

Minorities in Community

Ebook

Projekt

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I am a member of several communities. I chose one that, from a community perspective, taught me the most. The EcoKarma environmental organization was created with the goal of living in a more livable and cleaner village and working together on this cause. A group of people formed who were tired of seeing the reckless treatment of the environment, fed up with littering, and the carelessness of people. The members wanted to live in a more livable, cleaner, and continuously evolving settlement where our children, grandchildren, and their children could proudly look back at their hometown.

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INTRODUCTION

The Minorities in Community is a European Union-funded project that helped Hungarian-speaking people living in Hungary, Slovakia, and Serbia find their own path in community building.

With the support of the grant, we have created intensive training programs through which participants experienced the processes and changes that take place within the community and in themselves, gaining knowledge through experiential learning. We used the same method in our previous project, and the feedback indicated that the training was a "life-changing experience." Our project targeted adults who realized they do not want to live as modern slaves and who value self-development, self-awareness, and social responsibility. These are people who are at a stage in life where they are asking transcendental questions (Why are we on Earth? Who am I? What is my heart's desire? How can I be happy?). The target group of our project consists of men and women in midlife crises who are no longer searching for more money or material possessions but are looking for values important to their spiritual world. These values include understanding, acceptance, clear communication, playing without games, sustainable living, and community life.

The main driving force of our project is the social change where people are becoming isolated and feel powerless to change things. We want to reach out to those who are dissatisfied with the current system but are willing and able to change, taking responsibility even if it means changing their current life and themselves.

In small communities, people can find what inspires them, grow both personally and professionally, learn from each other and about themselves, and be in a supportive environment that will hold them even in times of loss or tragedy. A group of like-minded, compassionate, and understanding people forms a stronghold in difficult times that protects its members. Among the cooperating organizations, there are both experienced and less experienced ones. Through collaboration between these organizations, a mentorship program will be established where the organizations can learn from each

other, primarily in the area of project management. Through the released e-book, we aim to present good practices and feasible community initiatives to the general public. These shared experiences can be read in the following pages.

Partner organisations

KompAkt Slovakia

The goal of KompAkt Slovakia is environmental protection, sustainable development, responsible consumption, composting, waste sorting and recycling, striving for zero waste, healthy living, and permaculture - environmental awareness in all areas of life.

Based on these principles, we aim to create active communities through the following tools:

- Establishing community gardens based on the principles of permaculture and sustainability,
- Organizing lectures and courses for the general public and schools,
- Providing advice to individuals, companies, organizations, and local governments.

As a Hungarian organization in Slovakia, we consider the implementation of mother-tongue education to be crucial. The long-term survival of Hungarians living as a minority can be successful by creating and strengthening communities. We work with local communities and are in contact with local initiatives, where the demand for community development is increasingly emerging. With our experience, we can contribute to the broad understanding of small community operations and the interpretation of their processes.

Szatyor Association

The Szatyor Association was established in 2011, and its headquarters is in Etyek, Hungary. Our goal is to raise awareness of the positive environmental impact of a sustainable lifestyle and conscious consumption. We promote ecological thinking through education, project, and event organization, as well as social entrepreneurial activities. We aim to create space for sharing social-ecological knowledge, experiences, and best practices related to sustainability. As an alternative green organization, our goal is to provide a tangible example that conscious behavior, healthy living, organic farming, and fair economics can be integrated into our daily lives. We carry out various activities: non-formal education for young people and adults, national and international cooperation, accepting and sending team and long-term volunteers, network building, and cross-border cooperation.

The Szatyor Association mainly works with young adults through training and youth exchange programs. The association holds a sending, receiving, and coordinating ESC quality certificate. It has been hosting and preparing young people for long-term volunteerism abroad for 8 years.

Valdorf Društvo Vojvodina

The goals of the Vojvodina Waldorf Community are:

- To provide opportunities for alternative education,
- To organize informal training,
- To assist in the creation of small communities,
- To foster domestic and cross-border cooperation in culture, education, and development,
- To organize and conduct individual and group consultations and workshops.

We aim to assist future communities in finding shared values and goals that will allow them to live long-term community life. We will share our experiences and studies on community formation and operation. We can also assist in the project's implementation by the participation of community members in the retreat.

Our organization works with a wide range of age groups, from preschool to school-age children, since the establishment of kindergartens and schools is also one of our goals. We also work with the teacher age group, which can be broad due to the creation of a teaching staff. Additionally, we engage with anyone interested in experiencing life within a community with shared goals.

1. The History of Our Community

1.1. Starting on the Community Path

In the summer of 2023, the four founding members met at the Gyüttment Festival, began talking, getting to know each other, and developed a strong mutual trust.

"Similar people with similar ideas and goals" – this is where the idea of turning it into a community began. But how do we start?

After many conversations, the four members purchased a cottage to renovate at the end of 2023 as an “introductory project,” as it's during a renovation that you truly discover how well you can collaborate.

In April 2024, my partner and I participated in the community’s second open weekend, where members and interested individuals could get to know each other in an organized program.

The weekend went so well that, expressing our intention to join the community, we already participated in organizing the third open weekend. You could say we went from being interested parties to actual members.

I personally feel that the condition for becoming a member is the intention to commit, taking responsibility for the community's life and tasks, while also getting to know one another.

Currently, the community consists of 12 members.

Out of the 12, 6 are men and 6 are women, 3 of whom are in relationships, and 6 are single.

The members had known each other before from various events, but not all of them knew each other. We had met at joint programs, self-awareness groups, men's or women's circles, festivals, and other places. The process of getting to know each other, the "assembling," had begun.

The community has a vision.

We are looking for our “common cause,” and aligning individual goals to create a common goal.

The four founding members have been together since the fall of 2023, and by April 2024, 8 more members had joined.

By September 2024, the Pontegy community consisted of 12 members, 6 men and 6 women, 3 couples, and 6 singles.

From May to September 2024, the community focused on the internal development of the 12 members, and then in October 2024, we organized another open day where "outsiders" could participate with the intention of meeting others or joining the community.

At the open day, one couple and one man joined, who had been following the community's evolution for months and had met us at other events.

Among our members are Pabló and Éva, who hold a series of talks on “becoming a real community,” offer community facilitator training, and work on community development, making them well-known figures in such circles and respected members of our community.

In the summer of 2023, the four founding members met at the Gyüttment Festival, began talking, getting to know each other, and developed a strong mutual trust.

As a result of many conversations, the four members purchased a cottage to renovate at the end of 2023 as an "introductory project," since it's during a renovation that you truly see how collaboration works.

On January 1, 2024, the community's vision was born, which is also featured on the “Pontegy Community” Facebook group's highlighted page.

The four-person community aims to grow to 10-16 members, which is why we organized introductory open weekends. By April 2024, the community grew to 12 members.

From then on, it became clear that we would meet in person one full day each month, and every week, we would hold a two-hour online meeting to discuss operational tasks and have “how is everyone” check-ins.

We established 8 working groups (community facilitators, event organizers, area scouts, builders, finance, unity creators, system organizers, PR communications), where members participate based on their affinities, take responsibility, and work toward our shared goals.

In early August 2024, we organized a 7-day “own treemap camp,” where all 12 community members participated in renovating the purchased cottage. We lived together for a week, worked from 8 AM to 2 PM, and after lunch, we continued “building our community” from 4 PM to 10 PM. During the afternoon sessions, we analyzed the successes and difficulties of working together, began addressing and resolving conflicts, as part of a “conflict project.” During this week, we intensely searched for our “common cause,” aligning our individual goals into a shared one.

During this week, our community integrated many times and also differentiated due to the arising conflicts.

We are currently working on our internal regulations, such as membership criteria and mentoring for new members.

At the beginning of November 2024, one of our members said goodbye to the community because they felt they could no longer continue with us. This event personally shook me, as I was close to the person, but it also highlighted the need to establish rules not just for membership but for the conditions and process of departure as well.

We are continuously fine-tuning our internal communication (Messenger groups, Facebook internal group), though we still face challenges to ensure that information doesn't get lost with 15 people involved.

We are also regulating our decision-making process to find the most suitable method for everyone to agree on.

Everyone tries to attend our weekly Zoom meetings, and if someone cannot attend, they can watch the recordings later, which is a great help. We also prepare summaries of the meetings, which are stored on Google Drive along with other documents.

Although our community is still relatively new, we have already done a lot together.

What I am most proud of is that our community's strength is visible during periods of differentiation (during conflict stages) and in resolving conflicts.

The first major challenge is finding the land we can buy to all move in together. We are currently in this process.

The training helps me better understand human relationships and community dynamics.

This training has helped me a lot because it coincided with my time joining the community.

My personal development goals within the community:

Handling misunderstandings, differences, and conflicts arising from human diversity.

Drawing and maintaining my boundaries with clear, straightforward communication.

Our community vision

“We are organizing ourselves to create a ‘real’ community, with the following main characteristics:

- Conscious-based
- Intentional
- Built on close human relationships
- A lifestyle community.

Conscious-based means that self-awareness, both individually and as a group, is extremely important to us. We support this with our own internal self-awareness practices and processes.

Intentional means that we freely and voluntarily choose each other and this community.

Built on close human relationships means that we gradually bring our lifestyles closer together, intentionally spending more and more time together. We support each other and are present for one another.

We want to create a lifestyle community, which is why our plan includes establishing a retreat center on a multi-hectare property that will also serve as our home.

One of the retreat’s goals is to host external groups, offering a location primarily for self-awareness-focused events.

Members of the community will bring their own business activities; the retreat center is not intended solely to support the community financially.

We aim for equal material and time participation in creating and maintaining the community's physical living space.

Our community does not have the primary goal of complete self-sufficiency, but we are open to it and strive to produce quality food, mainly plant-based.

We place great emphasis on conflict resolution within the community. Our members take responsibility for uncovering and resolving their internal conflicts, and we provide space for these processes.

Our motto is: “I’d like to hear more about the events that triggered your feelings.” “Let’s heal the wounds of our souls, rather than the community!”

It's a fundamental principle that we stay in touch with our feelings, bring them to awareness, take responsibility for them, express them, and resolve them – we do not run from conflicts, we resolve them!

We are still in the process of searching for land, with a preferred location within an hour's drive from Budapest (mainly Komárom-Esztergom county, the northern and western parts of Pest county, and the northern part of Fejér county). Locations that are accessible by public transport and are in remote areas are preferred.

Planned community-forming activities:

- Creating a community space
- Construction
- Gardening (organic)
- Shared meals
- Self-awareness processes
- Film club, board games
- Weekly meetings and sharing sessions (self-awareness, operational, conflict resolution, etc.)

We are looking for you if you are looking for us :)”

2. Together

2.1. For the development of all of us

Their community is called "The People of Nature," and the whole journey began when they decided, during a casual gathering with friends, to not use mobile phones. Instead, they played music, danced, sang, and discussed what activities they enjoy doing in nature or at home. Their community grew as more people joined, each sharing similar interests.

Relations between members

The relationships within the community are mostly friendly, with some couples joining as well. The thing that connects them most is their shared outlook on life, similar hobbies, and the desire to create new things and learn. Though the number of members varies, the foundation of the group is a mutual understanding and philosophy. The founding members have changed over time, and currently, the community is maintained by just one person and their partner.

