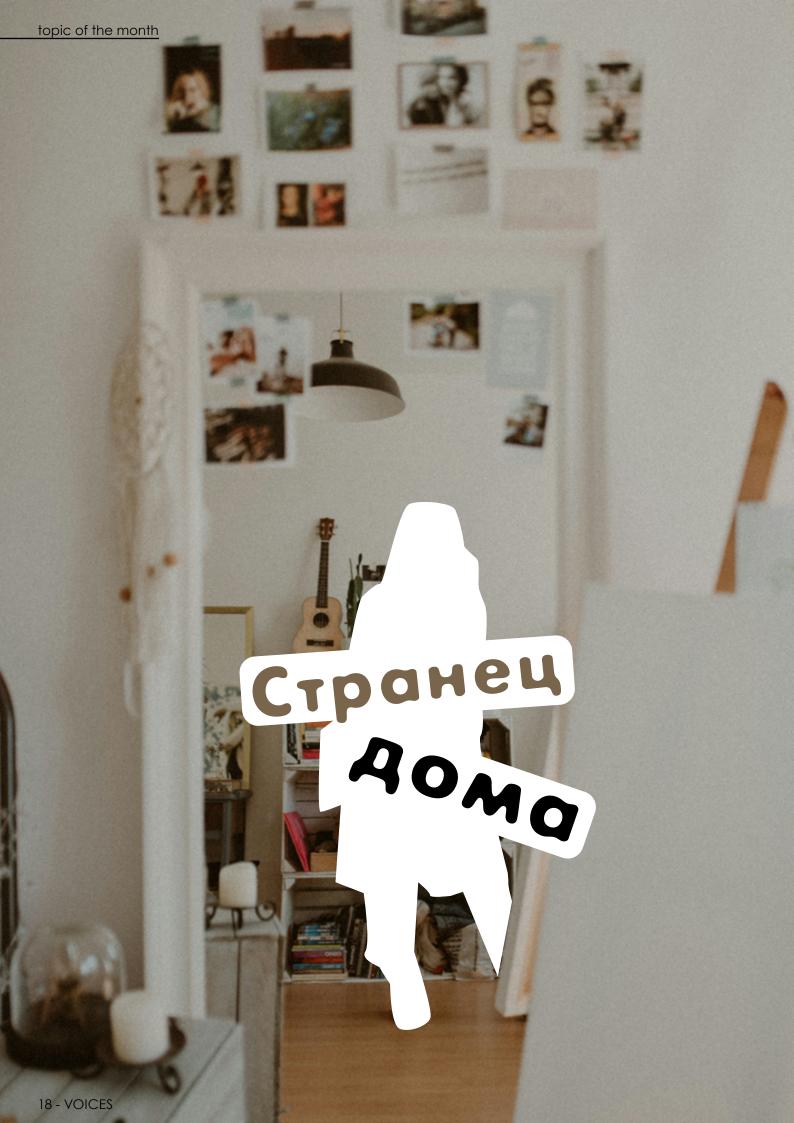
And always, there is a woman poised to challenge the status quo.

As Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) observed: "The beginning is always today." As long as these voices are heard, women will never be silenced. They come from different places and different times, yet share the same cycle of life, ready to break this chain. Because there is eternally a Lysistrata, an Adela, a Nora, an Emel. They will start their story from today and this 'today' will echo across countless presents. These four women, like the four seasons of a year, followed one another and revealed the greatest illusion of this world even in this short article.

Ilgın Sabuncu

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ајтешкиот дел од животот во странство? Па, понекогаш знае да биде враќањето.

Наместо да ве утеши, враќањето дома може да биде фрустрирачко, збунувачко и депресивно, особено ако таму не сте пропуштиле ама баш ништо. Очигледно, секој минува различно низ тоа, а јас сум доста екстремен пример. И покрај тоа - или можеби поради тоа - сакам да го споделам моето искуство. Ќе разговараме за моите чувства, случајни мисли, обратен културен шок и начини за справување со него, па се надевам дека сте подготвени за "патување".

