



International Conference

12-14 September 2022

ABC Bildungs- und Tagungszentrum Drochtersen-Hüll, Germany



– Documentation –

The conference was organized by Verein Niedersächsischer Bildungsinitiativen VNB e.V. and Learn2Change – Global Network of Educational Activists.



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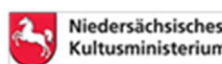


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Summary

The conference “OUR VOICES – OUR PLANET. Global Dialogue and Learning for Democracy and Sustainability” took place at the ABC–Bildungs- und Tagungszentrum e. V. in Drochtersen Hüll, Germany. From the 12th to the 14th of September 2022, fifty participants from different parts of the globe took part in the reflection around the topics of democracy and sustainability.

Background of the conference was that the world community is facing multiple crises that seem to make it increasingly difficult to live together in peace, justice and an intact environment. We are experiencing wars, poverty and hunger, an increase of social inequalities, the loss of biodiversity and the negative effects of climate change. Disastrous living conditions are forcing many to flee and migrate. Nevertheless, there is still hope and the belief that it is possible to overcome these crises by radical change and a sustainable development that enables social, economic and environmental justice for all. For such a transformation, we need appropriate political and economic frameworks and open societies where people can participate and actively shape change. Education is a key element for democracy and for the participation in and shaping of sustainability. Global learning in dialogue with partners from around the world can support such educational processes.

In this context, the international conference for dialogue and learning on the connection between democracy and sustainability took place. It allowed deep conversations on questions such as

- What challenges does climate change and an eco-social transformation impose on democracy worldwide?
- How must democracy be (re)defined and lived to meet the need for global sustainability and climate justice?
- Who “sits at the table” and whose voices are hardly heard in public discourse and decision-making?
- How can people be empowered to participate in democratic processes for an eco-social transformation?
- How can we defy the shrinking space of civil society and strengthen its role for democratic and sustainable futures?
- Which kind of relationship between humans and nature do we need to protect our planet? How would our economy look?
- How can we build our resilience and common trust to stay calm and able to navigate with care despite all urgency?
- How can we design education to foster a beneficial relation between democracy and sustainability?
- How can digitalization support participation and democratic processes for sustainability?

The educational approach of the conference was participatory and interactive, interweaving different perspectives and appreciating the participants as the main resource of the conference. In a multi-sensual and holistic way, the conference was designed in an open format with keynotes, discussion and reflection rounds, workshops, open spaces etc. This mixture allowed for growth as a group and building a common compass, while leaving open room for participants to fill and different paths of exploration and learning for different participants.

Program Overview

Monday 12th	Tuesday 13th	Wednesday 14th
<i>Interweaving our PERSPECTIVES; exploring the RELATION OF DEMOCRACY AND SUSTAINABILITY; strategizing on the ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND EDUCATION</i>		
Arrival/Registration	8.30-9.10 Breakfast	8.30-9.10 Breakfast
	9.15-9.30 Plenary Good Morning Check-In	9.15-9.30 Plenary: Good Morning Check-In/Energizer
	9.30-10.30 Plenary + outside Entanglement Walk	9.30-12.15 Plenary: OPEN SPACE 3x45 Min + 15 Min break in between
12.15-13.00 Plenary: Opening Ceremony	10.30-10.50 Plenary: Workshop-Teasers I	12.00-13.00 Plenary: Our Voices – let them hear it
	11.00-13.00 (incl. short break) WORKSHOPS I: Civil Society for Sustainability and Democracy: Challenges, Perspectives, Discourses	
13.00-14.00: Lunch Break	13.00-14.30 Lunch Break	13.00-14.00: Lunch Break
14.00 – 15.30 Plenary Welcome Address Interactive Get-to-Know and Stepping-Into-Topic Orientation of Program and Venue	14.30-14.50 Plenary: Workshop-Teasers II	14.00-15.00 Plenary: Learning Reflection Impulses for continuing the journey Feedback Gratitudes & Closing Ceremony
	15.00-16.00 WORKSHOPS II: Civil Society for Sustainability and Democracy: Strategies, Practices, Actions	
15.30-16.00 Coffee Break	16.00-16.30 Coffee Break	
16.00-17.00 Plenary: Keynote <i>Just a piece of the cake or the whole bakery? Defending Democracy means defending our planet!</i>	16.30-17.30 WORKSHOPS II (continue)	
17.00-18.00 Plenary: Engaging with the keynote Exchange in small groups		
18.00-18.30 Voices from the Audience. Final discussion on the keynote in plenary	17.45-18.30 Plenary: <i>Fishbowl: Connecting the dots from different perspectives</i>	
18.30-19.30: Dinner Break	18.30-20.00: Dinner Break	
19.30-20.30 (Plenary) Networking Activity	20.00 – Open end (Plenary) Open stage show	