One of their greatest successes is organizing the "Day of Peace" festival, which took place in Vásárút, near Dunaszerdahely. The festival was a great achievement, and a new team formed to help organize the event. Volunteers played a crucial role in making the event a success. The festival received positive feedback, with attendees expressing their joy at having such an event in their area. This feedback reaffirmed their belief that they were on the right path with their community-building efforts.

Their biggest challenge was securing a venue. The idea and organization of the festival were tied to a specific location by a lake, which they had already discussed with the property owner and agreed on a reasonable rental fee. However, just a month before the event, they received a message that the agreement was being canceled, and they needed to find a new location. This was a major setback, but they remained determined and eventually found an even better venue.

Their belief in their vision and mutual support helped them overcome this challenge. It also reaffirmed the importance of working together and trusting in the process.

In terms of personal growth, the training process has helped them understand how communities function and how to manage and support a community. They have not had this kind of training before, so they are eager to learn everything that helps them build and develop their community.

Looking forward, they aim to organize more events and gatherings to foster stronger connections within the community. Their primary goal is to spend quality time together, listen to each other, and have fun. They want to create a space where people can bond, help one another, and enjoy each other's company. After the last few years of being more isolated, they realize how difficult it can be for people to step out of their homes and reconnect with others, so their aim is to make this process easier.

Their goal for next year is to host the "Day of Peace" festival again, and perhaps even make it a multi-day event. They warmly invite anyone interested to join them.

3. Sanctuary

3.1. Establishing a Creative Workshop in the Inherited Family Home

The idea of a creative workshop naturally came into my life, although it arrived in a somewhat reverse order, as the location came first, and it has its own history.

I come from a village in Csallóköz, where our family owns a house that once belonged to my grandparents. In early 2020, just before COVID, the house became empty when my grandfather passed away. During the pandemic, I quit my job at an architecture office since I hold a degree in architectural engineering. I didn't really enjoy the work, it didn't make me happy, and I felt I needed to take a different direction. I decided to try to make one of my dreams come true—hat-making. When the COVID wave eased, I took a course in Budapest, where I learned the basics of hat-making. While I was attending the course, a family friend's family was renting the house, but they didn't respect some of our requests. This emotionally affected our family because that house holds great value for us. Once the decision was made for them to move out, I asked myself where my hat workshop should be. It didn't take long to decide—it was clear I would set up the workshop in one of the rooms of the house. But first, the room needed some work (painting, sanding the parquet, etc.). After these few steps, I set up my workshop, where both old furniture and new items found their place. I try to maintain the original elements, but not too much, staying away from being stuck in the past.

Several updates were made to the house, which my parents considered necessary to replace or improve (e.g., new roof tiles, heating system). My father works in construction, and I am an architect, which often leads to friction between us, and this is an important part of the story. The house itself is already of great value, but its location, about 20 km from the capital, adds even more significance. Once I started setting up my workshop, I began to temporarily organize the other rooms as well. However, I could become extremely frustrated when it was decided how much more needed to be done from a construction point of view, even though I thought the house could function without these updates. My parents understandably wanted to get the house in order while they still had the energy to do so, and I respect that, but it caused me a lot of stress and anxiety. When someone came to visit or to place a hat order, everyone really liked the place

and the potential of what could be done there. I agreed with them, but the work, which we could only plan through arguments, still lay ahead, and who knows when it would be completed.

The good news is that now, in the fall of 2024, it seems we are finally at a stage where no major work is needed for the house to function peacefully. This is a huge step for me, and I may not have fully grasped it yet, because the past few years of arguments have caused a lot of stress and anxiety.

This is the positive and negative side of having a family-owned property. I will always have some worry, no matter what I want to create here, although I have support from my parents. My mother often says, as the owner of the parental home, that she would love for there to be some movement and activity in the space. This sentence has stuck in my mind, as well as in the minds of every visitor who mentioned how they would enjoy spending a few days here.

When I make hats, I'm immersed in my inner world, but after a few days, I realize I miss people. I think of city coworking spaces, where, even if people don't work together, they can meet for a coffee after work or during the day. Or when it comes to creative work, they visit each other's studios. This idea started to take root in my mind—that maybe I could create something like that here, at this house.

Last winter, a familiar friend and I started working with ceramics in the not-yet-renovated kitchen. Although neither of us knew exactly what we were doing, it was a very relaxing activity for us. Hearing this, a few people from our acquaintance circle said they would love to join. I was very happy that this came up, but unfortunately, we had to put the idea on hold due to the next steps of the renovation. The kitchen was next in line, and ceramic work had to be suspended for a few months. Now the plan is to dedicate one of the outdoor spaces to this activity, as I would like to transform old-fashioned laundry or flower rooms into creative spaces. There are still a few critical issues to address, as these rooms are full of old furniture, and some technical problems need to be fixed, requiring more renovations. Despite everything, the idea is starting to take shape in my mind, and it's beginning to look realistic. I think the sensitive point will always be the family ownership, which, if clarified and managed through open communication, can evolve positively. However, the arguments with my father during the renovation process have left me with some wounds, and sometimes that holds me back from making progress.

I consider myself lucky in that I am surrounded by many creative and skilled artists and creators. There are also many people around me who are not professionally involved in art but are interested in it and find liberation in the creative process. I want to bring these people together or create a space where they can meet, whether for a workshop or just for coffee and a chat. My concrete plans include establishing a ceramics workshop and a smaller drawing studio. Of course, in the house, there will also be a living room and a kitchen where events like reading nights, cooking classes, or small group art therapy can take place. Outdoors, we could even have film screenings or ping-pong tournaments.

These activities and workshops are not dreams; I'm surrounded by people who are actively involved in these fields and would be happy to join me in creating this space. Honestly, I feel that this community already exists around me, and I am the connecting individual. I often bring people together for creative projects, so I believe I will be able to create a smaller community here as well. However, this brings up the question of how I will be able to distribute the work or organize the various parts of the project, as I will always feel the weight of the house being family-owned. I view this as a significant emotional challenge.

Recently, a childhood memory resurfaced when we went on a hike around Lake Balaton, and we visited these artistic retreats. We would peek at them, and they always seemed like magical places to me. Now, the picture is coming together, and I believe that the house, my grandparents' house, is in my life for a reason, even though, at times, amid the difficulties and arguments, I feel that it would be easier to do this in a place without such strong emotional ties.

From my own experience, I know that creation liberates, and I wish everyone could experience this. However, the downside of this type of work is the loneliness. When creating together, although everyone is immersed in their own world, the shared experience can bring about a wonderful feeling of togetherness. Someone might need support, or someone else might draw inspiration from another's creativity. I would like anyone interested in creating to be able to try it here, in complete freedom, with no expectations, just for the joy of creating.

Since my work environment is also a creative one (I work as a film set designer), I often feel the pressure to create something beautiful and good. For me, this is another challenge with the artist's space: that things don't need to be perfect for creativity to flow, and for the creative self to be released. I must accept that some processes take longer and might temporarily slow progress, but in the meantime, there is time to work on other things. For me, the house renovation has been this time to shape the idea of this artist's retreat and let the picture come together.

In the meantime, I've been able to experience the operation of different naturally formed communities, which we live through individually every time a new film project starts, because a new team is formed. Now, I know that when people can connect with each other and help and pay attention to one another, the whole work process can turn into a pleasant adult camp, and unfortunately, the opposite is also true. When there is no human acceptance or assistance, stress increases, and collaboration becomes more difficult. For me, this is a live example of how important human connections and communication are. In fact, it was the good human relationships and experiences on the first film set that made me decide this is what I want to do. Interestingly, the team-building and the creative process were my motivation, not the specific outcome of the film. I didn't experience this in the architectural office. The film world is a fast-paced environment, and burnout is very common because there's no time or space to rest and recharge. I've noticed this in recent months, and that's why I feel it's even more important to have this creative house—a place where I can go to rest and retreat. I want to create that same feeling for my colleagues who need it too.

The starting point of the idea, from an external perspective, is the house, but from an internal perspective, it is truly a place of peace, where we can create together freely, or just release the creative steam.

4. Encounters

4.1. Developing my community through self-awareness

The institution was founded in 2014 by former Waldorf parents. Our family joined in 2018, and it was around that time that a strong, new, active parent community was formed, wanting to do more than just drop off and pick up their children. In Waldorf institutions, it's a tradition for parents to do social work, which is also implicitly part of the pedagogy. Parents working together for common goals set an example for the children. The institution also relies on an active community to function. There are many tasks, big and small, that fall to the parents. In fact, the parents are the institution's maintainers.

First and foremost, we are united by a common cause: to create a truly great place for our children from ages 3 to 14. While working together, friendships also develop. Naturally, some find it easier to get along with each other, while others struggle to share space with certain individuals. A community of this size reflects the full spectrum of human relationships.

When the community was founded in 2014, it was created by 10 families who were close friends. The community now consists of 140 families, and it has grown significantly over the past 3-4 years. Nowadays, not everyone knows each other personally. There is a need for the community to function as an organization, with workgroups, leadership roles, and effective communication channels. In the summer of 2024, we made significant progress when we established a regular bi-weekly meeting for active parents, founding parents, and educators.

In 2014, 10 closely connected families founded the Csillagbölcső Waldorf Kindergarten, and the following year, the School was established. There had previously been a Waldorf institution in Kecskemét, but not everyone was in agreement, which led to the formation of the Csillagbölcső Waldorf Association. The association members pooled their resources to purchase an old, dilapidated kindergarten building from the municipality, which they renovated with thousands of hours of volunteer work, obtained the necessary permits, and opened the kindergarten. The number of children attending the kindergarten grew steadily until it reached its capacity limit. The institution now hosts 104 children, making it probably the largest Waldorf kindergarten in Hungary. Meanwhile, the primary school was also started, mostly with combined classes. If all goes well, the last combined class will end in 2025, and from then on, there will be one class per grade. The school's student body is also growing year by year.

The dynamic growth has brought about continuous changes, naturally resulting in tensions. For example, we could hold a celebration with 50 children, but with 80, it became cramped, and with 100, we either had to split the group or find an external, larger venue. For me, the greatest

success of our parent community is that, initially, the relationship with the founders was characterized by mutual distrust. Trust had to be built brick by brick while egos had to be dismantled.

For me, the biggest crisis so far was the collapse of the "third Waldorf school in Kecskemét," which had a significant impact on us. In every larger meeting, the topic revolved around this, evoking strong emotions from the participants. Some wanted to distance themselves from the situation based on past experiences and let the other community resolve its issues, while others saw helping as a natural response in such a situation. Around this time, several parents distanced themselves from community organization, who had previously been very active in the work.

The pendulum can be moved from its resting position, but eventually, it always returns. In time, every problematic situation resolves itself. So, my answer is that time helped resolve the crisis. The institution in question ultimately collapsed in a way, but some parents joined our institution, some went elsewhere, and others stayed and continued in their own way. From one perspective, it can be said that it was much ado about nothing. On the other hand, there are certainly a few human dramas in the events' swirl. We learned a lot about ourselves and our community members in the process.

For me, it was a great help to receive confirmation that my role is to facilitate the community, to bring the right people together and help them in their work. There are two key outcomes of this. First, I need to avoid trying to solve everything myself, or else I will burn out, and most likely, there are more qualified people in a community of several hundred people. Second, the facilitator role is a vital function, and if done well, it can be incredibly valuable and useful to the community. As a result of the training, it became clear to me that I generally work best when I organize the work behind the leader, helping to achieve the goals set by the leader.

