

# Interkulturelle Friedenswerkstätte (intercultural space to foster peace)



Circle of first meeting  
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## Location

Hohenems, Vorarlberg

## Country

Austria

## Short summarizing description

The project FRIEDENSWIRKSTÄTTE was a welcoming and connective space, where refugees and non-refugees gathered, to deal with our own involvement in the fundamental struggles of life and to co-create for peace. The methods were based on holistic and elicitive peace work, in order to strengthen the potentials of the participants as resources for synergies. Especially the potential for peace of refugees should get a space to be witnessed and unfold, twisting the emotionally loaded image of refugees as messengers of war and terrorism. The evolving synergies lifted the group up, beyond the division of “us and them”, moving beyond a helper and receiver relationship, in order to create a shared culture of peace. From this culture and from the ideas of the participants, follow-up projects and partnerships emerged. One of those is the radio project: SALAM I LIKE IT – THE FREQUENCY OF THE MANY PEACES.

## Key Terms

Peace, Participation, Dialogue

## Context and background, Which problems/challenges does your measure try to solve/cope with?

In a previous workshop a participant said: "We didn't only escape from war to save ourselves, but also because we didn't want to kill. Many of us had to choose: to kill for the militia, to refuse and thus be killed by the militia, or to flee to live in peace." Many refugees came to Austria with this intention, while newspapers wrote headlines like „waves of refugees bring war and terrorism upon our doorstep“. In the current political discourse, the issue of (in)security is omnipresent. Many citizens feel paralyzed in the face of global problems - borders are an attempt to exclude what we fear. However, without sustainable measure, exclusion creates more insecurity, disconnection and powerlessness for everyone. We aimed for sustainable transformation - empowering local synergies of peace.

## Which are the key objectives of your measure?

- Integration on an individual level (communication skills, basic needs, economic inclusion, shared values)
- Integration on a collective level (holistic dialogue to integrate fears, wishes, cosmovisions and values with methods like theatre or circle dialogues)
- Enabling holistic encounter across identities to strengthen the supportive network within the group-community grow
- Integration of the potentials of refugees/migrants, and non-migrants towards synergies of peace for the extended community/society
- Developing new projects for peace in a participatory way - empowerment

## Who are the main target groups and beneficiaries of your measure?

Anybody who wants to foster peace in the region, especially refugees of war, but also other migrants and non-migrants from different generations. Translation was/is provided in order to enable the full exchange in verbal dialogue. The possibility for child care also enabled the participation of mothers, fathers and other caretakers

## Which actions have already been implemented and which results have been achieved so far?

In January 2017 we called for people who want to contribute to peace, especially those who fled war to live in peace. More people than we could host answered this calling. An initial hosting-team - including a dialogue facilitator, translators, moderators and a childcare worker - welcomed 35 people from 7 countries in our first meeting. The first day gave space to tuning in with each other and with our interpretations of peace. For this we used Theater for Living games and circle dialogues. New hosting-team members helped us to design the next three meetings, which always lasted for half a day and focused on emerging topics. Different methods allowed us to learn from each other and develop shared values. After the first meeting, part of time would also be dedicated to manifest ideas on future action for peace. The group process included more than 50 people and closed in July with an excursion to an alpine pasture. Along with many other synergies, the radio project SALAM I LIKE IT evolved.

## Which were the main problems and challenges you were/are facing when implementing the project and how did/do you (try to) overcome them?

The most apparent problem was linked to limited resources. In a welcoming and professionally facilitated space, where diverse people do intensive participatory work on a long term scale, translation, child care, food, payment for facilitators and coordinators is needed. With sufficiently accessible funding, we could have provided space for more participants and followed the ideal structure of 7 meetings. The challenge was met with exhaustive investments of unpaid time of professionals. With given resources we would love to follow the calls to initiate similar projects in other regions.

## Link to website

## Starting date

2017-01-10

## Duration

7 - ongoing follow up measures

## Regional scale

3 - big region (Bundesland, Region, Département/Province, Kanton etc.)

