

**RESHAPING
FUTURE**

together

WHAT FUTURE DO WE SEE FOR OUR COMMUNITIES?

1st International meeting of a working group
to create wellbeing economies locally based on
arts and science, community and spirituality
18th April, 2023, Vienna at WEST (Alte WU)

Co-hosted by: Friedrich Hinterberger, Barbara Bulc and Simona Koch

BACKGROUND

This gathering was inspired by Fritz and Barbara meeting at the Wellbeing Summit in Bilbao in 2022. The purpose of the Vienna meeting was to co-create a growing space/community where we can learn from each other and combine our knowledge, activities and wisdom. We asked a central question, what if we prioritize wellbeing over economic growth?

We came together to explore

- IMAGINING FUTURE(S)
- RECONCILING THE PAST
- SHARING POWER*

through various participatory practices co-designed social experiments with communities, towns, cities or regions.

*These practices were inspired by the social research study Barbara co-authored with Eric Gordon, *Activating Values in Urban Transitions (May 2022)*, based on her work stewarding a city-wide social experiment for youth wellbeing called OurCluj, a values-based urban living laboratory in Cluj, Romania, that prioritizes values of care and trust over economic growth.

AGENDA:

1. Opening Words (Fritz & Barbara)
2. G.R.A.C.E. practice (Barbara)
3. Introductions
4. Postcards from the future (Peter)
5. Lunch Break
6. Sharing/ exchange: Feelings, visions, how to proceed.
7. Closing practice G.R.A.C.E.(Barbara) & Mulan story

1. OPENING WORDS

Fritz expressed gratitude for every participant joining and mentioned that there were a lot more interested to come but unfortunately not able to join this time. He points out that this meeting marks the start of something novel. Regarding the diverse backgrounds from all of us while heading towards a common direction, namely thinking about wellbeing for our future communities, the first international meeting of this working group can be really seen as a glimpse of hope.

2. G.R.A.C.E. PRACTICE

Barbara was leading the group on this exercise to cultivate compassion-based interactions, introduced first by Joan Roshi Halifax. The term “grace” is seen as an acronym of five non-compassion elements, necessary for compassion to emerge:

G: Gather attention. **R:** Recall our intention. **A:** Attune to self and then other. **C:** Consider what will serve. **E:** Engage & End

It begins with Gather Attention, at time when attention has been colonized by social media, politics, consumerism, and pressures we are never good enough. It help us focus on how to serve.

When we seek to fix, we see the world as broken.

When we seek to help, we see the world as weak.

When we seek to serve, we see the world as a whole. fixing and helping may be the world of ego, and service the world of the soul.

(- Rachel Naomi Remen)



WHAT FUTURE DO WE SEE FOR OUR COMMUNITIES?

CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

18th April 2013 VIENNA

FUTURE - RECONCILING THE PAST

INTRODUCTION ROUND

The introduction round was the next activity. We proceeded in an alphabetical order here, with presentation slides.

Starting with **Milena Bister** who is a sociocultural anthropologist of science and technology, senior researcher in the anticipatory research project klimarechnungshof.jetzt.

Followed by **Barbara Bulc**, a social chemist and the Founder of SDG Colab and Global Development. Ambassador at Reboot the Future. Primary steward of OurCluj values-based living lab See also Barbara's recent op-ed article "Why we need to prioritize wellbeing over growth" in the Financial Times.

Ulrike Payerhofer curator, educator and Senior Artist at University of Applied Arts Vienna for UniNEtZ project (www.uninetz.at) and IPSD (ipsd.uni-ak.ac.at) and initiator and artistic director of Projektwerkstatt (www.doingtransformation.at) – a transversal incubator for transdisciplinary practices across art, science and society.

Friedrich (Fritz) Hinterberger: Senior researcher at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna and Paris Lodron University Salzburg. Vice President of the Austrian Chapter of the Club of Rome. fritz.hinterberger.com Current Projects: Wellbeing for all Progress beyond growth and Palmen im Ausseerland.