The parent team, which has been working together for the past 3 years, consists of about 10 people who know each other very well, have worked together for a long time, and understand each other's strengths and weaknesses. However, this community has the characteristic that, since it is organized around both kindergarten and school, parents "graduate" from the institution and move on. 10 years ago, the founders accomplished the first miracle, which they were able to sustain for about 5 years, but then a gap emerged, which we, the "second-generation" parents, were able to fill, though it required some struggle. Learning from this, we now consciously need to prepare for the arrival of the next generation of parents. However, if they don't come naturally, we will have to "raise" them, because sooner or later, we have to pass on the torch, ensuring that the flame of the Csillagbölcső Waldorf community doesn't go out. Every day, many valuable things are created in this community, whether it's intellectual knowledge, physical objects, human relationships, or emotional enrichment, and it would be a shame to let that go to waste.

5.Struggle and Balance

5.1. Can we truly become a community, or will we burn out in our shared cause?

It wasn't exactly an idea to form a community; rather, it was a path that, in our view, has no alternative. We all believe that only through the process of becoming a community can long-term and sustainable cooperation be built among people. People who gathered around our cause already had, or were beginning to develop, a foundational belief that community-based solutions could move many areas of our lives forward, and we consider this to be valid in terms of the broader community and society as well.

If I were to focus on the idea or inspiration behind it, the motivation comes from the fact that we don't feel comfortable in this society. We know, see, and experience too much – yet how little we truly know – about the chances that groups of people have for their lives, both within our immediate surroundings and on a global scale. How immense and how severely limited these chances are. The basic conditions for life, such as having a home, being able to heat it, having access to clean water and food, not to mention healthcare and education, seem to be out of reach for so many. Every member of our small and larger team had previously been directly involved with or volunteered for social groups where these differences were experienced firsthand.

Many of us also longed for (or even insisted on) making our daily activities part of a larger effort to create a better environment (both natural and social) and an economy based on values and solidarity. Not just gathering together in a pub, a cultural setting, or in friendship, but acting together, and making it part of our work as well. A workplace where we take care of each other and where mutuality is at the forefront.

We are a association, which is like a large spider web, with dense central parts and ones that reach farther out. Our cause has been woven from the basic motivations above, with a focus on food sovereignty. We are happy to engage (and would engage) with other related areas as well, since we are a diverse team, though this is mainly on hold due to capacity and other reasons. Other challenges contribute to this, which we will discuss later. Many people can relate to the theme of our daily food, and we believe that a more conscious and active smaller and larger community can find a good entry point by working together to take care of one of our basic needs.

We established our organization in mutual agreement over four years ago, with the goal of having an active membership. Therefore, we set a minimum participation requirement for association members. This approach is both a means to enhance operational efficiency and a

strong intention toward ourselves and our cause, ensuring that everyone contributes what they can.

Our association has 14 members, of which four form the core of the operational team, and we work together every day. In some areas, 5-6 people are also involved in the work organization, and some participate in "húruk" tasks and our product distribution days.

The main meeting points of our larger community are Fridays. Of the approximately 30-strong volunteer team, about 20 of us are together on this day in shifts, with around 40 local producers visiting us in the morning and about 200-250 families or their members in the afternoon.

Our shared cause and fundamental values connect us. We have a camaraderie, a comradeship, and a familial work relationship. This applies to the smaller work team. We also spend time together in our free time and organize social outings. It's not easy to maintain all of this and ensure that our cause progresses, that we become more professional, while also dealing with the personal difficulties of life that require space, peace, and freedom.

The community may have a "therapeutic" effect, but that is not its goal. This is an important point, and it fits with the following: There were some overly "spiritual" members in the community. We said this line when one of them (a member of our work team) repeatedly talked about the concept of expectations, claiming that expectations are not good, and about acceptance and spiritual development, while we didn't really understand what the essence of these ideas was. The presentation was somewhat muddled and scattered, drawing on various sources, and was mostly delivered in a teacher-like or instructive manner.

It was clear that personal wounds and past events were driving these expressions, which would have been fine if we had understood what to do with them. We tried to ask questions in order to understand, but the answers didn't come. Instead, we experienced awkward silences and a lack of responses from the individual. Ultimately, the questions remained unanswered, and the whole evening conversation was marked by this.

The main feeling left was that we didn't want to understand or accept what this person was expressing. This was a valuable lesson, and we discussed it in a smaller circle, which led to the above sentence. We realized that we couldn't focus on one person's needs beyond our capacity, especially if they didn't really want us to.

There have already been many pieces related to this topic, but I will attempt to approach the community's story from another angle. Before diving into that, I would like to go even further back to my own personal story.

Since childhood, I have been close to nature, gardening, plants, and the gifts of wild or cultivated land, that is, food and food preparation. Even as a city dweller, we had a small garden where fruits and vegetables grew, and I frequently encountered rural life and small-scale farming at relatives' farms. I loved going to the market with my mother, enjoying the atmosphere, and selecting what we would take home. As a young adult, I began developing connections with local producers, with whom I enjoyed talking.

I respected and still respect their extremely important and valuable work. During university, I started turning my focus to local agriculture and short food chains. I participated in the organization of the first farmer's market in Pécs, and later my thesis was connected to this topic. The matter became close to my heart, driven by a sense of community.

The producers I knew knew each other, everyone knew everyone, and great relationships developed, leading to many professional conversations. During those years, I didn't know much about community building, but I was learning more and more about various social, economic, and environmental collaborations. One such lesson was realizing that we are facing a complex and severe food crisis, that the agricultural population is shrinking (disappearing, transforming), which deeply affects the structure of our landscapes and the natural environment. The sustainable path requires the formation of cooperation and solidarity.

Before the founding of the association, the idea of a purchasing community was starting to gain traction in the area. A group of people gathered together to discuss it. The first lockdown of the COVID pandemic delayed our active action, but many discussions and information-gathering took place. This founding group split into two parts, one working on how to form a community, and the other eager to start organizing.

After the summer reopening, most of us agreed to move forward, and we found a location for logistics. Thanks to old relationships, we also had the starting network of producers (and their "replacement" network) and met the minimum legal requirements. By then, it became clear who was interested in organizing a community from the sidelines and who would handle the work. Some people dropped out, but many others joined and participated in the work.

Events accelerated from here, and a few months later, 150 families were connecting with the organization weekly to get their food. Along the way, we had to handle many tasks, and chaotic organizing meetings and conflicts emerged. We began focusing more on our core values, vision, and strategy.

In the summer of 2021, one year after the launch, a significant change occurred that we couldn't delay any longer. We had to organize every area, clarify responsibilities, and start forming a more

committed inner circle. A leadership team of three was formed, later expanded to four. Internal rules, democratic operating methods, organizational culture, communication, decision-making, solidarity economy, and organizational development became more prominent.

The volunteer team always fluctuated, but a truly stable, enthusiastic, and loyal core group emerged, many of whom are still with us today.

Our property challenges brought many difficulties until the summer of 2022, but it also gave us a lot of experience in our "traveling circus." At the same time, continuous capital and capacity shortages prevented us from making bigger strides and truly focusing on our community, partnership-building, and professional development. This is the classic rat race. Nevertheless, we began connecting with the Solidarity Economy Center, the Gólya Cooperative, and several individuals. By the summer of 2022, we secured a permanent rental property that was entirely ours, with suitable parameters. We started settling in long-term. It was a significant milestone for the community.

With a stable base and financial reserves, we began developing a larger background system and preparing our new customer groups and logistics for our solidarity food chain. This started in 2023, and our website and platform reached a usable level, although a great deal of work remains before it becomes a model-quality system.

We are thus running with our cause, as the team pushes forward in the face of headwinds and resource shortages. It is incredibly difficult to make a community and cause economically sustainable in this capitalist system, especially when we seek to remove the profit motive from the food system (as a public good). We essentially have to hunt for the partners and collaborators who complement us. Those who take part in the operational and professional work are particularly important, while the outer layers of the "onion" grow more easily. It would be wonderful to have more personal relationships, more flexibility; we all long to know our producers, customers, and partners better, as well as our trade union coordinators.

First and foremost, we are proud of our community, which has evolved and is still evolving. Our main reason for being is to continue building, and, from this, to strengthen our impact on local food systems and solidarity economies. We are proud of our professional work, of how we managed to develop processes, share knowledge, and build a community of dedicated volunteers. There is no one-size-fits-all approach, but we are also proud that our understanding of the cause is developing along with the work itself.

I think this is a familiar story: what works well in one phase can be challenging in another. One

of the most difficult aspects is facing the difficulty of ensuring the long-term sustainability of the entire operation, particularly when our volunteers are also workers. We have also realized that it's important to involve newcomers slowly, which is a delicate process.

One must be careful not to burn people out. Although we share a common purpose, we are ultimately still individuals with separate lives. Finding a way to balance everything is difficult. There are many professional pitfalls and blind spots that we are constantly navigating. The community-building process is particularly difficult when we simultaneously have to handle survival tasks. We have to define where to draw the line between personal needs and community needs, and when to scale up or scale back.

6. Community under One Roof

6.1. My Inner Journey Through Communities

The journey here has been long (and this is just the beginning). I am now sharing my personal story in the following pages, my search, attempts, and encounter with real community. Since my birth, I have belonged to smaller or larger communities (as most of us do). These include family, relatives, kindergarten, school, workplace, and many others. However, most of these were not communities I chose. I often found myself in a community where I had to fit in, adapt, and, in many cases, meet expectations.

I did not always consider myself a community person. Certainly not in elementary school. Perhaps during my high school years, some kind of change occurred. As my world expanded, I also opened up to people. The feeling of belonging really strengthened at that time. In these years, my musical style largely defined this sense of belonging. The images of those "band days" from the past appear as part of a search, a search for myself. These were rudimentary communities. University years, however, revealed an even broader path to my developing personality. I made many new friends and acquaintances, meeting very different people in life (and this diversity was precisely what made it beautiful). At this time, I no longer based my connections on musical style, and this surprisingly had a favorable impact on my ability to accept and relate to others.

The next step in my adulthood was getting my first job. It is truly said that this is when we step into the real world, a world that doesn't necessarily have real communities. This was the beginning of my desire to fit in and meet expectations. Although I chose a job that could have become my calling, it didn't turn out that way. To be honest, teaching and pedagogy were never part of my plans, yet life led me down this path (because when you can't decide, you just drift along). Over the years, I gained a lot of experience in this field, and with the experience came disappointment (many times). No matter where I went, I never felt like I was in the right place. After all, this is one of the most important things in life: to be in the right place (this was one of the most honest, human interviews I ever had, one I will never forget). At various workplaces, I encountered various communities. I met many good people (children and adults alike). Since workplaces can involve very different people working in the same team, adaptability is crucial. I perfected this ability over the years (to my own detriment, of course). My most recent workplace was where I spent enough time to slowly lose myself. Naturally, I never felt I was in the right place here either. Looking back at these years, I almost never thought of us as a community (although our common goal – raising and teaching children with the hope of a better world – often brought the community together).