Има толку многу совети на интернет за преселба на ново место... но, не многу луѓе споменуваат колку е тешко да се вратите дома по некое време. Вашиот роден град се променил, но вие сте се промениле уште повеќе, и се чувствувате како двајцата да се оддалечивте како пријатели од детството кои тргнале по својот пат. Одите по познатите улици со еден вид дистанца, како да сте само половина таму. И најлошо од сè, кафулето што го посетувавте редовно веќе ги нема вашите омилени карамел тостови во менито...

Сето ова го натера мојот мозок да се сети на фразата што ја слушнав пред некое време - обратен културен шок - и ме мотивираше да ја разгледам, надевајќи се дека ќе најдам некое објаснување. Додека повеќето луѓе се свесни дека преселувањето на ново место и култура ќе бара малку прилагодување, потребата за повторно прилагодување не изгледа толку очигледна.

Враќањето не е само чувство дека не припаѓате таму. Обратниот културен шок доаѓа со тоа што сте покритични кон вашиот дом - можеби затоа што сте го паметеле како подобар отколку што бил, или можеби затоа што го споредувате со вашиот живот во странство. Можеби ќе се исцрпите правејќи основни работи, бидејќи мора да обрнете внимание на начинот на кој ги правите, особено доколку културата е значително различна. Она што најмногу го забележав е дека

местата држат спомени исклучително силно и се обидуваат да ги вратат старите верзии од мене што сакам да ги оставам зад себе. Понекогаш се чувствува како постојана борба да не го изгубам новооткриениот јас што сакам да го задржам. Тогаш, која е причината зад сето ова?

Прво, сте се промениле. Престојот во нова средина значи дека веројатно мораше да ја преуредите вашата рутина, социјалниот круг или дури и едноставни работи како навиките во исхраната. Да дадам пример, живеењето на Балканот ме направи посоцијална. Секако, требаше малку време, но од интроверт кој имаше двајца пријатели во мојот роден град, се претворив во личност која излегува неколку пати неделно. Одеднаш, престојот околу луѓе и постојаното запознавање нови - дури и само за разговор или еднократно кафе - станаа мој секојдневен живот. Мислам дека навистина има нешто во јужноевропското сонце што има моќ да ги отвори луѓето, но тоа е тема за друг ден.

Второ, вашиот дом се променил. Веројатно сте доживеале многу за време на вашиот престој во странство, но во текот на целото ова време - и вашето семејство и пријателите, исто така, живееја свои животи. Можеби откриле нов омилен начин за правење палачинки. Можеби некои од нив повеќе не се таму. И вашиот роден град се променил. Ќе забележите нови места и ќе сфатите дека сте ги изгубиле некои од оние што ги знаевте во душа.

Ако сакате да додадете повеќе проблеми во оваа збрка, можеби ќе се најдете себеси повеќе возбудени да ги споделите вашите животни приказни од странство отколку луѓето да ги слушаат, а спротивното - да не бидете заинтересирани да дознаете што се случило дома. Да се биде странец доаѓа со еден вид третман на "позната личност", бидејќи сте поинтересни за локалните луѓе отколку што сте во вашата земја... и дефинитивно е нешто што треба да се пропушти. Исто така, е полесно да се спријателите со други странци, бидејќи веднаш имате нешто заедничко за почеток. Сето ова значи

дека можеби ќе се чувствувате како да не припаѓате дома и ќе мора повторно да се адаптирате.

Секако, не можам да ве оставам без решенија, па еве неколку идеи. Поврзете се со други кои имаат слично искуство, без разлика дали станува збор за запознавање странци во вашиот град или одржување контакт со пријатели што сте ги стекнале во странство. Некои од работите што можете да ги направите се менторство, започнување група за размена на јазици или споделување на вашата приказна преку интернет. Најдете начин да ги интегрирате вашите нови навики и вештини во вашиот секојдневен живот, од начинот на кој го подготвувате појадокот, до вашите следни кариерни избори. На овој начин, ќе ја одржите "жива" трансформираната верзија од себе. Уште еден совет што го слушнав пред да заминам е да останете зафатени. Направете планови за работи што ве интересираат: организирајте го вашето следно патување, пријавете се за нови часови, започнете го хобито што го одложувавте.