Felix Zabel: Current engagement with the topics of creativity, exploration of desirable futures as well as their concrete implementation by means of innovation and entrepreneurship methods. Background as designer, start-up founder in the field of architectural technologies, coach of start-up projects in the impact and creative field. Additional engagement and training in Futures Literacy (developed by UNESCO)

Valerie Schaller: An artist who works with large-scale video projections and special stagings. She creates spaces of regeneration where one can immerse in deep contemplation and receive good energies. These spaces can be set up anywhere and are like oases in our restless and stressful civilization. See: www.valerie-schaller.com

Simona Koch: Visual Artist, designer and researcher based in Vienna, Austria and Bavaria. www.simonakoch.de, tinyurl.com/yxql99le

Marisa Mühlböck: Researcher and author in the fields of Corporate Social Responsibility, Sustainable Business Transformation and Sustainable Leadership (e.g. www.lit-verlag.de/isbn/978-3-643-50452-4); editor of a Springer book on Sustainable Business Transformation & Well-being (to be published in 2024) www.springer.com/series/11565 Former CEO of social enterprise Discovering Hands in Austria: www.discovering-hands.at/startseite

Daniel Gratzner: Climate activist (formerly LCOY and FFF), founder of the flourishing society, student of Tibetology and Psychology (focus environmental psychology), translator of Tibetan Buddhist texts.

Ronja Janu: A trans- and interdisciplinary researcher on intersection of climate change, inequality, gender-based violence, human rights, and artistic strategies. Her current project explores a good life for all examining the Latin American concept, Buen Vivir, as an inspiration for transformation beyond capitalistic structures.

Finally **Peter Bachler** introduced himself, as well as his project "Zukunftsküche". He is member of the Artists for Future Vienna, engaged in his local district and curious about creating a good climate (social and environmental).

MULAN STORY (PETER)

As bridging from the introduction part to another exercise that was about to follow, Peter was telling an ancient Mulan Story:

Mulan sat on the main square of the city. He was sitting on a chair facing another one that was empty. In between the two chairs he placed a table with a sign on it. It said: For one piece of gold you will receive the perfect answer on two questions.

Some time passed and people were looking at him with curiosity and amazement. Suddenly a stranger passed by, inspecting Mulan skeptically.

He said: "Mulan, don't you think one piece of gold might be too much for what you are offering?"

Mulan replied: "No. And what is your second question?"

POSTCARDS FROM THE FUTURE

Next, there was another exercise which is called "Postcards from the future". Peter introduced it. The basic idea is to activate one's imagination for a positive future.

The exercise's technique is particularly helpful, when facing a personal crisis.

First, one centers him / her -self. Felling inside your own body and resting on an area that anchors oneself. Then, in your imagination, jump





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towards a place in the future that is meaningful. Imagine an utopian future and let your imagination be the guide. Now picture a child in your scenario and approach it gently. It will point towards something that contains the message from the future. This message is what will be written on the postcard, usually described in a few sentences.

Lunchbreak

Sharing and making lunch together.



EXCHANGE: VISIONS, FUTURES, THOUGHTS

For the second part of the workshop we sat in a circle and talked about what we learned and experienced so far, we were exchanging concepts and ideas.

Barbara started the conversation by repeating the story on how she and Fritz met in Bilbao at the firts of -its -kind global Wellbeing Summit. Their encounter was happening pretty random at the end of the summit.

Just as for our workshop, the summit in Bilbao was beyond just meeting like minded people, it was something to be felt in a fully embodied experience. For such events not just the right people are necessary to be there, but also art and nature must be present.

Optionally, through the right utilization of art and nature, a space where connections can be made naturally, will be established.

We agreed upon to foster communication in order to prevent separate-ness, limitation and attachment to narratives on the future. Exchange supports the manifestation of new narratives. And those are necessary for imagining futures.

FURTHER REFLECTIONS:

Welcoming: Felt welcoming and familiar with attendees, could hug Fritz. Inspired curiosity and expansion. Fresh seasonal flowers contributed. We are co-creating space, together.

Holistic approach: Usually workshop that deal with the future focus on technical issues. However this one also addresses inner transformation. Thinking about the “inner infrastructure” of people is as necessary as finding technical solutions for the society of the future.

“Enjoyed inner quality. This quality should be cultivated. I liked the meditation at the start.” ~ Felix

“Present yourself as a human being, not with CV.” ~ Felix

Interdisciplinarity: How to bridge different worlds (science, art, business, wellbeing, spirituality) ?It might need some time to understand each other’s language. But knowing that the overall goal is wellbeing it becomes clear that no competition or comparison between each other is necessary.

“Why do the projects on cities futures not always work with artists?” ~ Felix Zabel

Synergies: The idea of authorship was challenged. It is hard to express and share ideas in a competitive environment. If one must fear his idea is to be stolen, he won’t share it with the world. On the other hand some people might have visionary ideas but no idea how to realize them. Just by sharing ideas, people can unite, think collectively and implement them in the end.