In February 2024, I had to face a huge loss. I lost someone close to me, who was both a mentor, a role model, and a true friend. This loss greatly contributed to my decision to take the steps I had been putting off. I realized that life is finite, and it matters how and where we spend it (and in what community). In the early days of spring, the universe sent me a sign (at least that's how I felt and believe to this day) in the form of a wonderful opportunity. At that time, I felt quite down, but inside me, there was a very strong feeling that I needed to step forward, not for others, but for myself. I took this step (which required quite a bit of courage). In May, I participated in a four-day retreat, which became one of the most defining decisions of my life (this has since been proven many times over). Thanks to this decision, you are now reading my words.

Minorities in Community. This was the name of the program in which we, the “Harmonizers,” participated. It promised self-awareness work, community experience, learning communication and connection techniques, and I can say on behalf of all of us that the promises were fulfilled. It was there that I realized I didn't even know what it truly means to exist and function in a real community. I never would have imagined that I would experience this with a group of complete strangers (both from near and far). A team of people with different ages, life situations, and personalities, yet there was a palpable inner harmony (a sense of unity).

Self-Awareness. These four days led to many realizations. Until the first day of the retreat, I lived under the illusion that I had already been on the path of self-awareness for a long time (checking off books, lectures, and podcasts). I was wrong. It was then and there that I embarked on a journey from which I never want to deviate again. During these four days, I learned more about myself than I ever had before. I became closer to my inner self and discovered how I function, where and in what role I can imagine myself in a community (the experiences I had there were even surprising to me). It was there that I realized that without self-awareness, there can be no real connection, and without real connections, there can be no true communities.

Connection. I would now quote Edward Groody's thoughts (which were also featured in the Facebook post announcing the application), which fully expressed my inner struggle and desire: “Humanity is undergoing a major paradigm shift because we have lost the ability to connect, and COVID was just oil on the fire, making our connections disappear even faster. We need to relearn this ability, and community-building methods offer the basic tools to connect and experience that we, too, can belong somewhere.” Connection, to connect. These were words I had almost never used before, but I did them quite well (with varying success). They simply weren't in my vocabulary (yet they hold tremendous significance). I had an indescribable longing to connect with others honestly, being my true self. Only faint memories here and there indicated that there were times in my life when I could experience this (especially during my university years). At the retreat, I rediscovered my ability to connect, which filled me with boundless energy and vitality (my inner self switched to Duracell bunny mode). The feeling hit

me with the force of novelty, and joy danced in every cell of my body. I stepped out of my comfort zone, ventured out of my perpetual background role, and became the spiritual leader of a ship (one of my favorite tasks among many).

Holding Power. If someone has never felt the supportive power of a community, then they haven't truly lived (it may sound exaggerated, but I truly feel it). This kind of power can weave such a secure net around us that no matter where we fall, we can be sure we'll be held. It may seem like magic, but it is real, tangible power, something we can feel on our skin. And this net is woven by those who stand by us (not above us), keeping our shared goals in mind. This safe environment provides the perfect foundation for a community to function, grow, and strengthen. This doesn't mean that this kind of community is perfect, just that it can bear difficulties, differences of opinion, and the members are not afraid to confront them. During the retreat, I was apprehensive about such situations. To my surprise, I discovered that in a truly functioning community, there is room for disputes, problems, and differing viewpoints to be discussed.

Honesty and Trust. Two concepts that are extremely important to me. One presupposes the other (I firmly believe that one cannot exist without the other). Where I cannot be honest, trust cannot be established either, and where I do not trust those around me, I cannot and will not share my honest thoughts (or feelings). We can only be honest with others when we are honest with ourselves (ta-dam, we're back to self-awareness). Am I honest with myself, do I recognize when I am not? I dared. During the retreat, I shared my inner feelings and thoughts with great honesty, both with myself and in relation to others (I'll admit, it was a strange feeling, but also heartwarming and soul-soothing). In fact, one of my most positive realizations was that my openness and honesty had a significant impact on many members of our community. A few even thanked me for being the way I am. Needless to say, this gave me an indescribably wonderful feeling, and I didn't let go of it for a long time (fortunately).

Understanding and Acceptance. Once again, two concepts without which it is hard to imagine a community (or even a livable life). In order to be understood and accepted by others, we first need to understand and accept ourselves (yes, another "ta-dam"), which is impossible without proper self-awareness. How can we expect others to understand us if we don't even understand ourselves? I dare to say that self-understanding is only possible within a true community, just as true acceptance requires a certain community. I also experienced at this retreat that if I embark on the path of understanding (whether it is understanding myself or others), it leads to connections that deepen relationships and strengthen the community (indeed, everything is interconnected). I tried to pay attention to the expressions, stories, and words of the members of our community, trying to see the feeling beings behind them (I believe that only the "eye of the heart" can do this). The issue of acceptance is more controversial for me, as almost all of us have an inner judge that is difficult to restrain from making judgments. It was here that I realized that my prejudices stemmed from my previous experiences, and new positive experiences can dismantle our beliefs and reframe our reality. When I honestly shared some of my prejudices with a few of

my companions, from then on (after their initial huge surprise), the conversation deepened and the bond between us grew.

Shared Goals. These form the foundation of the community (along with its members). When I first filled out the application form (for the program), I had to answer what kind of community I would like to be part of. I expressed my thoughts as follows: "I long for a community where, with understanding, respect, and mutual support, we can move forward toward common goals. I would be very happy to be part of a community that supports a good cause, working for a better and more livable world every day." This desire has only grown stronger in me since then, as the retreat helped me think in terms of community again (or at least gave me the courage to do so).

Why did I write my story with such honesty? Perhaps to serve as a positive example for those who want to join communities in the future. It changed my life when I experienced what a real community is like. If you asked me today how I envision community, what this concept means to me, I would answer: community is a group of people working under one roof, supporting and helping each other, moving toward shared goals in a safe and supportive environment. This is not an exaggeration; this is what a real community is (at least for me). Who wouldn't want to belong to such a community?

Finally, I would like to quote József Attila's lines, which have been with me throughout the retreat: "No matter how much you wash yourself, you can only wash your face in others." These two lines express that we, as human beings, are social creatures and we desperately need connection, to belong somewhere. In my opinion, this is what determines our health, happiness, and well-being. The choice is ours. I say: let's finally hold each other's hands.

7. Community in the Light

7.1. The Transformative Power of Communities

This community was founded by János in the summer of 2023. He is a father of several children, a musician, a programmer, and is involved in dream interpretation, spiritual science, and esoteric teachings. I got to know him and the other members through the Vajdasági Waldorf Community. Later, János will become a teacher of free religion at the Waldorf school in Vajdaság, through the lens of anthroposophy and evangelical spiritual science.

The Vajdasági Waldorf community was initially initiated and organized by mothers. János received dreams from the spiritual leader of the community, telling him to join this community where he saw that the fathers and men were in the background, with no one to unite them. Based on the old "Életrevaló Férfiak Közösség" (Men's Community of the Life-worthy) from Subotica, he founded a men's circle within the Waldorf community. They meet monthly and hold an electronic forum, primarily discussing topics relevant to the spiritual challenges of today's world.

We maintain a friendly relationship. Endre (Beta) is the second most active member, who organizes Suska circles and work-bee events. It's probably at these work-bees where we get to know each other best, where we can connect and feel closer. One of our huge common goals was to help open the first Waldorf school in Vajdaság. Thanks to God and every participant, the school opened its doors in September this year. Many of the male members' wives are the founders of the school. The men supported the female leaders through their humble work and energy. When the man helps his partner humbly, the woman reciprocates with gratitude.

Our community consists of about 12 men, and there are at least as many families behind them. At different times, some members are more active than others. A close friend and I joined 9 months ago. We work well together in terms of attending meetings and understanding the topics. Recently, a member organized a work-bee to build the fence of a family house. We also contributed to clearing and beautifying the Waldorf school site, with men, women, children, spouses, and families all participating. The outcome was beautiful! It was a wonderful feeling to see and be part of it when 30 people came together, putting their hearts and souls into it, completing the seemingly impossible task in a flash.

Having been born with a life path number 9 in this life, I find it hard to pinpoint a clear career, as I have many skills, and I've worked in various fields. Life led me to try the teaching profession as well. A few years ago, spirituality entered my life in a unique way, and I became friends with

a spiritual group from Csantavér, where I met many wonderful people, including MC. During one of our club talks, MC mentioned that he had just come from the Vajdasági Waldorf meeting. It immediately piqued my interest, though I didn't know much about the Waldorf philosophy at that point. I had a brief conversation with MC about it, did some research, and eventually contacted a former high school classmate, who ended up being one of the founders and first teachers of the school.

In the middle of our conversation, she invited me to a Waldorf teacher meeting. I was excited but also nervous when I realized I would be representing the male gender among so many beautiful women. With gratitude and positive feelings in my heart, I awaited the next meeting. The wave started, and I dove into it. I felt that I wanted to be part of this mission and help push the initiative forward. At the same time, I learned that the male members of the community organize a men's circle. My friend spoke with János, and we went to the next meeting. They welcomed us warmly. Since then, whenever possible, we keep in touch. We help each other in every way we can, physically in the work-bees, emotionally in our conversations, and spiritually through shared meditations and revelations. The community got to know each other more and more, trust grew, and the community became stronger as more aspects of it unfolded.

One of our biggest successes was our involvement in the opening of the Vajdasági Waldorf school. The mentioned Suska circle and work-bees are also partly a result of the cohesion within the men's circle. We can also consider it a huge success that within the men's circle, we can speak openly about our feelings without fear or judgment. One example: during our last meeting, a young member brought up that he didn't want to join the military in Serbia, as the country would make military service compulsory again for men up to the age of 30. It was very courageous of this young man. There's so much involved in this question. Should he give his life for his country, for an exploitative country that is not even his nation, for the egos of cowardly politicians, and to honor war? We've learned over the past thousands of years that the harm caused by war far outweighs any benefit. These are the serious issues we can discuss with each other.

I think one of the biggest challenges was finding time for gatherings in this fast-paced world. Since the community consists of people from various towns and villages, travel costs are significant. This is not only a challenge for the men's circle but also for other circles, and for the parents who take their children to Waldorf schools or kindergartens in other locations.

We try to share the financial burden and organize joint travels. Spiritual encouragement also plays a huge role in this, as we realize that we're making these sacrifices for a noble cause. For example, János helped one of the members find a job to improve his financial stability. The

Suska circle helps everyone find their own strengths and abilities that are needed and that can exchange energy. Nothing is impossible. With God's help, we solve everything.

I feel that this training process helps me get to know myself better and helps in understanding my fellow members so that I can connect with them more easily. It's much easier and more effective to work with positive people, as the energy exchange and the circle of love flow smoothly.

We need to help each other within the community to find inner peace in relation to our life circumstances. We need to organize more work-bees, as they are one of the best ways to meet people, engage in useful, active occupations, and get to know each other. Perhaps we could also find something for the well-being of the body on a community level, which isn't necessarily drinking at the pub. After tiring work and everyday life, the men should be allowed some 'wellness' toolike going to a spa or having a massage, which many might never think of, might feel embarrassed about, or feel it's not worth spending money on.