Monday 12th of September

Opening Ceremony

With 50 participants, the opening ceremony started. Through different icebreakers, the participant got the first opportunity to get to know each other. The participants came from Chile, China/Hongkong, Germany, Ghana, India (online), Malawi, South Africa, Tunisia, Uganda and Ukraine.

The participants were multipliers and trainers in NGOs, schools, universities and students from schools.

Welcome

Welcome from VNB/Learn2Change-Network

Marion Rolle is the Head of the Regional Office of North-West of the Verein Niedersächsischer Bildungsinitiativen (VNB). She welcomed participants to the first bigger live event of the Learn2Change network after the pandemic. She highlighted positive advances toward equality and sustainability worldwide. In a world with increasing democratic and environmental crises, she appreciated participants and members of the Learn2Change network for being pioneers of the change that the world desperately needs.

Sarah Laustroer, Project Coordinator of “Our Voices – Our Planet” of VNB, reviewed the last two years of mainly online experiences during the project. She emphasised the importance of such a connection to its members during the pandemic and how such vital dynamics are accentuated in the conference as a live event.



Welcome Moderator and Check-In

Timo Holthoff, moderator of the conference, received participants to the conference with the invitation of the “In-between Safe Space and Brave Space”. The proposal encouraged respect among participants, the opportunity to disagree in points of view, and to feel vulnerable and exposed to take on the difficult conversations that the intersection of democracy, sustainability and education challenges bring.



Code of Conduct

To safeguard a respectful atmosphere in all activities, an awareness team was presented: Julia Wältring, Louis Zulu, Nomatlou Mahlangu and Gilbert Kofi Germain. Julia Wältring explained the Code of Conduct to the plenary and presented the will of all members of the awareness team to listen to any discomfort situation and safeguard everyone's integrity.

Interactive Get-to-Know and Stepping-Into-Topic: Who is here and why?

For an introduction into the topic, the moderator asked in a SLIDO-survey about the personal understandings of “sustainability” and “democracy”. As participants were questioned about the co-dependency between the two previous concepts, most of them agreed for example that dealing with climate change requires strong civil society and civic participation. Supporting voices from the participants also called the co-dependency of education for sustainable democracy and the complexity of democratic interactions. The survey that most participants considered the space for civil society action in the region they were coming from is shrinking or remaining the same. Some observed a widening of possibilities to participate, others severe restriction. However, all participants agreed to oppose the negative tendencies with a sincere willingness to listen and talk and work and connect with others to make a change.