А јас? Па, оваа недела почнувам нова работа во меѓународен тим, а следниот месец со магистерски студии. Мускулите ме болат од часовите по јога што ги најдов близу до мојот дом. Билетот за концерт на еден од моите омилени уметници ме чека во мојата фиока. Разгледав курсеви за возење и размислувам да волонтирам во засолниште за мачки. Се чувствувам тажно поголемиот дел од времето, но знам дека не можам да го паузирам мојот живот поради тоа. И можам само да се надевам дека ќе се подобри, бидејќи секогаш беше така во минатото.

И ако тоа чувство, сепак, не исчезнува - секогаш можеш пак да заминеш. Колку и да треба - пронајди се себеси повторно.

Ања Војџиак

1звори:

Intentional Expat – The Repatriation Blues: 5 Tips from an Expat Coach for Coping with Reverse Culture Shock U.S. Department of State – Reverse Culture Shock - The Challenges of Returning Home

# Брајчино

каде што тишината Зборува за иднината





есет дена, четири земји, една заедничка идеја – младите да бидат амбасадори на руралниот дух. Проектот "Rural Youth Ambassadors" нè однесе во Брајчино, село кое на прв поглед изгледа како заглавено во времето, а всушност крие одговори за иднината.

Брајчино нè пречека со камени патчиња и куќи кои носат тежина на генерации. Но токму таму, во срцето на тишината, започнаа најгласните разговори: како да го задржиме животот во руралните средини, како младите да не бегаат од селото, туку да го претворат во место на нови можности.

Секојдневните прошетки ни беа лекции. Го видовме Преспанското Езеро — раскошно, но повлечено, како огледало што ни ја врати нашата одговорност. Научивме дека природата не исчезнува сама, туку ние ја повлекуваме со себе. Токму тука ја почувствувавме тежината на улогата што ја имаме како млади: да не бидеме само сведоци, туку и актери на промена.

Од тие дискусии излегоа визии — фестивали што би го оживеале културниот пулс, зелени иницијативи што би го вратиле балансот со природата, идеи за социјални претпријатија што би го задржале духот на младите во селата. Секој предлог звучеше како мало семе засадено во плодна почва.

И токму тука лежи суштината: руралното не е минато, туку неискористен ресурс на сегашноста. Брајчино ни покажа дека иднината не се мери само во високи згради и брзи улици, туку и во чиста вода, отворено небо и во млад човек кој избира да остане и да создава таму каде што другите гледаат само тишина.

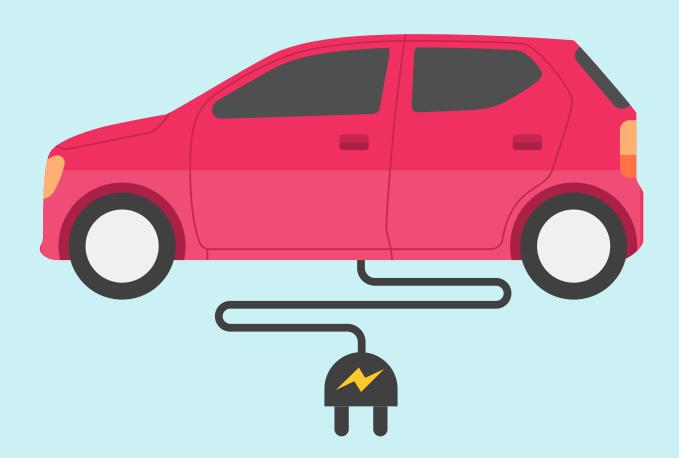
"Корените не нè влечат надолу, тие ни даваат потпора да растеме нагоре." И можеби токму оваа мисла е најдобриот опис на нашето искуство: дека да останеш во село, да вложиш таму каде што си роден, е чин на храброст. А, храброста секогаш ја движи историјата напред.