“Does one really possess an idea? What about collective authorship, creative commons.” ~ Felix Zabel

“If you contribute, it will come back somehow.” ~ Fritz

Connecting & creating new space: During our meeting we changed

our sitting, and moved into a circle – we created a new structure with a common focal point. Just sitting in a circle conveys a different space and atmosphere compared to podium-workshops or classroom type constellations. Coordination happens by all of us. One of the most crucial function of those initial meetings is making connections, seeing that people who deal with wellbeing are numerous, in many fields and not alone.

“The dots are connecting.” ~ Daniel Gratzler

“We know that relationships are essential. How can we make them meaningful then?” ~ Marisa Mühlböck

Transformation: In our current situation we don’t know what kind of future narratives and social relations are there to come. But for sure we should not face changes and new qualities with fear. Instead we have to ask ourselves: What quality do those newly emerging experiences have - are they real ? Are they fruitful?

Hartmut Rosas concept of *Resonanz, resonance theory and resonant connections to the world*, was referenced here. Creative collisions.

The transformation of a caterpillar, driven by growth and consumption turning into a beautiful butterfly that does not grow anymore, that strives to increase nature’s fruitfulness and searches for new partnerships, is indeed a promising image. ~ Marion Jaros

Imaginal cells – cells in the caterpillar responsible for transformation. We are all imaginal, by coming together, we transform. Barbara **Narratives & futures:** Concerning the question about a better future(s), surely there won’t be a point where one can answer it. But what we have to do is to constantly formulate better questions:



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There are two ways on how to look at a question.

1. The teacher asks a question to the student. Depending on how much the teacher can relate to the answer, the students ability will be ranked as good or bad.
2. The teacher tells the student to ask him a question in order to find out how far the student has developed. The quality of the question shows the maturity of the student here.

→ Either the question is there to be answered, or with time one just develops new and better questions and settle with the fact that no answer is permanent.

What futures do I smell, taste and feel for our community?"

~ Peter Bachler

"What futures do we have? We have to start talking about futures!" ~ Peter Bachler

"How do we awaken our hearts, individually and collectively?"

~ Barbara

▲ACTORS OF ▲ COLLECTIVE STORY:

Our western minds operate according to the pattern of a story. We need a start and especially an end to events, in order to make sense out of them. (Outcome → Process)

If we look at our future we ask ourselves whether the end of it all will be good or bad. But this focus on the end of the story limits and hinders us

from asking ourselves what to do right now. How can one act meaningfully in the present moment?

The french movie *Smoking/No smoking* was referred to here. The essence of it is that smallest changes, like deciding to smoke a cigarette or not, will have tremendous, unforeseen future effects. We have to intentionally recall our intentions again and again to not miss the chance of creating meaning and wellbeing in the present. For the future is unpredictable anyways.

At this point we discussed the difference between **ambition** and **aspiration**. Daniel gave a definition:

- **Ambition:** Starts with a detailed and concrete imagination on the future. The ambitious one sticks closely to the initial narrative / image. The realization of it is mainly achieved by pressure on one self and others to fit in the initial idea.
- **Aspiration:** Feeling a certain impulse that leads into a broad direction. Acting according to a spectrum of feelings and values that brings one closer to the place, the initial feeling was directed towards. The manifestation of one's aspiration succeeds, when listening to his / her heart.

"You always have the chance to make something intentionally."

~ Fritz

RECONCILING PAST:

The image of the growth and consumption driven caterpillar was used here once again. The changemakers of our times that aim at wellbeing and environmental protection usually tend to judge growth and consumption and label the contemporary paradigm as wrong. But looking at the caterpillar that transforms into a butterfly, it turns out that there is no wrong behavior at all. It needs to grow and consume in the first place

in order to be able to transform later on. It's just that at a certain point the paradigm changes - the old patterns become obsolete and a hindrance. Growth and consumption turn into sufficiency and cooperation.

In that way a regretful narrative on our pasts is not constructive. When talking about the past, there needs to be a balance between appreciating the achievements and learning from failures.

“We have to remember our pasts, so that new patterns can emerge” ~ Barbara Bulc.

IMAGINING FUTURES:

During the meeting *we agreed on the power of imagination. When it comes to shaping the future one can think about single inventions or solutions for various fields. But envisioning a future goes beyond new technologies or inventions. It is about having a vision of another space, an utopian space that has not yet to come, that probably will turn out to be very different from the initial one. But creating those visions and moving towards them is the most hopeful and powerful first step.

What is important here, is to make imagination on futures inclusive:

- To share ideas, to create spaces that enable and allow dreaming.
- To create a sense of responsibility and agency on shaping the future as a whole society.