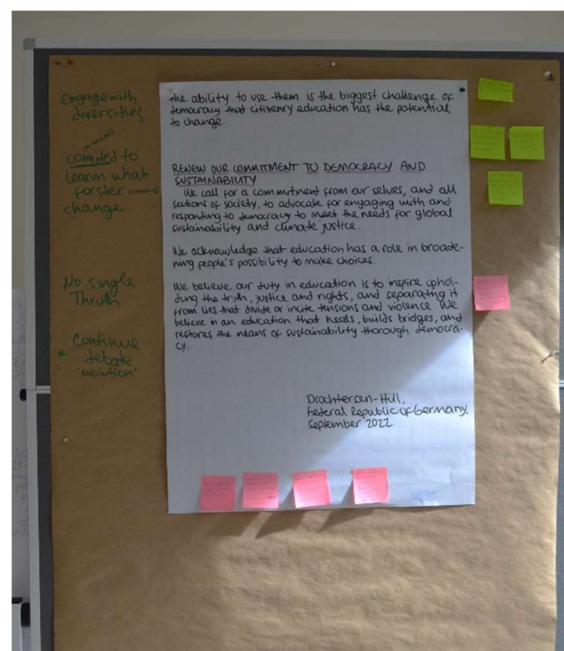
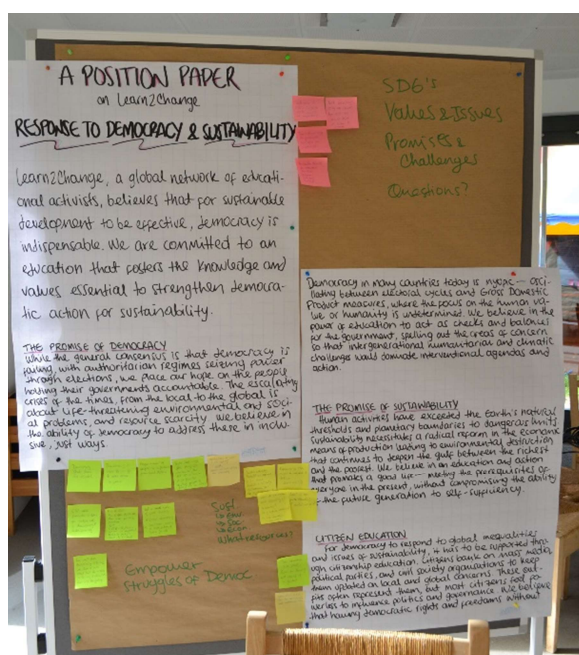


Orientation of the program and venue

The moderator shared the program overview with all participants.

Presentation of the Position Paper

Members from the Learn2Change- Network presented a draft of a position paper they prepared before the conference. They invited all participants to edit the network's standing concerning sustainability, democracy and education.



The structure and general ideas of the paper were permanently exposed for the duration of the conference for participants to leave additional comments or views for the ongoing construction of the document. On the last day, a period for the editing of the documents was developed and presented.

Keynote: Just a piece of the cake or the whole bakery? Defending democracy means defending our planet!

Eiman Seifeldin and Christian Cray gave the keynote with the title: *Just a piece of the cake or the whole bakery? Defending democracy means defending our planet!*

Eiman Seifeldin is a political activist and human rights defender and a mother of three children. She earned a higher diploma degree in Environmental Science in 2003 and worked as a lecturer at Omdurman Ahlia University, faculty of environmental science. Eiman was an active member of the Sudanese Environmental Conservation Society SECS. She is the co-founder and executive board member of The Sudanese Environmentalist Association SEA, which fully engaged in the December 2018 revolution. Furthermore, she is the co-founder and director of the International Crimes Monitor ICM media organization that reports on human rights violations all over the world.

Christian Cray (MA Environmental Education) has recently returned from a five years live and work with indigenous peoples in the Amazon rainforest of Ecuador. He is a member of the European Hub of the Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature (GARN). He is also one of the founding members of VNB's Learn to change network. He lives in Freiburg/Germany.



Their talk took the countries of Sudan and Ecuador as starting points to understand the different scales and complexity of complex dynamics between democracy and sustainability.

Eiman gave many examples of how the military dictatorship in Sudan has consistently avoided dealing with a vicious cycle of unsustainable agricultural practices, environmental degradation, famine, and over again. Because of the increasing food insecurity in the country and progressive nature deterioration, other aspects of society are impacted. Hundreds have been forced out of their territory, as land is increasingly unable to sustain life. As communities are broken, fear, intolerance and mistrust in governmental structures become chronic at the national level, even spreading to neighbouring lands.

In parallel, Christian Cray referred to sustainable and democratic global dynamics and their impacts on undemocratic countries that are also biodiversity hotspots. All around the world, the concern for environmentally democratic and socially sustainable systems is consolidating large social movements (i.e. “ni una mas” in Latin America; or “Fridays for the Future” in

Europe). These movements become social and political pressure to pursue sustainable development where the answer is normally the “decarbonisation” of western civilisation. However, as the “decarbonisation” of the west requires the transformation towards green energies (i.e. solar panels, windmills, electric cars, etc.), it demands the exploitation of critical minerals that are almost exclusively located in countries with high levels of corruption, institutional and socio-economic fragility, vulnerability to climate disruptions and opportunity for environmental plundering (most countries located the global south). In Christian’s words: “Our blind spot is that we’re heading towards a decarbonisation process that may end up undermining ecological integrity and increase the risks of conflict and democratic downfall, whose consequences could be worldwide.”