8. Together for Each Other

8.1. How to create a sustainable and supportive community

The idea came from the desire to help and solve a problem. We were classmates in the Mental Health Education course in the Slovak region, and in the Helping Conversations subject, having a helping relationship was a requirement. The three founding members created the "Mondd el" (Tell It) community with a Facebook page to help Viki find clients. This quickly came together. Back then, as an outsider, I considered the collaboration and the formation of the group a great thing, and I would have loved to join. I believed it would be more effective to promote mental health to the public through the community rather than on my own as an individual. In a community, the burdens are shared, and it's great to have someone to discuss and share experiences with, and perhaps find solutions to emerging problems. It's also more enjoyable to celebrate successes together.

The time spent together and the "common chord" led to deep friendships between the classmates at that time. The promotion of mental health and raising awareness on sensitive topics remain important to us. We also consider supporting each other in both personal lives and professional careers essential.

The "Mondd el" mental health community was formed in early 2022 with three members. We are now nine members, with the expansion happening in several stages, including one departure. From initially helping Viki find clients, we transitioned into writing proposals within the two and a half years. Professionally, we come from diverse backgrounds. While the mental health training is a common thread in our community, none of us have it as a primary profession, so each member has their main job. Among us, there are several educators, as well as a speech therapist, social worker, helpers, project manager, accountant, and me, who came from a financial background, joined the training, and later the group. Some of us now work primarily as helpers, while others have integrated the mental health perspective into their main professions, providing individual or group sessions in their supplementary activities.

The "Mondd el" community was formed in early 2022 with three members. In the spring, I joined the community with four other classmates. I was very happy that they found me worthy and invited me to the group. Thus, the team became eight members. During our studies, we used social media platforms to promote the concept of mental health. A unique aspect of our community is the large distance between us, measured in kilometers. Our personal connections

were mostly made during training sessions. Another key moment came when one member decided they no longer felt connected to the community and left. As we neared the end of our studies, the burden of writing our final papers was lifted, and we could breathe a little easier. During this demanding period, Viki continued to manage the professional responsibilities of "Mondd el," regularly posting to keep the community page active. She then decided not to complete the studies with us and postponed writing her thesis.

In the summer of 2023, we expanded by two more members, bringing the team to nine. In the autumn, we organized our first conference in the eastern region, which we considered a success. Feedback confirmed this. In early 2024, we had a team-building weekend together. This way, we can solve the issue of the large distances between us. We meet monthly online, but this isn't enough to maintain the connection; personal meetings are also necessary. Therefore, we decided to make these encounters more regular. Those who live closer to each other meet more frequently, but we all value the shared experience of coming together.

For me, the greatest success is that we are still here and still working to ensure that we continue to be. The regular meetings during our studies are hard to replace in the online space. Since for many of us, mental health isn't our main source of income, it takes real energy to find time for this, or rather to find a common time to connect. In June 2023, on the Day of Unity, "Mondd el" represented the Slovak training at the commemoration event. In the autumn of 2023, we organized a successful conference in the east, working together and complementing each other. We managed to reach enough people to cover the expenses of the organization with the revenue.

The project. During a winter personal meeting, the idea of applying for a grant to secure funds for personal meetings and other professional activities, self-development, and networking was raised. The time between the announcement and the application deadline was very short. The "Westerners" worked together, met in a living room, and put in an extraordinary effort to write and submit the application. Then came the waiting period, during which our visibility online decreased, and no posts were made, and we even suspended it during the summer. Our planned community-building day in the summer was another challenge, as not everyone attended. It was hard for me to accept the explanation for something that had been planned six months earlier. Returning to the earlier topic, the application was unsuccessful, and the big question was: what now?

The energy invested didn't pay off, and the reasons for the rejection were unclear, making it hard to understand what we had failed to meet. Some parts were heavily scored down, which led to a sense of shame that the team hadn't performed well. It felt as though we didn't deserve the support. Another challenge was ensuring that everyone could attend the online meetings. A lot of time was spent organizing and finding a time that worked for everyone.

In every case, open and honest communication helped. We listen to each other, hear how each person felt about the situation, and discuss what would help make things easier for them. We set the regular meeting time to the first Monday evening of every month. We agreed that we wouldn't change this time, and if someone can't join for any reason, they will join the next session, but we won't reschedule the time. This way, everyone knows that they will spend that evening connecting with each other. We try to define the tasks more clearly, determining who is responsible for what. For example, we divided the leadership into three areas, and we agreed on who would be responsible for each area. Each member must take individual responsibility, but this can't be forced. We allow time and support in the process, which is something we can offer. After submitting our second grant application, a big discussion will take place again. Many new situations need to be discussed, and I sincerely hope that our community will take this next step in its development.

Before, I didn't know that community life has its own characteristics, rules, and stages of development. Knowing this fact, and not just the rules, has given me an understanding. The laws of community dynamics help me realize that everything happening within and with us is normal and essential. We are in a state of growth and change. Just as my life is in constant change, so is the life of the community. This is a very important realization. The fact that I shouldn't expect that we will function the same way in years to come. There is no stagnation; either we evolve, or we deteriorate. To develop, we must make an effort, but not everyone needs to invest the same amount of energy. I received a very good explanation from Éra about the dynamics of circles, which helped me understand that the community can still function well, even if some members are on the outer circle. We can bring them into the circle and support them until they no longer need it.

Specifically, the boat-building exercise brought the most realizations. It's not just the role of the leader that matters, which is best when shared by several people, but also the roles of the others. The silent worker who executes tasks is just as vital. Even the person who constantly questions everything and represents the opposing view is needed for a balanced function. I spent a lot of time reflecting on this later. And I cannot emphasize enough how important clear, understandable, and precise communication is when solving a task within our community. It should always be this way, not just when working on a problem.

There are still some frictions between members, but I feel that the solution lies in proper communication. Even though it sometimes takes time away from other, perhaps more urgent tasks, we need to spend time exploring these issues. It is essential that everyone can express how they feel about a particular issue and what solution would be satisfactory for them. How can we move forward in a way that feels comfortable for everyone and makes them feel that the common cause is truly theirs? What still needs to be resolved within the group is the more precise definition of tasks.

I can't foresee future goals as I'm not the planner or visionary within the group. For me, the comfortable role is execution figuring out how to carry out a task efficiently. Others are better at planning, and I don't want to take that opportunity from them. This decision saves me energy, which I can use later when it's needed.

9. What's Outside, Is Inside...

9.1. Get to Know, Love, and Protect Yourself and Your Environment

I am a member of several communities. I chose one that, from a community perspective, taught me the most. The EcoKarma environmental organization was created with the goal of living in a more livable and cleaner village and working together on this cause. A group of people formed who were tired of seeing the reckless treatment of the environment, fed up with littering, and the carelessness of people. The members wanted to live in a more livable, cleaner, and continuously evolving settlement where our children, grandchildren, and their children could proudly look back at their hometown.

The idea of forming a community began with a single individual who thought, "We need to do something for our village," and this idea was then expanded to a broader group. Since we live in a village where everyone knows everyone, this effort quickly spread, and a group of 10 people was formed. In the beginning, there was a strong desire to act.

The common cause is the primary bond among the members. However, it is inevitable that when involving people into a community, close family members and friends are invited. Over time, those who can cooperate well together form a more lasting group.

The community was formed in 2020 with 10 members. Since then, the number of our members has fluctuated. We started with great enthusiasm and a strong desire to act, but over time, many things changed, and some members left for various reasons.

The EcoKarma environmental protection association in Csantavér was formed more than four years ago. The headquarters of the association is located in the Bartók Béla Cultural Center. Its primary goal was to try to make the village and its surroundings more beautiful. The team realized the problems at the beginning of the pandemic when several of us moved back home and confronted the fact that people abroad live in much more organized environments. I should mention that we had more free time at that point due to the limited pace of life.

Our community really became a strong team when we discovered an environmental grant. We quickly moved past just talking about the issues and began working on the application. The grant was advertised in Serbian, so a bilingual person joined our team. The application was written by 6-8 people, for a grant of 350,000 dinars, from which we were able to achieve several things. This grant enabled the creation of the short film "*There's Life Here Too*", focusing on the most urgent environmental issues in our locality. With this film, the members hoped to encourage as

many people as possible to adopt environmentally conscious thinking and lifestyle. We also created a website and officially founded our organization. We had enough funds for an action where we distributed reusable shopping bags at the local market to encourage people to use them instead of single-use plastic bags. Finally, we organized our first cleanup event along the Csík Creek (a small stream in our village), where we provided food and drinks for the volunteers. This grant gave us immense strength, not only financially but also in terms of bringing us together.

Thanks to this grant, we aimed to continue operating our officially registered organization. In the beginning, we held several cleanup actions. Then, we realized that there was no option for selective waste collection in our village. As a result, our team set up a collection point at the cultural center, where local residents can bring their sorted waste once a month. This initiative has been running ever since. Afterward, we organized a tree planting campaign, cleanups, and applied for equipment for planting saplings.

For nearly two years, our community worked enthusiastically. Over time, however, the external world returned to its previous state, and most team members moved on, beginning to see the volunteer work as a burden. Many people's lives had changed, and they could no longer dedicate time to the community and its tasks. Running the established activities required a lot of volunteer work, and in the long run, not everyone could continue. Also, not everyone came to the team with the aim of doing manual labor but to change the mindset of the people in their surroundings, which proved to be a significant challenge that could not be easily accomplished. Therefore, many members stepped back after a while.

The community evolved, and the former members followed new paths. However, new members joined, and our activities continued. The dynamic of our team changed with the turnover of members. The EcoKarma Association's goal remains to increase the local population's environmental awareness and protect our environment. We now place more emphasis on environmental education. We regularly care for the yard of the cultural center, plant trees, use compost, and pay attention to pollinators and birds.

In 2023, we organized our first Summer Eco-Camp for children ages 7-11. Through experiential pedagogy, we introduce participants to the importance of protecting the environment. During the camp, we emphasize that children should not only gain theoretical knowledge but also practical experience. Active participation in nature helps participants better understand the importance of environmental protection and motivates them to be more mindful in their daily lives. The goal of the Summer Eco-Camp is to make participants more conscious of protecting their environment and to foster a love for the living world around them.

In the past year, thanks to a successful grant, we established a community garden at our association's headquarters. We planted medicinal and aromatic plants, as well as native shrubs, and installed educational signage. We have organized several community programs and workshops. We are pleased to see growing interest in our programs, so we have set the goal of

expanding the community garden and its programs. In the garden, we aim to create a nature-friendly demonstration site. With the help of this space, children will more easily learn and adopt sustainable and environmentally friendly lifestyles.

Thanks to the grant, we successfully developed the Educational Community Garden. The garden offers us the opportunity to hold thematic workshops during our events. The funds from the grant helped us purchase plants, educational boards, tools for creating raised beds, and supplies for maintaining the garden and conducting programs and workshops, including bird food for winter feeding.

Essentially, the success we can claim is our first jointly written grant. It gave us a lot of momentum, primarily because it provided a shared goal, which became a motivation for the group. Through the grant, a community formed, as it was a challenge to accomplish. After achieving our first goal, the group's dynamics changed.

The first major challenge can be examined from my perspective, which I believe applies to the whole group. Some individuals may have already faced challenges regarding responsibility earlier on.