Групата која беше дел од проектот е доказ дека постојат млади со глас, со желба за промена и со сила за подвиг. Тие не се само учесници во една размена, туку пример за генерација што верува дека секој чекор — колку и да е мал — може да остави трага. "Rural Youth Ambassadors" не беше само проект, туку сведоштво дека младите можат да бидат двигатели на големи приказни.

Комплименти до Здружението Брајчино 2011 за одлично организираниот проект, а Волонтерски Центар Скопје и во иднина ќе биде тука за било каква помош и поддршка.

Анастасија Ѓорѓиевска

# WHY YOU SHOULDN'T BUY AN ELECTRIC CAR

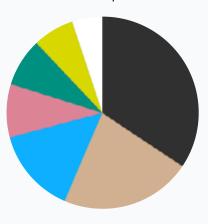


Rising pollution, dwindling fossil fuels, and higher vehicle costs. When you look at it from this perspective, electric cars seem like a logical choice but if we examine it deeply, we see that it is not actually like that.

#### Cost of electricity

Although electricity is often perceived as a clean and sustainable source of energy, it would not be entirely accurate to describe it as such under present conditions. As illustrated in the graph below, a significant portion of global electricity generation still relies heavily on fossil fuels, particularly natural gas and coal. While the share of these resources has been gradually declining over the years due to the increasing adoption of renewable alternatives, their current contribution remains considerably high. This dependence on fossil fuels highlights an important issue: the environmental benefits of technologies such as electric vehicles are not as absolute as they are commonly assumed to be. In other words, the extent to which electric cars can be considered environmentally friendly is closely tied to the energy mix from which electricity is produced. Unless cleaner and renewable sources become the dominant means of electricity generation, the claim that electric vehicles offer a fully clean solution remains open to debate.

2024 world electricity generation by source in terawatt-hours (TWh). Total generation was 30.85 petawatt-hours:



- Coal 10,587 (34.4%)
- Natural gas 6,796 (22.1%)
- Hydro 4,417 (14.4%)
- Nuclear 2,765 (8.99%)
- Wind 2,497 (8.12%)
- Solar 2,130 (6.92%)
- ☐ Other 1,569 (5.10%)

#### Inadequate battery technology

The battery, which serves as the primary source of energy in electric vehicles, still faces significant limitations in meeting the demands of modern life. For instance, consider an emergency situation in which you must urgently take a loved one to the hospital. If the car's battery is depleted, you are forced to wait at least half an hour for it to recharge before being able to continue your journey. Even under ordinary circumstances, such a waiting period is inconvenient; in critical or time-sensitive situations, however, it may become not only impractical but also potentially harmful. Beyond charging times, another major challenge is the limited lifespan and endurance of current battery technologies. The inability of batteries to retain sufficient energy for extended periods not only restricts the overall efficiency of electric vehicles but also raises questions about their reliability in everyday use. Unless significant advancements are made in battery capacity, charging speed, and durability, these issues will remain key obstacles to the widespread adoption of electric vehicles.



Although electric vehicles are often as more cost-effective perceived compared to conventional fossil fuelpowered cars, in reality, they may prove to be more expensive over the long term. One of the primary reasons for this is the battery, which represents the most critical and costly component of an electric vehicle. In the event of a malfunction or the need for replacement, the expense can be substantial, with costs starting at a minimum of 5,000 USD. Furthermore, if other electrical or electronic mechanisms within the vehicle fail, the repair or replacement costs are likewise considerably high. Unlike fossil fuel vehicles, electric cars may not require regular annual maintenance fees for engine-related systems, which initially creates the impression of lower operating expenses. However,



replacement and specialized electrical repairs are taken into account, electric vehicles can ultimately become a more expensive alternative. Thus, the economic advantage of electric cars remains debatable, particularly when evaluating long-term ownership and unforeseen repair scenarios.