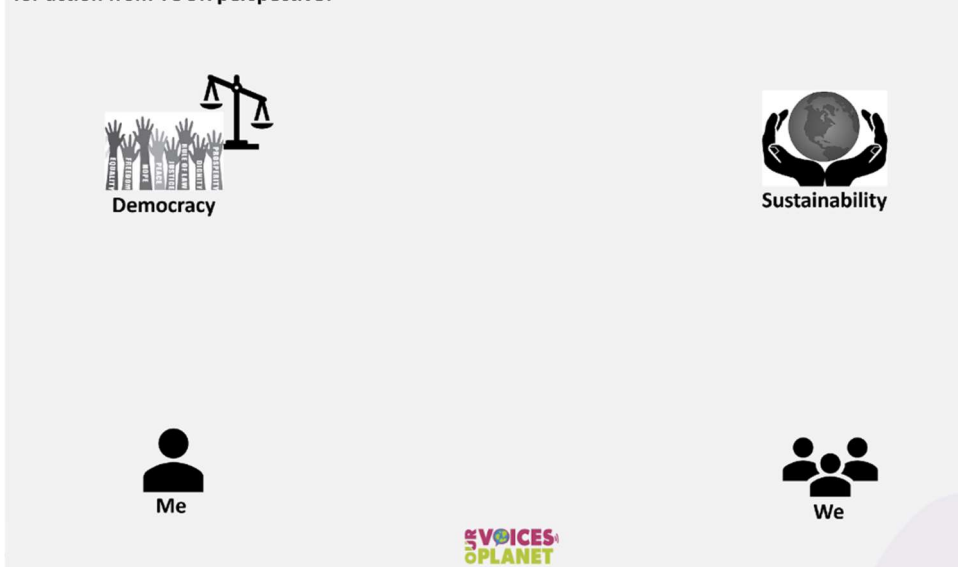
The keynote addressed the complex dynamics at global, national and local levels and the dichotomy of position in the interoperability of democracy and sustainability. Christian Cray explained, *“there is a pessimistic position that assumes a fundamental incompatibility between democracy and sustainability. Both cannot be realized at the same time; democracy thrives at the expense of sustainability. This thinking goes back to the idea that democratic states cannot solve highly complex and urgent environmental problems at the necessary speed. While sustainability concepts come from the need to limit resource use and industrial production and extraction, democracies are trapped between economic growth and environmental exploitation.”*

In opposition, *“the optimistic view shows that sustainability depends on a functioning democracy; democracy provides fertile grounds for achieving a truly sustainable society. Only democracy can ensure that sustainability problems are sufficiently identified, articulated, and debated in such a way that the plurality of perspectives, knowledge, and values in society can be considered.”*

The theme leaves a strong call for action and change in troubling times.

Engaging with the keynote

A mind-map of co-dependencies: What are critical connections, frictions and different responsibilities for action from YOUR perspective?



To deal with the diverse emotions and interaction that the keynote initiated in the participants, the moderator invited the participants to draw a mind map of the relationships between democracy, sustainability, themselves as individuals, and as members of a (global) collective.

The papers distributed to participants to draw their mind map also included a pictogram of an animal. To form small groups to share their thoughts, participants had to find others who had the same animal on the paper by making the respective animal sounds. The silliness that this activity evoked in the audience effectively eased the tension in the room after the global challenges presented in the keynote address.

After finding the groups, the participants exchanged on their mind-maps and on the question: What are critical connections, frictions and different responsibilities for sustainable and democratic action from your perspective.

Voices from the Audience

Final discussion on the keynote in the plenary.

Addressing the complexity of issues in a mind map proved to be very challenging, not only because of the nature of the topics but also because of individuals' different points of view, feelings, perceptions, issues and interrelationships.

The participants mentioned as challenges for a change towards a democratic and sustainable future: capitalism; different and diverse definitions of the concept of sustainability; the particularities of governments and systems of democracy; de-centralization; differences between the responsibilities of the Global North and South in consumption patterns and in responsibilities for global problems; political participation and engagement of diverse and different social groups; etc.