The first challenge was addressed through Community Training. Several people wanted to take on leadership roles rather than merely being activists. Most of us didn't even know what being a leader really meant. Some viewed leadership as a prestige role rather than a role with equal responsibility. Essentially, our long-term goals differed, which had a major impact on our progress. The long-term goals emerged as ideas that couldn't be concretely pursued. Those who were more focused on strategy had no interest in taking on responsibility, which delayed the group's functioning. Most people wanted to brainstorm ideas rather than take action. There were few operational members, and almost no facilitators. Although we occasionally prepared plans for meetings, the discussions were often unstructured. The unifying role was absent, and we didn't have any community-building or team-building programs. Ultimately, we were left with tasks that many began to view as burdens rather than goals.

In the beginning, we instinctively realized that it's hard to create anything alone and that a community is always needed. It's why community is so important it has far greater creative power than a single person. Unfortunately, over time, we forgot this.

It was, in fact, the letting go. We allowed those who wanted to leave to go, and the solution was to reform the community. The core objectives of the community environmental education, awareness, selective waste collection, and increasing sensitivity to our environment—remained. We moved forward with this in mind. This didn't fully solve the problem, but it did allow us to move forward. The community as a whole couldn't stay together, but the operational members carried on, as action was needed.

Mainly, the recognition and understanding of roles have been helpful. This led to an acceptance within the team.

Our development goals are to expand the community, assign roles within it, and organize team-building programs.

10. The Desired Path

10.1. ...and as you walk this path, day by day, you will be convinced that all previous obstacles and difficulties served the purpose of leading you to that certain... to your 'desired' path.

For many long years, practically since childhood, I have been reluctant to join cliques. I can say that, for the most part whether it was a smaller or larger group—I always stood out from the crowd. Despite my natural inclination to be among people and connect with them, for some reason, after a certain point, I found myself in social settings where I didn't find like-minded "companions."

Over the years, I realized that I can truly connect only with those individuals and in environments where there are shared values, where we can give each other something beyond the material world. I believe that my "need" for such people began to emerge more profoundly after I became a parent and established my family. The feeling of belonging somewhere increasingly occupied my thoughts, and in fact, it still does. As a "lonely child," and later experiencing similar feelings as a "lonely adult" in my relationship, after decades of wandering the world, I came to understand that one of the greatest values in life is being part of a community where I am understood, accepted for who I am, and supported on my journey when necessary.

Before this discovery, I instinctively encountered well-meaning people and groups: primarily in connection with themes arising from my current life situation, such as motherhood, parenting, or the pursuit of a healthy lifestyle, which in my case represented a quest for balance in everyday life. Not to mention the exploration of the connection between physical and mental health.

In the past approximately 2-3 years, I have had the fortune of meeting many people and movements that consistently reassured me that I am not alone with many of my questions, problems, plans, or desires. In fact, there are enough of us. It's just that nowadays, finding the right path, communication tools, and opportunities for contact and later meetings is not so easy. However, it is not impossible.

The community training I am participating in reinforces the idea that the process into which I have organically begun to experience the power of community, guided by my intuitions and motivations, is indeed a good direction. Furthermore, I am capable of establishing my own stable and functional community by developing a certain system and adhering to it.

From years of observing from the sidelines, I increasingly feel the urge and determination to start working on building my own community. The beginning is likely difficult for me because, as a multi-polar person, I do not have a single topic or area of interest around which I'd like to build my community. My vision involves uniting smaller communities that work in different areas of life: such as self-sufficient communities, those working on reforming education and

educating our children, as well as communities that educate adults and support our mental and physical health. Above all, I believe that it is essential for each member of a community to find their place and role within that community for it to function as a true community.

Therefore, I see my primary task as taking appropriate steps in areas that currently shape my daily life. As a mother of young children, I am constantly considering how I can spend more time together with my little boy in a way that is also "useful": for instance, by exercising together, being outdoors, or possibly gardening: planting flowers, apples, walnuts, or gathering herbs doing all this with like-minded parents and their children.

To do this, I need to connect with the local Herbal Ladies to discuss possible alternatives in child-friendly activities. It would definitely be worthwhile to create a group in the online space where the list of interested individuals can be compiled more quickly. With a suitable venue, initially making meals from the harvested goodies in each other's kitchens could be a fantastic upcoming joint program.

With this bonded group of parents and children, we could reach out to a plant nursery and volunteer there, for which we could taste the delicacies grown in the garden. But with the same small team, we could also regularly organize child-friendly hikes, sports, and dancing programs.

Ideally, our long-term goals might include a community garden or a community house; for those who, like me, want to live as close to nature as possible and in more sustainable conditions, I would certainly consider the concepts of co-housing and residential communities as well. My vision for forming our current "small community" is as follows, and I feel it is currently feasible: thanks to my activities in color consulting and participation in aroma therapy training, I am happily meeting individuals like myself who have recently shifted towards fields almost entirely different from their original professions and are working daily to create a lifestyle that aligns with their ideas while being in harmony with their families.

With these primarily women and mothers, a group spirit is developing slowly but organically, which I would like to give a visible form to. I consider the importance of gathering vital in several ways: becoming more visible as individuals within the community, whether as citizens or entrepreneurs, is an enormous advantage, and each member's life can be greatly enhanced if we can support each other within the community even if only with a kind word sometimes—but also over the long term in furthering each other's names in public consciousness, thus assisting each other in building our community activities. Finally, I see significant potential in barter and exchange opportunities within the community.

The path promises to be winding and filled with challenges, but thanks to the clarity gained from community training about where my place might be within my community, I embark on this certain PATH with much greater determination and a clearer vision in mind.

11. I Raise Myself

11.1. A Man's Journey of Self-Discovery

A significant family pattern of abandonment and the feeling of loneliness.

Help!

This was the word that allowed me to speak out from under the emotional burdens weighing on me. It seemed like just one word, yet I waited so long for it. I left my wife in the hospital after 21 hours of labor because my job called me away, and at that moment, I was not the person who could have said that my place was with my wife and our soon-to-be-born child.

An hour after leaving, I received a call: "Your little boy has been born, and both are well." This remains the most beautiful and significant experience of my life to this day. It was a wonderful feeling to know they were okay, yet I felt like a monster for leaving them behind. Following this, I found myself in the midst of a massive emotional crisis. I was simultaneously the happiest person in the world, and in another moment, inexplicable dark and painful feelings overtook me. I hadn't even started on my parenting journey yet, and from the very beginning, I felt like I had failed.

A defining experience from my childhood was when my dad became mentally ill, and my mom had to raise us alone. They were challenging years. Living through all these difficulties, I gradually formed (compulsively) an image of what kind of father and man I wanted to be. I began my fatherhood journey with childhood wounds, saying, "I will always be here for you, you can always count on me." I burned with this devotion for three years until I found myself exhausted after our daughter was born.

Family life, construction, and entrepreneurship brought challenges that created constant tension within me. In every area of my life and every role, I wanted to fulfill my responsibilities. I didn't want to be like my dad; I didn't want to disappoint my family. I felt alone in all my struggles, as if no one knew what I truly felt. There were alternating feelings of victimhood and haunting guilt. Meanwhile, I tried to project the image of a "strong man" that I believed I should be.

After several years of anxiety, I reached a point of self-discovery, where getting to know my own inner world helped me better reflect on my behaviors and the actions of those around me. This led to the birth of a new relationship with myself. At a certain point, I started to feel that I still didn't know who I really was, but for a while, I felt the presence of someone deep inside me, and connecting with that was a nourishing and intimate experience. It felt like I was no longer so alone. This period

brought profound experiences. I could express it by saying that I eventually became a participant in my own life. With individual and group therapeutic tools, I moved along the rocky path of self-discovery until I arrived at my main theme, which is the wounded inner child within me. With becoming a father, a regression process started, an avalanche that activated the traumas of my past, allowing me to relive the injuries of my childhood. Slowly but surely, the past, which wishes to heal, begins to emerge.

By now, I have managed to reach a point where I feel I am not alone. I feel that there are many of us in similar situations. On my journey, the mysteries of manhood and the challenges of fatherhood have strengthened my intention to connect with communities of like-minded men. In our fast-paced society, there is no manual on how to move forward for anyone. As natural beings, we are separated from Mother Nature, searching for anchors in the noisy world out there.

I envision a community where men are equal neither more nor less than one another. We meet at set intervals for a multi-day hike, where we can experience our connection with nature whether it's camping outdoors, starting a fire, or simply being together in the face of extreme weather conditions.

We intentionally build a space of trust where people open up before each other at the evening campfire, sharing emotional crises, parenting challenges, or relationship difficulties. So much happens to us; let's support each other in the daily challenges of the masculine journey.

If we are willing to take action on this path, I believe we can evolve into a better version of ourselves, which will impact our communities, families, and society. The generations before us didn't have the tools we have today through self-discovery. The world is changing, and we men need to relearn how to organize ourselves.

12. From a Common Cause to Community

For successful collaboration, the establishment of the school, and even more so for its ongoing operation, it is essential for this group or team to function as a community. However, when I joined, I believe this already existed, as the proponents approached it this way from the very beginning.

It was the common cause that brought the members together, but friendships have developed among them by now, at least most can consider each other as friends.

Approximately 50 to 80 individuals belong here. About 50 are adults, and in addition, there are children who are enrolled in or wish to enroll in these institutions sooner or later. However, it's not only families here; there are also single adults who find the atmosphere and ethos attractive in some way. It should definitely be added that this is a dynamically developing community. Occasionally, someone interested reaches out to us wanting to learn about Waldorf and anthroposophy; when we announce a program, prepare for the school or kindergarten opening, and it is publicized that they can join, more interested individuals appear. If they are confirmed that this is their place, they get closer and participate more in the community, but there are also departures, dropouts, so it's hard to provide exact numbers.

Since the idea emerged in early 2021, in about 3 to 3 and a half years, 3 institutions have been created: two kindergartens (family daycares) and a school, which is currently functioning with the first class and a class teacher. Additionally, there are residents from other settlements who are considering starting a local institution from time to time and would join if there were a place nearby. Growth is also expected in the coming years when new classes are introduced. There are sympathizers held back by distance from joining, and some are willing to travel, even transporting their children for this type of pedagogy. We cannot meet everyone's needs, but we welcome everyone, even for more casual connections, preparing for possible future collaborations.

The community's history began in 2021 at the doula training in Magyarakanizsa, where some participants realized they shared a similar mindset in disagreeing with the current educational system and would prefer to enroll their children in an alternative institution. At the call from Csilla, stating that they could jointly establish a Waldorf school and kindergarten, their eyes lit up. It turned out that Csilla had already received an offer from Tamás, an anthroposophical organizational developer of Vojvodina origin from Hungary, to help them get started. They could expect several years of preparation.

They began to engage with the topic, addressing organizational questions as well as the anthroposophical foundations of Waldorf pedagogy. They were not shy about reading a related

book together weekly via Zoom, which allowed them to truly delve into this ethos. Additionally, they organized meetings to gather those who wanted to join them. At these events, they became acquainted with Waldorf principles through guest educators experienced in it.

In January 2022, two of the founders, Éva and Zsuzsi, enrolled in the class teacher training in Solymár. The first step, however, was the kindergarten, as many in the community had young children; with no trained kindergarten teacher available, Zsuzsi—who had already started her class teacher training—took on the task of starting the Waldorf-oriented family daycare, which opened that same year. Five families joined, representing seven children, although they soon had to experience the dropout of one family. Later, this number increased again. This task was not easy for Zsuzsi, as two of her own older children were in the group, and she needed to manage the care for her youngest without formal early childhood education qualifications. Despite this, she persevered and sought someone qualified to assist her.