“Power lies within the collective imagination of the future. Even though there will never be a final picture, as long as we don't have images at all we are stuck here.” ~ Felix Zabel

“What I see is that many of us are working on various kinds of practices. All of them aim to explore different future societies.” ~Barbara Bulc

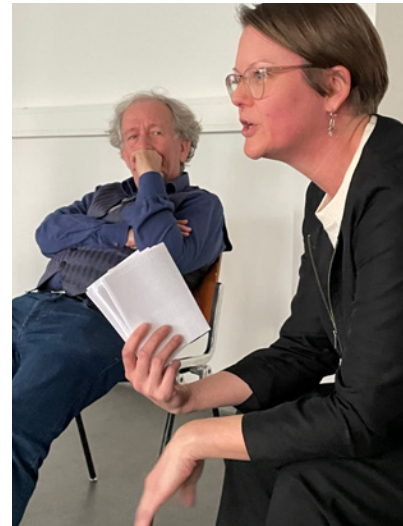
Responsibility: Important to define responsibilities - some kind of organic basic structure; balancing between flow and structure for this to continue. Principles for working together. Quality of mutual support.

NEXT STEPS:

For future we all agreed on having recurring meetings. In order to improve the organizational framework, someone has to take a lead on planning the meetings on a regular basis. Early announcements of dates are always helpful.

Then the challenge will be to find a flow for our gatherings, to find a balance between having a narrow structure and keeping some flexibility. For the methods and topics will change.

Another idea was to initiate a forum as an exchange platform for us to share information and wisdom.



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IDEAS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS TO COME:

- Beyond strengthening the connection of participants to make the workshop more accessible and inclusive.
- To create a concrete agenda with certain outcome.
- To understand power: How do top-down approaches work? Why are Bill Gates or Elon Musk so successful? How do their design processes work? (Top-down vs bottom-up emergence).

“I’ve been working with musicians, I know how they cooperate. Unlike scientists or businessmen they practice all the time. That is why they constantly improve. For us it might be the same: The more we meet, the better it gets.” ~ Fritz

G.R.A.C.E. PRACTICE & MULAN STORY FOR CLOSING

As a closing exercise (“To close the circle of time for the day.”- Peter) Barbara was asked to guide the GRACE practice. Afterwards Peter shared another Mulan story:

One night Mulan was searching for his keys near the place he was living. Searching the ground and the street, he just could not find them. Strangers and friends came by and helped him searching. Even after

extensive searching, nobody could find his keys. Finally someone asked:

“Mulan, are you sure this is the place you lost the keys?”

Mulan replied:

“I’m sure I didn’t lose them here, I am searching here because the lights are on.”

CLOSING

This document outlines the agenda and activities of a wellbeing workshop, including a G.R.A.C.E. practice, introduction round, postcards from the future exercise, and group discussions on topics such as interdisciplinarity, imagination, and agency in shaping the future. The participants agreed to have recurring meetings and explore topics such as power dynamics and top-down vs bottom-up approaches. The workshop ended with another G.R.A.C.E. practice and a Mulan story.

The workshop aimed to bring together individuals from various disciplines to explore ways to improve wellbeing for future communities. The G.R.A.C.E. practice for cultivating compassionate interactions, guided by Barbara Bulc, focused on five non-compassion elements: Gather attention, Recall our intention, Attune to self and then other, Consider what will serve, and Engage. The introduction round allowed each participant to introduce themselves and their work.

The postcards from the future exercise aimed to activate the imagination of the participants towards a positive future, helping them visualize an utopian future and letting their imagination guide them towards it. The group then shared their results.

During the group discussions, participants spoke about the importance of a holistic approach and interdisciplinarity in shaping the future, as well as the need to foster communication, connections and exchange in order to prevent separation, limitation, and attachment to narratives of the future. They also discussed the power of imagination and creating inclusive spaces for dreaming and envisioning the future.

The participants agreed to have recurring meetings and explore topics such as power dynamics and top-down vs bottom-up approaches. They also discussed creating a forum as an exchange platform for sharing information and wisdom. The workshop ended with another G.R.A.C.E. practice to close the time circle for the day and a Mulan story.

Overall, the workshop was a means to bring together individuals from different fields to exchange ideas and work towards a common goal of improving collectively wellbeing for future communities, rethinking values, approaches and organizing principles.