After a plenary discussion, the two keynote speakers closed this part of the day, each with a personal statement.

Christian Cray emphasised that decisions for change must base on knowledge. “We have the best access to information and with the deepest complexity than ever before. However, we also have to scale the problem. Education is so important because we have so much knowledge on local solutions that we have tools to change towards sustainability. Creativity and imagination are our best allies. We have to upscale local solutions.”

For her part, Eiman Seifeldin stated: “For me, there are different concepts of sustainability. Therefore, we need to localise global sustainability goals to our contexts: countries, regions, and communities. Because when we do not, poor people pay the price of unsustainable lives. When we internalise and put into context our sustainability goals, we can also become more resilient to the challenges we have. Understanding what our resources are and localising our efforts is critical to saving the bakery.”



Tuesday 13th of September

Check-In: Individual and group exercises, including a walk outside.

After a short guided meditation to prepare for the day, the moderator invited the conference participants to do an experimental walk. The instructions were the following:

"Entanglement Walk"

Invitation for an experimental walk (30min).

To start the walk: Pause, breath and take a conscious step over an imaginary threshold to enter an unknown space beyond the normality that you are used to:

3 phases of 10 minutes each.

1. "Presence": Walk slowly with your senses wide open and explore your surroundings like a toddler who curiously perceives things for the first time without having a name for them: Get close, look closely, touch, feel, smell, hear, taste.

Be mindful of your entanglement with everything (non-)living. Walk and talk with the plants, the trees, the stones, the waters, the animals, the clouds...see who speaks to you and listen. What is their perspective on your perspective? What can they tell you about the world, about life, about time, about themselves?

2. "Past": Imagine you are walking with an ancestor 100 years in the past. What traces and resources has s*he left in your life? What are you grateful for to him*her? What might be his*her view of your life and the present? What stories and advice does this person have for you?

Walk backwards (borrowing from a Maori cosmology of time: *we weave the fabric of the present, facing our ancestors who weaved before us and now watch and guide us, as we move backwards into an unknown future*).

3. "Future": Walk with a descendant (100 years in the future). What does s*he tell you about what you can do today for his*her future well-being? What is he*she grateful to you for?

De-Briefing: On your way back, take a moment to reflect: Which bodily sensations, feelings, thoughts and new perspectives did the experiment evoke? Which relations are easy or usual for you to make, which are difficult or unusual and why?

As you re-enter the plenary, exchange in a small group about your different resonances with the entanglement walk. Make sure everybody has a chance to share.

Back at the plenary, the moderator shared the day's agenda. After an overview of all workshops, each facilitator had the opportunity to do a 3-minute presentation of the activities and topics to be discussed in their workshop.

WORKSHOP SESSION I: Civil Society for Sustainability and Democracy: Challenges, Perspectives, Discourses

The following are summaries of each of the workshops' results based on the report of the corresponding facilitator.

Dealing with shrinking civil society spaces: How to protect and strengthen civic action?

Facilitators: Geoffrey Nsubuga, Somero, Uganda; April Lai, Greeners South, Hongkong/China.

Civil society is an important aspect of democracy process because it provides a vital link between citizens and the state, promotes inclusion, protects human rights and provides a voice to hold governments accountable for delivering public services, defending the rule of law and promoting participation and inclusive decision-making at all levels. But civil society organisations (CSOs) are increasingly threatened. They become victims of repression and violence perpetrated by both state and non-state groups. Furthermore, they are subjected to restrictions through legal initiatives and administrative action. The workshop dealt with shrinking space of CSOs. The participants discussed questions like: Is the overall phenomenon best understood as a global trend of closing civic space, or of changing civic space? How can we address the global emergency of shrinking civic space? What risks are CSOs exposed to civic threats?