In addition, while manufacturers of electric vehicles continuously work to reduce production costs each year and, in parallel, lower the market prices of their cars, this development, although seemingly advantageous for first-time buyers—can have significant drawbacks in the long run. Specifically, when owners decide to sell their vehicles, they often face considerably greater depreciation compared to fossil fuel-powered cars. The rapid decline in resale value means that, despite initial savings at the point of purchase, electric vehicle owners may ultimately incur higher financial losses when attempting to resell their cars.

For the reasons I have outlined above, I would personally not prefer to purchase an electric vehicle at this stage. Nevertheless, I would like to emphasize that these are merely my own views, shaped by current circumstances. Should the issues I have mentioned be resolved in the future such as improvements in battery technology, reductions in costs, and wider adoption of cleaner energy sources I would certainly consider buying an electric vehicle.

Cemal Emre Denk

Sources:

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this body is

There is room for joy - sometimes a living room, spiraled and alive with houseplants, sometimes a garden with an empty bench.

There is room for grief - sometimes in a basement, sometimes on a chair by the window.

There is room for anger - sometimes in a closet under the stairs, sometimes at a kitchen table.

There is room for stillness - sometimes it waits in a tea cabinet, or between the pages of an old book.

There is room for hope - sometimes it rests on a windowsill, watching the trees, sometimes it whispers, closed in the attic upstairs.

Courage also sits there - sometimes silently under the bed, or stands next to the entrance door.



This body can hold much more. It is a spacious house.

80

## DISCOVERING AND EMBRACING THE SPIRIT OF THE COMMUNITY

Volunteering in Olde Vechte for two months was similar to immersing oneself in a vibrant mosaic of culture and community. Each day brings new experiences, allowing me to connect deeply with the locals and contribute meaningfully to various projects. The time I spent there will stay with me for the rest of my life, as it was my first volunteering experience abroad. The connections I made and the insight I gained from various situations and experiences significantly broadened my perspectives. Emphasizing thinking within the community itself also leads to personal development; such situations can sometimes be acceptable or unacceptable for us. The result is more important: whether we feel we've improved, whether it helped us, and whether we have a better self-image or reject it.

growth his journey of self-discovery and often challenges preconceived notions and pushes us to adapt. Ultimately, it's this evolution that shapes our identities and influences how we interact with the world around us. The journey of self-discovery and growth often makes us rethink what we think we know and forces us to evolve. The process of change constitutes what makes us who we are and shapes how we connect with the world around us.

Ide Vechte is a lively community that is also hidden and untouched in the beautiful nature. This makes it a one-of-a-kind place for people who want to relax and connect with nature. This mix of liveliness and solitude makes for a rich experience that honors both the calm of nature and the life of the community. You may create moments that strengthen relationships and spread joy when you share the food you prepare with those you care about and when your everyday activities bring vitality, worth, and happiness to the place. It was a tremendous joy. Every meal is an occasion for laughter and conversation, and it serves as a reminder of the small pleasures in life. Many unique moments, many events, funny friendships, and countless memories shaped our experiences during those two months. Sharing our challenges, worries, or whatever brings us to a more profound understanding of one another strengthened our bond.

4

n addition to my activities and tasks, this experience helped me identify my shortcomings and strengthen my skills, significantly changing the perception and the way I worked. This experience has to meet people with similar experiences to gaining new knowledge, this journey



# ОТКРИВАЊЕТО И ПРИФАЌАЊЕТО НА ДУХОТ ВО ЗАЕДНИЦАТА

Волонтирањето во фондацијата "Olde Vechte" во период од два месеца, беше слично на нурнување во енергичен мозаик културата и заедницата. Секој ден носи нови искуства, овозможувајќи ми длабоко да се поврзам со локалните луѓе и да придонесам значајно за различни проекти. Времето што го поминав таму ќе остане со мене до крајот на животот, бидејќи тоа беше моето прво волонтерско искуство во странство. Врската што ја направив и впечатокот што го добив од различни ситуации и искуства значително ги прошири моите перспективи. Истакнувањето моментот на заедничко размислување во самата заедница, исто така, води кон личен развој; таквите ситуации понекогаш може да бидат прифатливи или неприфатливи за нас. Резултатот е поважен: дали чувствуваме дека сме се подобриле, дали тоа ни помогнало, и дали имаме подобра слика за себе или го отфрламе.