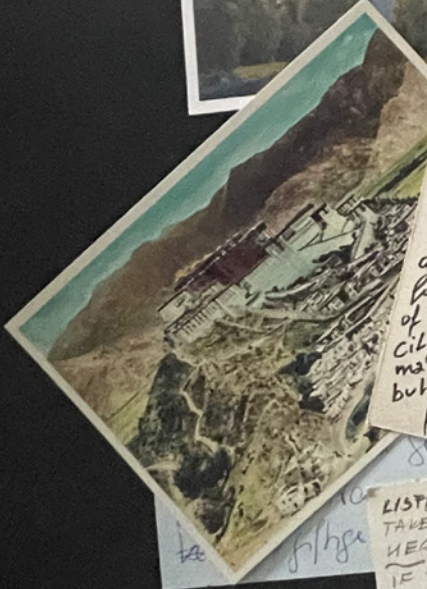
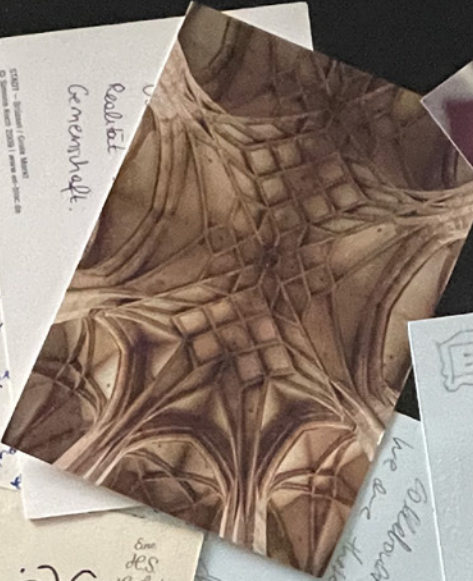
POSTCARDS FROM THE FUTURE

Impressions from “Postcars from the Future”. An idea introduced by Peter. The basic idea is to activate one’s imagination for a positive future.

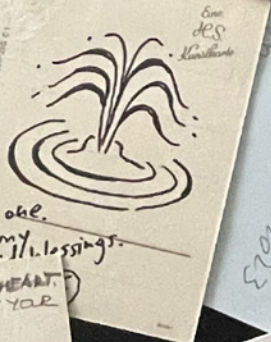




Recall set
Gernshofle.



Dear
Loved ones,
In the future
Life is centered
around a huge
fountain as part
of every town and
city. Water is the
main element of life
but it also symbolizes
flow. The future
Society is a flowing one.
Send you my
love & lossings.