The workshop's core learning is that democracy and participation are the keys to sustainable development. The state should run with transparency and accountability, while civil society carries a positive function to bridge/fill up the gaps in policy and should be free from political suppression. As the leading cause of the discussion, it is recognised that people in Hongkong have been deprived of freedom of organisation, speech, press and expression since the imposition of the Nation Security Law on 30 June 2020. However, even when social movement is weakened, voices of livelihood/vulnerable/labour/environment issues are still ongoing and raised by NGOs to keep activist momentum. Social media platforms, networking and international attendance spaces are key for the collective organisation of, i.e. development of new leaderships, provision of training and experience sharing, social mobilisation, providing/circulating information, and assistance in solidarity campaigns.

Why representation matters!? How to design participation for ensuring the individual and collective rights of all?

Facilitators: Hamza Ghedamsi, Model African Union, Tunisia; Gilbert Kofi Germain, Young and Lonely Foundation, Ghana.

To understand the importance for participation in decision making, to promote and deepen democratic practices and principles, to ensure there is respect for human dignity, to ensure that decisions made meet actual expectations of participants. To highlight the importance of youth participation, minorities' inclusion and gender as transversal link between the different topics and linked to democracy. The workshop started with participative activities to make deep reflections linked to the representation, participation, and power in general. This brought different point of views and backgrounds. Then, the facilitators opened the space to align the different points of views, clarify the variety coming from the different background and the common points. Examples from Ghana and Tunisia flew in the discussion.

In the workshop, it was resolved that representation varies according to context and specificity. It can be affected by the unequal distribution of power, harming the inclusion of all voices and democratic processes when it comes to decision-making. That is why acceptance processes and inclusion are core elements for just decision-making, while good education supports responsible decision-making and wider representation. Nevertheless, questions arose around those who have no representation (such as nature and the environment) or have other barriers to being heard. Which model should be adopted to make the decision-making process inclusive and participative?

Giving rights to nature – an emerging idea?

Facilitators: Christian Cray, member of the European hub of GARN, Germany; Jorge Huichalaf, Cooperativa Kúme Mogen, Chile

The content of the workshop was: Propagation of „Rights of Nature“, as a post-development concept that aims at challenging the current anthropocentric worldview and to speed up a change of mind to save the planetary web of life that we all depend on. Presentation of the concept of nature and humans as a reciprocal relationship in the culture and language of the Mapuche indigenous people in southern Chile. Presentation of the main ideas of nature as a juridical rights holder, as manifested in the Universal Declaration of Rights of Mother Earth and in the constitution of Ecuador. Guided discussion with „pros and cons „to have a fruitful exchange about Rights of Nature together with the expertise of the participants.

The main findings were: Nature and humans have a reciprocal relationship in the culture and language of the Mapuche indigenous people in southern Chile. Therefore, in their worldview, nature is a juridical rights holder. This perspective has already shaped important law-binding documents, such as the Universal Declaration of Rights of Mother Earth and the constitution of Ecuador. The workshop guided a fruitful exchange about the Rights of Nature through “pros and cons” and the participants' expertise. The purpose of this discussion was the propagation of the “Rights of Nature“, as a post-development concept that aims at challenging the current anthropocentric worldview and to speed up a change of mind to save the planetary web of life that we all depend on.

Looking at history: Decolonization as a precondition for climate justice?!

Facilitators: Ruby Hembrom, adivaani, India (online); Maissara Saeed, Solidan, Germany

The objectives of the workshop were: To review the historiography of the current climate crises and see how it is grounded in *racial* capitalism. To understand how colonization and slavery become central rather than peripheral to the Industrial Revolution and the birth of *carbon* capitalism. To derive and discuss how decolonization is a precondition for climate justice. Viewing climate change as an environmental concern alone, unconnected to other social justice struggles is a fallacy. After a short presentation of key concepts and ideas through interactive methods of activities, simulations and games, we will discuss based on two short video inputs. What is “Climate apartheid” (as introduced by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights in 2019)? And what does it mean for contemporary democracy and sustainability goals? The discussion also allowed for a critical exploration of the concepts of Racial Capitalism and Carbon Capitalism. The activities resolved that in our movement and response to climate change, there is an urgency and need to decolonize our mind-sets, theories and practices as a precondition for climate justice.

Good digital life for all? Digital capitalism and alternatives.