In October, they established a civil organization to operate legally, participate in tenders, and be taken more seriously. They organized monthly meetings to discuss various organizational tasks, make decisions together, and discuss how to move forward, collectively dreaming of what their desired school would look like.

In 2023, following one year of daycare operation, a qualified Waldorf kindergarten teacher, Lilla, joined Zsuzsi, who had actually grown fond of the wonderful world of Waldorf kindergartens during the community-organized introductory events. Lilla, also of Vojvodina origin, was living in Budapest at that time to attend a nearby training and work in a Waldorf kindergarten but decided to move home at the community's invitation to take on this role in the family daycare.

The foundation of the school slowly became timely, as two kindergartners were ready for school. Zsuzsi was nearing the end of her training. However, besides the class teacher, other participants are also needed for its establishment, so starting from 2024, they began to assemble a teaching staff from those who would be willing to teach various subjects at the Waldorf school. Once they announced this opportunity, the community expanded again with various subject teachers and teacher candidates. By January, a conference was held where prospective Waldorf teachers got acquainted with anthroposophical foundations and discussed educational principles, enriching their individual knowledge and common knowledge base. From that point on, they hold monthly meetings. Initially, Zsuzsi led these, but since she needed to focus on completing her training, another enthusiastic founding member, Éva, took over the organizing role to support Zsuzsi, as she was on a break from training due to expecting a child.

Starting in February, they began recruiting applicants for the school to ensure that the two confirmed starting children would have classmates and knew that there were sympathizers who would join. They believed that with the introduction of such new things, many hesitate to embark on the unknown, not fully grasping Waldorf's objectives, so they organized an informational

meeting and an event for adults to give them a taste of school life, which was very successful. Community posts, letter exchanges, and organizational efforts became more frequent.

Then, in the great search for a venue, the school initiative received a family house where the first class could be implemented, and after many discussions, meetings, and considerations, six children were enrolled by their parents. Their families committed to providing their children with this opportunity, which includes preparing the school, transporting their children if needed, and pooling the financial costs, including the class teacher's salary and all related expenses. They even posted a fundraising message to ease the start. The renovation and outfitting of the school building and yard were partly carried out by the families and partly by the whole community's efforts, receiving donations from many sources. Among them were other Waldorf schools from Hungary, likely feeling that a sister institution was being born and wanting to help the larger Waldorf family thrive. They organized workdays and announced communal work events to ensure that the school and its yard would be safe, homely, and beautiful for the first students and teachers. The collaborative work further strengthened the community itself.

The school opened its doors on September 1st with a celebration to welcome the little first graders and their families, with many members of the community attending, as well as guests who had supported their journey so far. In preparation for the opening, they decorated together, devised the festive program, and assembled it with the teaching staff, which again served as a unifying force. The founders, Csilla, Zsuzsi, and Éva, shared a few words about how this school initiative all began and expressed their happiness about how far they had come. Of course, Tamás was also present, sharing his perspective on the three to three-and-a-half years of joint work with this team and community. Afterward, the children were accompanied by their parents to the decorated gate symbolically entering into school life. Many of us had tears in our eyes during the celebration.

Families interested in this initiative searched for where and with whom the kindergarten could be realized around Subotica. Luckily, in September of this year, enough people managed to come together to start this initiative; teachers also applied for the role, thus this family daycare began with about 8 to 10 staff members. Some fluctuation can still be observed, but there is enough core membership to assure their operation.

Currently, all three institutions are conducting their annual work, and the community has somewhat restructured, gathering around these institutions. Still, the teaching staff continues to hold monthly meetings, where they can personally come together, and the kindergarten teachers wish to introduce something similar to manage pedagogy tasks and further develop. The community has opportunities to meet during festivities and workdays when they help make each other's homes more beautiful.

Three institutions were established: the Kanizsa and Subotica kindergartens/daycares and the school located in Martonos, currently operating with the first class. New people continuously

join the initiative and the community, who are involved because of their children, are building the future teaching staff or are moving the common cause forward in a closer or looser connection in some manner.

Perhaps the choice of location for the school was the major challenge that could have created a rift in the community, as it was not only necessary to find a building for the Waldorf in one settlement but also a suitable common location accessible for interested families throughout Vojvodina, where transport for children could be arranged if necessary. The specific school needed to be established in one site or another; it couldn't be in multiple locations since there were not enough teachers and interested individuals yet, so we knew that eventually, a location had to be chosen.

Several possible solutions were proposed in this regard. We had to consider if the school's location should be at the intersection of the geographical locations of the interested families or at the site with the most interest. The downside of the former is that this intersection might fall into a small village, to which none of us belong, and we cannot act there as we simply do not live there; we would only go there to learn or teach, but at least it would be fair for everyone to travel the same distance with their children. However, we quickly dismissed this, as the other option seemed more logical—one of the locations where many people expressed interest.

Of course, this also depended on where we could find a house or building that met these needs, and it was possible that, even though people are currently interested, they might not be committed, as similar dropouts have happened already with the kindergarten and school. When the topic of establishing the Subotica kindergarten became relevant, the proposing family offered to build a structure on their land to serve the purposes of the kindergarten and possibly the school later on. As soon as this began to be communicated, there was an individual who took this as a settled fact and became offended that they hadn't been included in the decision-making. Therefore, it arose that we needed to discuss who has the right to make decisions within the community and who should be involved in these.

Naturally, no one feels comfortable in such a situation, so we had to address this urgently.

For the Waldorf initiative in Vojvodina, having a mentor to whom we can turn with all our questions and problems (Tamás) was a significant help. We also approached him with this dilemma. During our conversation, it was stated that those who have been involved for a long time, from the beginning, and have devoted the most energy to advancing this cause are the ones most entitled to make decisions, and we should not rely on those who have just recently appeared and have not yet committed themselves.

However, the one who raised this as a problem was not such an individual; they had been a member of the community since the doula training and even had a child enrolled in the Kanizsa daycare. They also had the opportunity to participate in joint meetings, but another problem

arose that not everyone can attend who wants to because of their time constraints. They were from Zenta, and the venue happened to be in Subotica, which are the two furthest cities from which we have interested participants for school founding.

We then designated the inner circle meetings for this issue, which caused some hiccups in wondering whether someone had unlawfully seized decision-making authority. But the fact is that this was merely an offer, providing a new opportunity that could have been beneficial for an impasse, which was intended to resolve problems related to the kindergarten but could also have affected longer-term matters.

Ultimately, the kindergarten building was not built, although we organized a workday in the community to prepare and clear the site. This was a collaboration with good energy and definitely a bonding experience. If for nothing else, it served that purpose. The continuation was blocked for various reasons, as there were low points during the kindergarten opening, but the school building issue was ultimately decided based on practical arguments. After that, we began to announce that we were waiting for applicants for the first class and decided with those currently involved in school starting that the committed parents and the class teacher would jointly decide where the location should be, and everyone would look into what buildings could be suitable; perhaps someone in their family might have a property to offer for this purpose.

Ultimately, among the concrete options, they accepted the offer of a family house in Martonos, which was made by the acquaintances of the class teacher—more precisely, the family legacy of locals living abroad. Essentially, Zsuzsi, our most active member who led the daycare and organized most meetings, was preparing for this more complex, elevated, and responsible task, having completed the entire training, assessing how much work it would entail, and how exhausting it would be if she also had to travel. Moreover, as she offered to transport the children among the towns of Vojvodina, that could have led to burnout from the outset if it were even possible at all. Therefore, she began asking about vacant properties in her village, leading to this offer. Given that it was even on the same street as her own house, it seemed like the best possible option among all. For simple, practical reasons, as it would be very tiring otherwise.

When she shared this at the parent meeting, everyone understood and accepted it, and thus the decision, in great unanimity, was made regarding where the first class would commence. However, they agreed that the location could change later since it was an offer, and they needed to be prepared for a potential move. They knew the situation would be different for the classes starting the following year, but they also realized that it would always be situational and further decisions would have to be made by those involved according to the current circumstances.

How does the training process help you personally in supporting your community?

I had to realize that I could be very much an outsider in an apparently well-functioning community. I became distrustful due to my previous traumatic personal experiences. The training

process specifically pointed out to me that I am more visible in the community than I sometimes am at certain life situations when I'd rather blend in and feel comfortable. In a well-functioning community where people care for each other, it is hard to remain invisible; I receive attention whether I want it or not. However, aiming for invisibility or wanting not to be seen can convey a message to the other community members that I do not intend to send, namely that I do not care about them or reject their outreach, although that is not the case; I would just observe things from a distance for a while.

To avoid and prevent such messages, I need to provide a status report to the other members of the community, assuring them that there are no negative feelings toward them, but rather it is about my own temporary self-protection, and I will return once I am over it. Just saying this can turn the whole situation into a more positive light and help them understand me and the situation.

I see that the most active people in my community are those who have been involved from the start moms who participated in the doula training. Of course, their husbands also joined and participate, as well as new enthusiastic members joining later, but I would like those who contribute the most not to burn out because everything falls on them. It would be beneficial if, in smaller matters that could be equally important, others, even new or fresher community members, would take part and assume responsibility for organizing certain events, communicating within the group, brainstorming, writing social media posts, and similar tasks. Perhaps a rotational system would be good so that it can function like blood circulation, relieving the initial contributors and fostering an environment where new sustaining members can emerge, which would strengthen the community.

13. How to Thrive in a Community

13.1. Challenges of Community Life: Caring and Attentiveness Toward Myself and Others

We all long to belong somewhere. This desire may be stronger if our primary relationships (e.g., mother, father) haven't developed ideally. What do I mean by this? If we haven't had enough personal experience with a nurturing, warm, loving, accepting, and supportive family background, we tend to miss it more intensely—and wish to make up for it. For many, the "how" part of this becomes a daunting challenge. Let's talk a bit about what it means to "belong" somewhere, the path to full membership, how long it lasts, and what determines the quality and length of our community existence. I'll approach these issues from practical perspectives, providing understandable guidelines for those who want to feel more connected, as well as for those creating live communities where new members can be successfully integrated beyond just their individual selves.

Integration

Joining an existing or newly forming group brings fresh energy, growth, and change. Just like a family (whether it's mother-father, mother-mother, father-father, or any other valid family structure) undergoes transformation when they have a child, the dynamics of a group change when its composition shifts. Change, therefore, requires resilience from group members, openness, and courage to embrace novelty.

Looking at group dynamics, it is always the group that grants the leader their role, meaning there will never be a leader unless the group recognizes them as such. The same applies to new members: it is important not only to welcome them but also for the new member to demonstrate their commitment to belong.

What Makes a Group a Group?

Presence and participation are the starting points. Anyone who is not present or does not participate in the community's activities does not truly exist as part of it, since a community without active membership is only a statistical entity. During university weekends, it was crucial that we immediately applied the things we had learned. Participation was mandatory, and missing even twice left me with a strong sense of lag and absence. It felt good when a classmate, either voluntarily or at my request, shared the theoretical lessons with me, but I still missed out on the collaborative work. The responsibility of the members, therefore, is to be present in the group, which requires commitment.