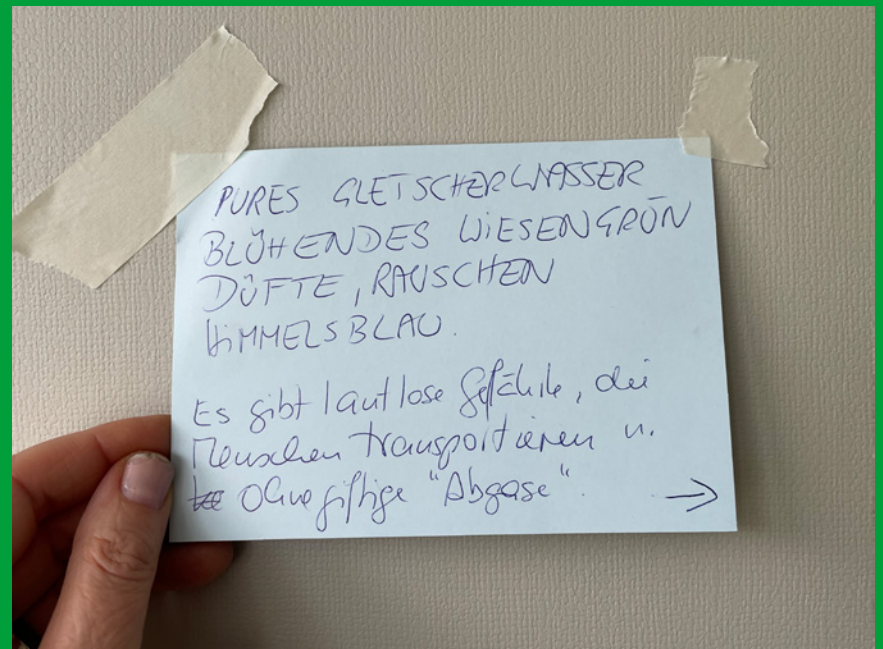
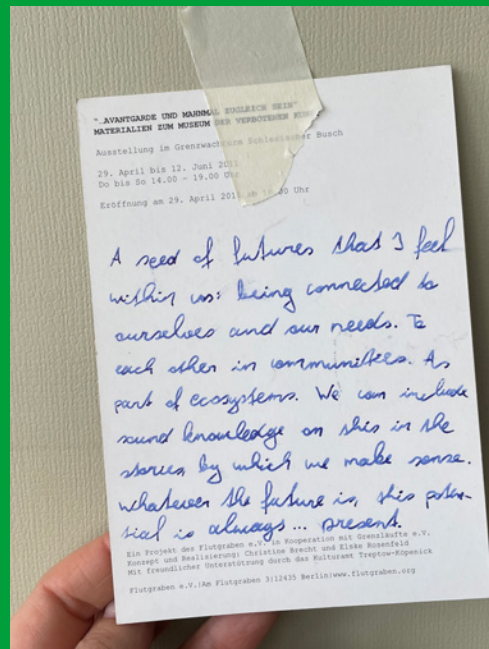
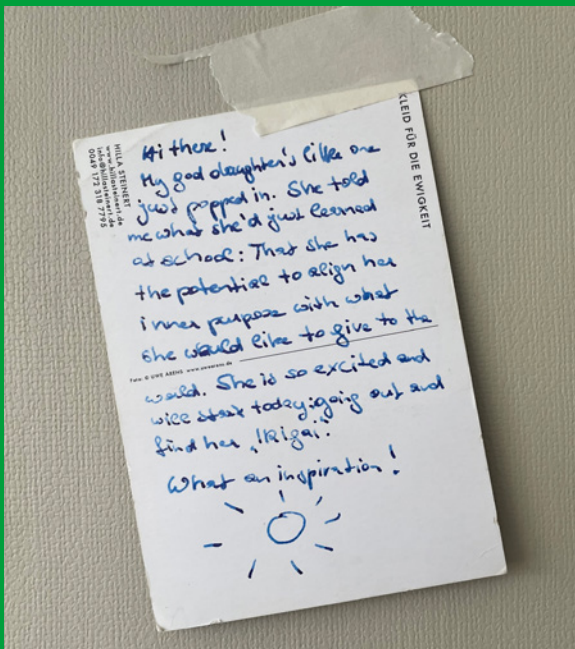
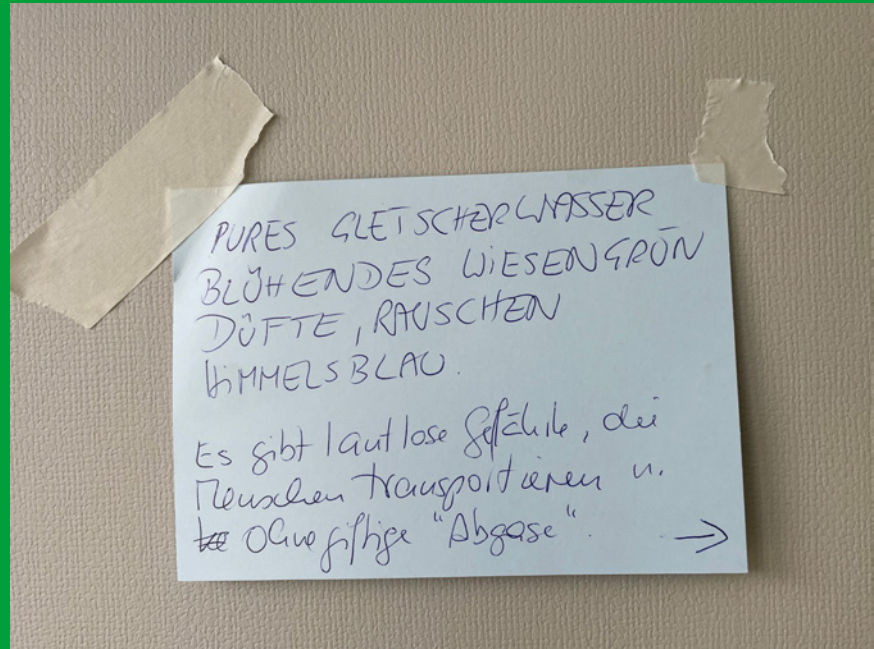
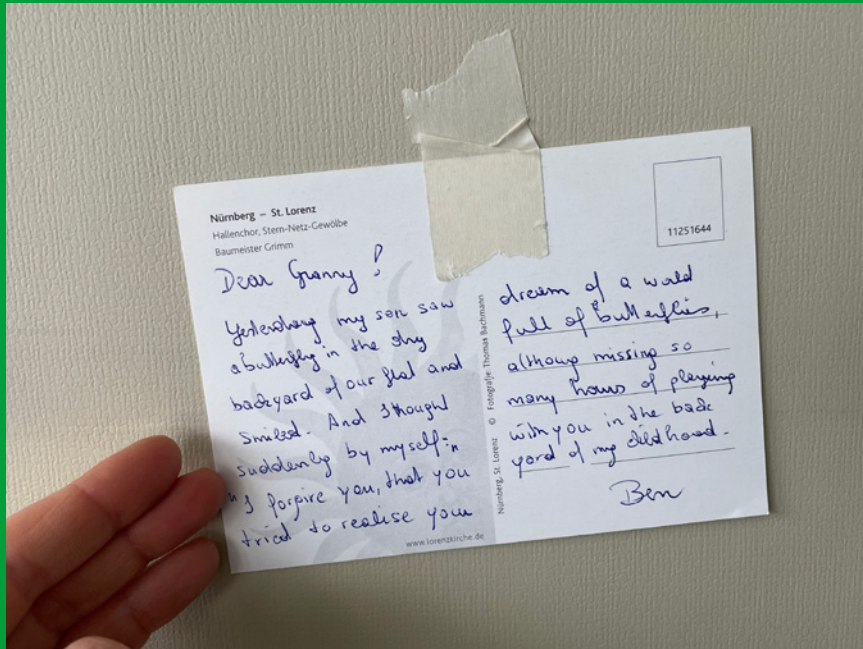