Facilitators: Niclas Guentor, Konzeptwerk Neue Ökonomie, Germany

The basic idea of digital capitalism is to make all aspects of our lives more energy- and resource-efficient. But can this lead to a good life for all? In this workshop, the limits and critiques of digital transformation and its ecological costs were discussed. There was a careful reflection on how digital technology could be designed in a radically different way and thus become part of a real social-ecological transformation considering planetary boundaries. In conclusion, it was resolved that digital literacy is essential for sustainable development, which makes it necessary for everyone to be digitally proficient and educated about digital systems in the fiscal and virtual world.

IMPRESSIONS OF MORNING WORKSHOPS



WORKSHOP SESSION II: Civil Society for Sustainability and Democracy: Strategies, Practices, Actions (*preliminary program, changes possible*)

Democracy is more than a teaching unit: Living participation to engage young and non-privileged people and create structures for active citizenship.

Facilitators: Nomatlou Mahlangu, Golden Youth Club / Peer Leader International South Africa; Harald Kleem, Peer Leader International, Germany, Mariia Makynichuk, and Sonya Martyshchuk, Peer Leader International Ukraine.

Democracy is not a vending machine: Just put in your vote and receive democracy. The same could be said about education for democracy: This is NOT just a teaching unit. In the workshop, the participants collected experiences from different countries about how the systems motivate to participate, how we can assist in encouraging young people to play a role in the democratic development and how the institutions have to change to allow participation – including schools and universities, companies, NGOs and parties.

The workshop collected experiences from different countries on how the systems motivate to participate in politics, how we can assist in encouraging young people to play a role in democratic development and how the institutions have to change to allow participation – including schools and universities, companies, NGOs and political parties. Through the different participating countries (Germany, South Africa, Tunisia, Colombia, and Ukraine), it was pointed out that skills to CHANGE need to be developed and, especially in situations of crisis, are relevant for learners. Additionally, active political participation should be a whole-institution approach that attracts and motivates non-reached target groups to bring new ideas. In previous experiences, change inspired by students (or young people) has been successful.

Participatory and democratic forms of learning for democracy and sustainability.

Facilitator: Julia Wältring, Verband Entwicklungspolitik Niedersachsen, Germany

In the workshop, the participant learned about methods and ways how to make people feel part of a process and become involved in and we receive new ideas by sharing examples from our own work. Participatory and democratic processes are based on a flat hierarchy or even better no hierarchy and on nonviolent communication among others. As we are living in a mainly hierarchical and violent world, it is a challenge to practise the opposite. Really listening to one another is a good starting exercise to do so. To check out some methods to be aware of ideas, needs and experiences of all participants in a group or a process is another step to nourish a sustaining ground for common action. In this sense, the participants tried out different methods.

The power of local communities for change. Strategies and tools for community empowerment and action.

Facilitator: Joseph Kenson Sakala, YSD Malawi.

This workshop dug deep through various community struggles and dissected the practical strategies and tools that have proven effective across multiple spaces. Through these activities, it was determined that a “community” is based on shared values and a connection to the land; communities have power in local struggles but often need to be empowered and supported in specialised topics (i.e. legal). Some tools that have proved valuable for local communities overcoming challenges are networking, (international) solidarity, raising awareness, creating synergies, strengthening the connection between communal values, stories and actions.

Community-based and solidary economy models as a basis for democracy and sustainability.

Facilitator: Sabine Meyer, Indisches Haus, Germany.

The aims of the workshop was to dig deeper into the hidden power that lies in local communities for change and to discuss and share strategies and tools that have proven to be more effective in community influence for change. This because in this emerging world coupled with the changing climate and pursuit for economic development, communities of people and nature at large have been subjected to intense pressure and exploitation in the name of economic development. The participants discussed: How could we possibly help design sustainable, democratic, solidarity economic processes? The workshop looked into some theories and practical examples - including post-growth, circular and community-based economies- to discuss chances and challenges in the pursuit of a sustainable economy, which allows people to participate democratically, respecting the planetary boundaries and peoples' (basic) needs. It unpacked various community struggles and dissected various practical strategies and tools that have proven to be effective across various spaces but also those that are believed to be valuable as we face the present and future. The participants were invited to be part of this valuable exchange.

IMPRESSIONS OF AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS



Moderated Fishbowl: Connecting the dots from different perspectives.