## Other involved partners

welcome.zu.flucht (project of OJA), Visionscafé Hohenems, ProKonTra Hohenems, Verein Friedenskraftwerk Vorarlberg, Proton – das freie Radio, Vindex – Flucht und Asyl; Funded by OEGPB, City of Hohenems and welcome.zu.flucht;

## Contact person

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## Category 1, Managing social change

Creating space for participation to foster our own potentials for peace enables moving beyond the division of helper/receiver. With elicitive methods we developed a culture of peace and conflict. Differences on the individual and collective level (e.g. religious practices, meanings, (body-)language(s), defining experiences), were and are topic of our collaboration as well as shared values and attributes. Professional moderation helped to make these aspects visible, to hold conflicts safely and to access learnings. Participants learned tools to communicate in a non-violent way and they got to know additional spaces to initiate projects for social change themselves: physical spaces, media spaces and social spaces. Participating in a welcoming setting empower the experience that everyone has valuable gifts for social change. Now many participants support each other with what they can share. Involved organizations benefit from new stakeholders (e.g. with new multilingual radio shows).

## Category 5, PR impact and awareness raising

Our invitation to participate and the respective intention was spread in a vast network of cooperating partners via webpages, newsletters and flyers and in a local newspaper. Participating partners communicated the success of the project to their respective teams. They can see the benefit of attuning their projects to our principles and learned methods to do so. The radio station PROTON reported on the process and broadcasted records of 3 circle dialogues. In the meetings we considered the question of how we can reach a larger audience to foster peace and raise awareness on the potentials of refugees. Within the follow-up project SALAM I LIKE mixed teams appear in the public as journalists and active dialogue partners. Our own newsletter and the online magazine DISKURS published a report on the project and the MAGAZINE FOR MANY PEACES will publish a report in January. With this application we take a further step in offering our knowledge and cooperation with interested partners.

## Category 6, Innovative dimension

Most integration measures assume a lead culture/structure to be defined, to then develop measures for assimilation. Even if the tensions within this lead culture and synergetic transformation is aspired, there is little expertise on methods to do so. We experimented with a pilot project for this purpose. The innovative mix of methods included Theater and Mandala work. Experimental facilitation tools were invented as needs and topics arose. We connected elicitive peace work and integration in a unique way: Working with the philosophy of the Many Peaces we managed to provide a frame for synergetic integration of different aspects of peace and social change. The hosting team was coordinated by Julia Felder (peace researcher and facilitator of conflict transformation). From the first meeting onwards, the hosting team was open to new ideas and actors. Thus, even the hosting team process was an intercultural learning field, showing possibilities and limits of such a coherent approach.

## Category 7, Transferability

### PRECONDITIONS

- house that offers space for circle dialogues, movement and creativity, rooms for groups, space for childcare
- 2 facilitators trained in any form of dialogue work or elicitive conflict transformation
- At least 2 intercultural hosting team members who help to welcome people, care for food, moderate etc.
- Translators and childcare

### METHODS

*Dialogue* as method according to David Bohm has a simple structure. It stems from archaic rituals that have been practiced in a variety of cultures.

A couple of *Theater for Living* games can be applied also by non-professionals and are valuable to connect people with different languages.

For participatory collaboration the Art of Hosting is useful. E.g. *Worldcafe* or *Open Space* are easily applied.

For mandala work as elicitive conflict transformation tool there are little resources available, we are happy to share knowledge and contacts in an individual exchange. Literature references on other methods are provided on request.

## Category 8, Embedment in a comprehensive welcoming strategy

There are institutions in Vorarlberg who provide basic catering and very limited assimilation assistance. While private actors initiated local spaces for encounter, Inkontra offered Theater for Living workshops for refugees and non-refugees as conflict transformation. We also offered workshops in partner institutions. In the Friedenswerkstätte we connected partners and gave participants a 'map' of existing welcoming-initiatives. We encouraging partners to further open their initiatives for diverse actors. We continued connecting participants who had special interest in a topic/special talents with respective organisations. The project SALAM I LIKE IT emerged from participation. A growing intercultural team of 14 people from 6 countries gained skills for doing street interviews and radio shows. They conduct interviews in public places on questions of peace. Every second week a radio show is broadcasted. Inkontra coordinates and remains open for new ideas.

## Further Information



in a Theater for Living Game  
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[Participants Statements.pdf](#) — 324Kb  
statements of participants on the project