we are thinking
to
Trits
Arthur 2023

GAIA, 2100
Dear younger Simona,
don't forget to
stay in contact
with the Elements
but surf with
the evolution
xx old Simona

LISTEN DEEPLY TO YOUR HEART.
TAKE TIME TO HEAR WHAT YOUR
HEART DESIRES.
IF YOU CANNOT HEAR, TAKE
MORE TIME. PERHAPS YOUR
HEART FEELS LONELY, PERHAPS
IT MUTES. PERHAPS IT CANNOT FEEL.
HOLD IT GENTLY IN YOUR HANDS,
UNTIL IT OPENS.
YOUR DREAM IS ALREADY IN YOU.
YOU RECOGNIZE IT BECAUSE
IT BRINGS YOU JOY. THIS IS
YOUR COMPASS. ADJUST IT.
LEARN CURIOUSLY WITH YOUR
BODY AND MIND TO MANIFEST
YOUR DREAM. NOT JUST FOR
A POSITION IN SOCIETY, EMBRACE
IMAGINATION AND NEW PERSPECTIVES.
LOVE IS YOUR TRUE FORCE.
WIDEN AND DEEPEN YOUR CORES
OF LOVE. DO NOT EXPECT OTHERS
TO COME FORTH. YOU ARE THE CHANGE
YOU ARE THE CHANGE





It's amazing and colorful,
I play where I want and
with objects that don't
make any sense.

STADT - Berlin / Brandenburger Tor
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Schau dich um, bin ich viel
im Wald liebe ich ihn, bin
ich viel mit Euch liebe ich
es.

Gemeinsam schaffen wir unsere
Realität und diese schafft unsere
Gemeinschaft.