To bring together reflections and thoughts awakened in during the day's activities, a moderated Fishbowl was organised for the plenary discussion.

Due to the diversity of themes, different topics were brought up. While not all of them were consistently followed up for debate, a couple called attention. Since its foundation, things have changed in the Learn2Change network; for instance, a growing common learning between North-South can be observed. New faces have joined the network.

Also, the current state of the planet demands change (consumption patterns, increasing autocracies), but there is big uncertainty on the type of change and its direction of it. A revolution? An evolution? It is still required to be aware of our contexts (in different scales) while keeping an open mind for learning and taking action to start that change.



Wednesday 14th of September

Good morning, Check-in and Energizer

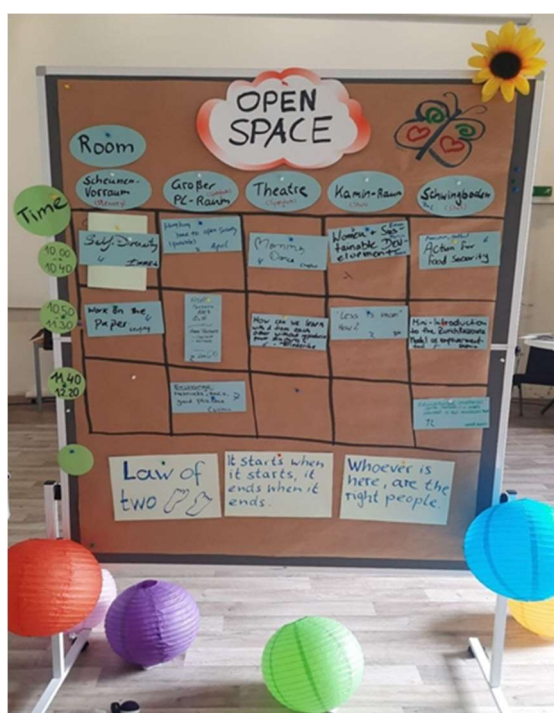
To start the last day of the conference, the plenary allowed remembering friends in the Learn2Change network who passed away since the last meeting.

Open Space

After the Check in, participants got the stage to propose different activities for the Open Space. A variety of offers included:

- Self-diversity
- Hongkong road to an open society
- Women and sustainable development
- Action for food security
- Collective work in the Position Paper
- ASA-projects 2023 – Questions and answers
- How can we learn with and from each other without reproducing power structures?
- Less is more!
- Mini introduction to the Zürich Resource Model for empowerment
- Open Exchange on methods, tools, good practice for education for sustainable development and democracy education
- Educational material developed in the project OUR VOICES – OUR PLANET

The presentation of the current progress of the position paper was of particular interest to the audience, so it was decided that this would be shared in the plenary stage at the end of the Open Space.



Impulses for continuing the journey

Based on the conference's experiences, there have been two main initiatives to continue: the expansion of the Learn2Change network and a support team for Hong Kong.

Due to the challenging situation that the people of Hong Kong are going through and the rise of awareness in different activities during the conference, a support group for Hong Kong was created. The group presented other ideas that members of the network could partake in to help people in Hongkong. Some of them include:

- Buying SIM cards (outside of China) and shipping them to Hong Kong so that activities there can use them for communication purposes in a secure channel. This idea, however, will be later pursued after the proper research has been done.
- Support system for political prisoners. This initiative is mainly starting from the desire of prisoners to use their jail time to advance in their studies. This would allow them to have better opportunities once they regain their freedom.

These initiatives were heard with interest and with a reminder. We must fight for freedom and democracy everywhere, not only in Hong Kong. We must keep bringing up such initiatives and have the courage to take action.

As for the extension of the Learn2Change Network, an excel list with the contact data of all participants who agreed was created and shared to enable future exchanges.

It was briefly mentioned the initiative to open regional groups. New participants are welcome to join these groups and the monthly Learn2Change online meetings.

Feedback, gratitude & closing ceremony

There was widespread gratitude among both participants and organizers of the conference. Tokens of appreciation are given to all those who were vital in the event's organisation.

For closure, a directed exercise allowed everyone to hug others and thank them for the shared moments, the inspiration, the courage, and the respect.