атувањето на самооткривање и раст често не тера да го преиспитаме она што мислиме дека го знаеме и нѐ принудува да еволуираме. Процесот на промени претставува она што не прави и она што сме, и го обликува начинот на кој се поврзуваме со светот околу нас.

"Olde Vechte" е жива заедница што е скриена и недопрена во прекрасната природа. Ова го прави еднонасочно место за луѓе кои сакаат да се релаксираат и да се поврзат со природата. Оваа мешавина на живост и самотија го прави богато искуство кое ги почитува и смиреноста природата и животот на заедницата. Може да создадете моменти кои ги зајакнуваат односите и да шират радост кога ја делите храната што ја подготвувате со оние за кои се грижите и кога вашите секојдневни активности носат виталност, вредност и среќа на местото. Тоа беше огромна

радост. Секој приготвен оброк е прилика за смеа и разговор, и служи како потсетник за малите задоволства во животот. Стекнати многу уникатни моменти, настани, смешни и блиски пријателства и безброј спомени кој ги обликуваа нашите искуства во текот на овие два месеци. Споделувањето на нашите предизвици, грижи или што и да е, не доведе до подлабоко разбирање еден кон друг што ја зајакна нашата врска во заедницата.

окрај активностите и задачите, ова искуство ми помогна да ги идентификувам моите недостатоци и да ги зајакнам моите вештини, значително да ја променам перцепцијата и начинот на кој работев. Ова искуство ме направи посигурен и ми даде поволни алатки за решавање на проблемите во иднина. Исто така, овој период ми помогна и ме натера да размислувам за многу аспекти од мојот живот, како и генерално за мене. Јас бев во можност да сретнам луѓе со слични искуства и да добијам нова перспектива со присуството на една од обуките на програмата поддржана од самата фондација. Покрај стекнувањето на ново знаење, оваа приказна ме инспирираше да ја поздравам промената и да ги извршувам моите страсти обновена СО енергија.

Се надевам дека моето искуство со "Olde Vechte" нема да биде крајот, бидејќи верувам дека сè уште има многу повеќе да научиме за нас и да постигнеме заедно. Продолжувањето на ова патување може да доведе до многу повеќе врски и согледувања. Единствената атмосфера и чувство на заедницата оставија траен впечаток за мене.

Борис Ристоски волонтер на краткорочен ЕСКпроект "Extra Mile" во Омен, Холандија









# RECLAIMING —HOME—



When my mom told me she was filing the documents to become a German citizen, my first thought was "Finally!". For a second, I felt the triumphant sensation that inevitably follows winning a long-running argument. But although I had been trying for years to convince my mom of assuming German citizenship, it soon occurred to me that it was in fact not my own but rather my mom's victory. By claiming German citizenship, she is reclaiming not only her own voice but also the voice of all the millions of people sharing her story, or rather our story: descending from the so-called "guest-workers".

Although the concept of "guest-workers" is not a historic novelty, the family histories shaped by the recruitments of workers to Western Germany in the 1950s and 1960s are in many ways unique ones that require reappraisal not only on an individual but also societal level. Growing up, I never really questioned my family's history. I never questioned the fact that we only spoke Greek to my grandparents, that my mother's passport looked different from my own, that every summer holiday was spent at the island of my grandparents' birth. It was only when age made my grandparents increasingly nostalgic and open to talk about the past and growing xenophobia made my mother feel like not being accepted in the country she called home her whole life, the single pieces of my family's past started to fall into place and align within the greater context of history.