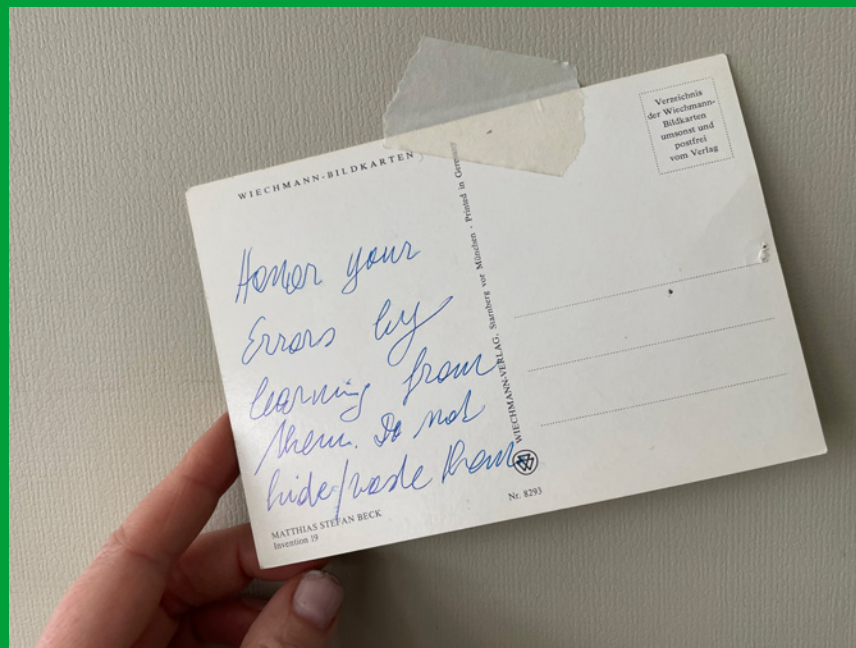
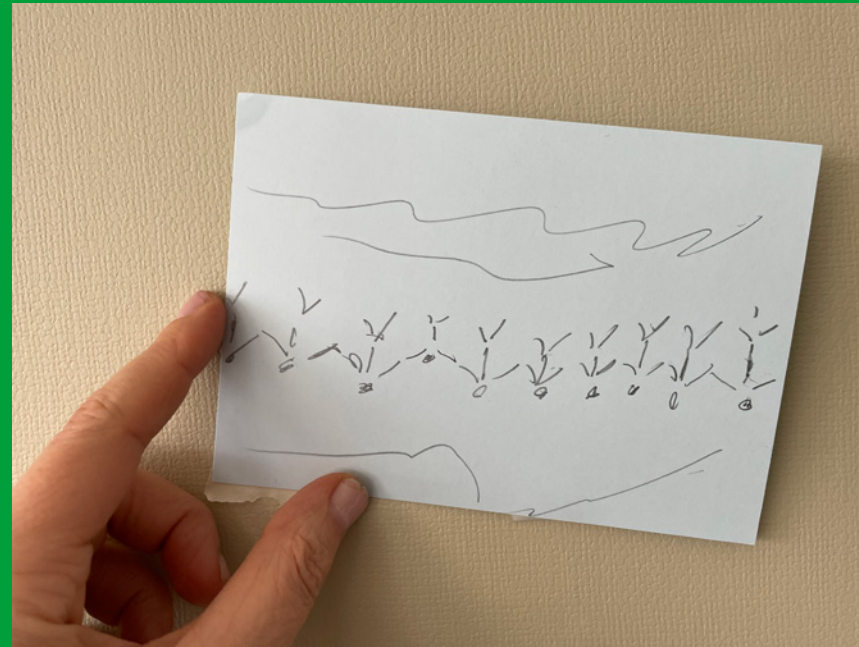
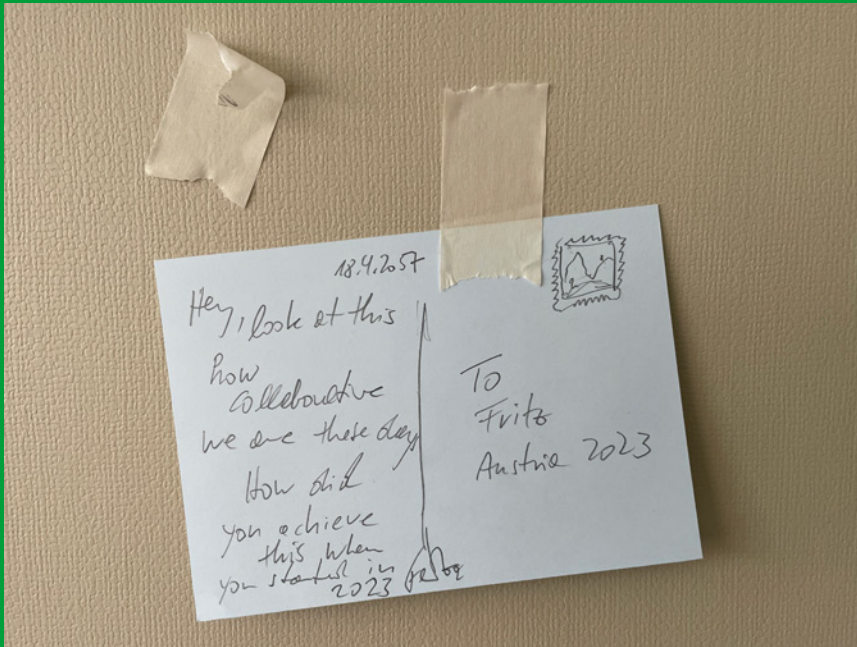
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Dear younger Simona,
Stay in contact
with the clouds
but surf with
the evolution
+ old Simona

GAIA, 2100
Simona Koch
Favoritstr. 163
1100 Vienna
Austria

Die Straße wurde zur Kriese.
Eine Gruppe sitzt dort und tauscht sich aus.
Weniger wurde mehr. Was längst schon da war,
wurde wieder wichtig:
Gemeinschaft, Austausch, erhörten, Zeit.
Unsere Schultern wurden leichter, wir spürten die Ruhe in
unserem Rücken

STADT - New York / Flatiron
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**GREETINGS
FROM
THE FUTURE!**

Be part of the
one-day workshop
and start
**RESHAPING
FUTURE**

together

Fritz, Barbara &
Simona are looking
forward to see you at
the next gathering!