At the time economic growth gained momentum in post-war Western Germany, the country was in desperate need of a workforce to keep up with the accelerating pace of production. As many other nations struggled rather with unemployment than a lack of workforce, the German government

Megtisztított kemény,

mosva, egy porcellant

and leading businesses started to take the initiative to recruit foreign workers from abroad. Treaties between the Federal Republic of Germany and Italy, Spain, Greece, Türkiye, Marrocco, Portugal, South Korea, Tunisia, and Yugoslavia made the guestworker program official. As the name of the program already implies, this arrangement was meant to be temporary. The people that came to Germany to work were meant to stay only for a set amount of time - just like guests. The guest-worker initiative was designed to benefit all the involved parties, the German businesses, the sending nations, and the people leaving for work. But as it is always the case, reality turns out to be much more difficult and complex than even the most well-intended theory.

Nobody, neither German society nor the people coming to the country to work as guest workers were prepared for the imminent impact they would have on each other and the transgenerational issues that would result. Leaving village life on an Aegean island behind to earn money in an industrial district of a German city, my grandparents experienced the immense culture shock emblematic of the experience of the so-called first generation of guest workers. In the 1960s until the early 1970s, 14 million came to Germany with the guest workers' program - most of them without any prior knowledge of language, culture, or way of life. All those people were sure of was their goal to earn enough money to provide a better life back in their home country for the generations to come. Having this greater zeal and the dream of returning to the old home at heart, the people tried to cope with the everyday struggles of living and working in a foreign country. They either learned the necessary German skills on their own through everyday interactions or took part in rare

German classes, tried their best

репортажа



to keep their profile low and work as hard as possible. They did not strive to integrate into German society, nor did any Germans make efforts to accept them into society - why should they, since they would eventually return to

their old homeland. My grandparents had the very same thoughts. Only, they did not return. Delaying the return time after time the house was still under construction, there were no job prospects, it was an inopportune point in their daughters' schooling - they ended up staying in Germany. As part of the approximately 3 million guest workers who settled permanently in Germany, my grandparents belong to a group in German society whose story is generally known, but whose figurative voice remains mostly unheard. This is not due to the literal lack of language skills making selfexpression difficult but rather due to the absence of integration, which leaves them caught between the dream of their old homeland and the reality of their new one. Never properly dealt with, the question of belonging was consequently passed on to the next generation, the so-called second generation of guest workers.

Growing up in a society that did not recognize them as a full part of itself, the second generation found themselves caught between two worlds, belonging to both the old and the new homeland of their parents in some way, but to neither completely. In the old homeland they were always the Germans, and in Germany they were always singled out as coming from their parents' countries of origin. In order to be heard or seen, those growing up in a similar position, like my mother and her sisters, always seemed to have to walk an extra mile, always seemed to have to put in that extra effort to gain the respect and opportunities their peers enjoyed by right of birth. Coming of age in the 1990s, the time of naive but ignorant comments like "you are not that type of migrant, you are different", mass

petitions against dual citizenship, and racist far-right violence, my mother and many others sharing her history were left behind with a feeling of not belonging and not being recognized in the country they not only call home but which's society they are active parts of.

With the question of belonging still not cleared, the third generation finds itself all over the spectrum of belonging and not belonging. When I think about my family's history, sometimes I have struggled to relate. I grew up surrounded by my grandparent's food and tales of villagelife on an island and even started speaking Greek before German. But nowadays, I stumble over my words and struggle to read fluently in the language - just as I can empathize with the stories told and recognize myself as a part of family history but never can fully grasp it and make it my own. But in fact, I also do not have to. It is enough to listen, be aware about and recognize the patterns of my family's past, learn the hidden lessons, and try to practice remembrance.

In the end, family history is not only something that can set apart but also root us in a community. Even stories of exclusion can ultimately provide inclusion when properly told and properly listened to. The stories we get told about our family's past are unique stories shaped by unique experiences. At the same time, all of them share something deeply humane in the existential struggle of feeling alien and creating a sense of belonging. In this sense, family histories only stress the importance of remembrance and the healing power recalling, reappraisal and in-context setting can unfold. This is the only way we can provide the recognition and acknowledgement the people behind each story of history deserve.

Sophia Abegg

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# 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**, attentiongrabbing **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

# 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 seperately (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!



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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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