Communication and Collaboration

Does the group engage in equal, partnership-based dialogue? On what grounds can we collaborate? These foundations are set by the group's norms and ethical principles, and if based on assertiveness, are likely to promote better group dynamics. For me, it's a challenge to figure out how to not be too little or too much in a group. It's a delicate balance—knowing whether you're taking up enough space or dominating.

A good community experience relies on:

- Acceptance and Support: Group members recognize and support each other emotionally and socially. This means active listening and attention, which validate “presence.”
- Working Toward Common Goals: A clear collective goal ensures that every member can contribute in their unique style, and the focus is on developing both personal growth and community-building skills.
- Equality Among Members: When everyone feels that their contributions are equally valued, they are more likely to speak up and engage. Equal time and attention given to each member helps with this.
- Feeling Safe: The group provides a space for emotional and physical safety, where members can freely share their thoughts and feelings without fear of ridicule.
- Open Communication: Honest, open communication helps resolve conflicts and strengthens the sense of belonging. I believe that conflicts, when handled properly, offer great opportunities for growth.
- Valuing Autonomy and Self-expression: Encouraging everyone to express themselves freely while respecting individual uniqueness can help even the more introverted members to share.
- Encouraging Positive Feedback: Recognizing each other's efforts boosts self-esteem and motivation.
- Shared Experiences: Common activities and experiences, such as shared challenges and achievements, build stronger bonds among members.

Factors That Can Lead to the Decline of a Community

A community's life becomes burdensome if:

- Exclusion and Rejection: If differences are not celebrated but seen as deviations, the excluded member's spirit may diminish.
- Conflicting Goals and Interests: If members pull in different directions without compromise, efficiency declines.
- Hierarchical Structures: If the group allows oppression or dominance over certain members, it can destroy the community's integrity.

- Constant Criticism and Judgment: Gossip and constant judgment can harm members' self-esteem and create stress.
- Lack of Honest Communication: Concealing or withholding information breeds misunderstanding and tension, often leading to burnout or emotional withdrawal.
- Unresolved Conflicts: If conflicts are ignored or smoothed over without proper resolution, they can fester and increase group tension.
- Distrust and Insecurity: If there is no trust, and members don't feel safe, the constant stress and anxiety can create a toxic environment, leading to disengagement.

How Do I Feel in the Community?

One of the key points when forming and developing a community is ensuring that members want to participate and feel positive about their experiences. However, for many, it is challenging to know how to successfully integrate, connect, and express themselves within a group. There are, of course, introverted personalities, and it is completely normal for one's activity level or mood to fluctuate—but why? Because we are human, and our lives are affected by countless factors: family, friends, work, and more. Perhaps that's why it's even more important that the communities we choose to be part of are places where we can recharge and also uplift others.

Can we articulate principles that help ensure a constructive presence in a community? And perhaps a checklist that details what might make us feel good in a group? I will attempt to do so based on my experiences! Here's a summary of the factors that helped me feel positively connected, and what has sometimes caused difficulties or pain during my "social existence."

1. Is My Presence Valid? A community that explicitly welcomes you—saying "you belong here, we are glad you're with us"—makes you feel deeply validated. I clearly remember a moment early in my first relationship, when I met my partner's father. After talking for a while, he looked at me and said, "Welcome to the family!" We even shook hands. It was such a significant moment for me because from that moment on, I felt like my presence was recognized. In my own family, I never had that experience. Words in a community are incredibly powerful—they can uplift or harm, simply by how they are communicated.

2. Communication and Self-expression I've had the most experience in supervisory groups, where my communication is essential. Sometimes I still need to improve in expressing myself—such as phrasing things like "when you did this, it made me feel..." instead of offering advice. That said, communication in any community should be two-sided. If I expect principles like acceptance and respect from others, I also need to offer them. A community thrives when it functions in a thoughtful, genuinely caring communication style.

3. Encourage Each Other Fearlessly! Remember the immense joy and power you felt as a child when your family cheered you on for your first steps? Even if I don't remember that exact moment, I do remember the pride and courage I felt when supported. In a community of equals,

members who offer positive feedback can give each other a powerful boost. I had an experience recently where someone complimented me on my calming presence, and another remarked on my pleasant scent—it made me feel incredible for days. This kind of encouragement is crucial in a community. Without it, life can feel solitary and less meaningful.

14. The Challenge of the Beginning

14.1. The Formation of a Waldorf Kindergarten

A few families came together to create a Waldorf kindergarten. It was officially registered last March. The process of establishing it was very cumbersome and bureaucratic, so the founding team broke up, and only one family and a nursery teacher remained besides the founder. New families joined, including my husband, our nearly six-year-old daughter, who has one more year of kindergarten left. We even moved into the building, into a service apartment with our cats. My goal with moving in was to truly experience communal living. Apart from us, one of the kindergarten teachers lives in the building with her six-year-old daughter for three days a week, as they commute from the countryside. During these days, our daughters play together, even in the evening. There is also a very active mom who often stays after closing time with her daughter and helps with weekend programs, and they also play together.

First and foremost, it's about a common cause: the education of the children, and friendships are developing among the parents as well.

We are still in the process of formation. The foundation is quite fresh, most of the members joined in September. The kindergarten teachers are also new, and not all of them have Waldorf qualifications. Some are beginners, and others were socialized in traditional institutional systems.

Currently, there are 9 children actively attending the kindergarten, and it's expected that 4 more will join by February, with a goal of reaching 15. There are 8 children in the nursery, along with their parents.

I know more about the founder, Kata Beke. She has a background in event and cultural organization, and she has three adult children, all of whom attended Waldorf schools. She has been involved in the Waldorf community for about 15 years. Folk traditions are close to her heart, and she has many connections within cultural circles. Besides managing the institution, she also teaches at the Óbuda Waldorf School, and she is involved in organizing the holidays. We have several common threads in our lives, so I feel it was destined for us to be here. So far, I have developed a closer relationship with three parents: one mother and two fathers.

The kindergarten is located in a villa building in the 12th district, which has an exorbitant rent. In order to cover the costs, we need to operate at full capacity. However, the building offers many opportunities for events, programs, and workshops. One such opportunity is that they host birthday parties in the building on weekends, renting out the space to groups. These are often themed parties, like Harry Potter or Frozen. During these events, the nursery room transforms

into a Harry Potter castle, full of exciting adventures and decorations. Kata organizes and oversees all of this, even baking several trays of pastries and other treats. A passionate mother helps regularly with these weekend parties and decorations, and she spends her entire Sunday on it. Since we live in the building, I also help out for a few hours on weekends, even when it's not planned. I always see Kata panicking, feeling like there's so much work to be done, and since I'm there, I feel that I should help her. And I do.

Kata doesn't want to take on the leadership role, but everything seems to come together with her. Anita, one of the teachers, is officially the director, as she has a degree in institution management, but she is not very experienced with administration.

I can't share major successes yet, as this is a new community. But perhaps the fact that I've already participated in three events: a family weekend and two birthday parties, all of which were successful and the participants were satisfied. The mere fact that this kindergarten was established and registered, and that the nursery is Waldorf-based, is considered a success. It is also appreciated that they were supportive when we moved in. One father repaired a wall and organized a space for us. There are also many small everyday acts of kindness that surround us, which in itself is a success. It's nice when they offer me lunch or when we can give them some sourdough bread. I found edible mushrooms in the garden, which we cooked. We are also building a compost bin tomorrow. One day, while singing during a music session with the teacher, we spontaneously started singing together in the kitchen, and we are organizing a choir.

We've been living here for two weeks, and for me, the biggest challenge is defining my role. We pay a favorable rent, but it seems that they are also happy that we are always there, so the building is not left empty in the evenings. There's now also a kindergarten bunny—well, two, but one passed away after a few days. It probably came to us sick, but we didn't notice. Since then, everyone is paying more attention to the other bunny. I also check if it has water and food, even on weekends. In the evenings, I tend to clean up the kitchen and unpack it in the mornings because we use it as well, and since we are the last ones in the building, I take care of it. There's no internet in the house yet, but I've taken on the responsibility of arranging it. The waste management is not fully resolved either. There's just one communal trash bin, and there's no recycling yet. We need to solve that too, and I would like to take part in this.

One Monday morning, we woke up to find that the wind had blown diapers all over the yard, and we received a complaint from the neighbors. In the morning, I got a message from Kata in the parent group about this issue, asking whoever gets there first to handle it. However, we woke up later, and by then, one of the teachers had already arrived and cleaned it up. I immediately felt responsible and thought that as the person living there, I should have checked the bins and handled the problem. I felt bad for not being available. There's a feeling in me that I need to solve all the problems, and I experience it as a burden. After we dealt with the diaper issue, another problem came up: our kitten pooped in the kindergarten sleeping room, and the teacher

panicked, asking us to clean it up because of health regulations, which was completely reasonable.

It's also hard to establish our living space there because the kindergarten used this apartment as a storage room. We're constantly moving their things to make space for ours. The storage room needs to be reorganized because it is currently in total chaos. It seems that it will be up to the parents to solve this since Kata is extremely overworked. She manages the building, maintains communication with the landlord, and handles invoices and payments. She also organizes the professional work, including the teachers' and nursery workers' tasks. On weekends, she organizes events and birthday parties. She manages the Facebook page, the marketing, and ensures that new children join. She is the employer, arranges salary negotiations, and handles all the administration. She comes up with ideas like getting a bunny, buying it, and cleaning the cage. She even cooks lunch for the children every day.

I know that a few families "exploded" and left. Now a new community is forming. I think more work needs to be done to shape the group and the community. The nursery and kindergarten staff and parents need to exist as one team and feel ownership of the whole project. The structure of the operation needs to be better organized, and Kata should delegate tasks. We need to create an internal manual for ourselves to outline exactly what tasks exist and how we operate.

I believe that this process of forming a community is where the training will help, and also in understanding my own role better. It will help me contribute effectively and usefully without heading towards burnout.

I've considered asking for a pro bono Service Design consultation for our operation. I would like us to function in a more organized way, where it's clear who needs help with what. We need to assess what skills are present and who is willing to contribute more to this adventure. It would be great to develop the event organizing aspect into a separate business line. It would also be good to join the volunteer hosting service.

15. Building Labyrinths Together

15.1. Community Roles and the Path to Self-Discovery

I'm not entirely sure if we're really talking about a community here, as this is an emerging company focused on language teaching, translation, and text proofreading. The idea formed within me, driven by the need to provide a more diverse and comprehensive range of services.

The members have a collegial relationship, but there is also a more relaxed, friendly dynamic between us.

Currently, there are 10 members in the community, and the 11th will join us soon. The community began expanding around two years ago. Now, we're a functioning group with clearly defined roles. Two members live further away, which presents some new challenges for us.

In the beginning, I worked alone but soon realized that with limited time, I needed help, so I brought someone in to share the workload. At first, this was only for a few hours. We worked in a smaller room, taking turns. It was during this time that the need to expand into other languages emerged. I reached out to another person, bringing them in for a few hours a week. For a while, we worked as a trio, but the other two were only part-time, and I handled the rest of the tasks. At that time, I was also on maternity leave with my second daughter.

The development of the community was influenced by COVID, and during this period, I ended up working alone again. After maternity leave and the pandemic, I felt it was necessary to formalize the business. This led to moving to a larger space that could accommodate two parallel classes. Within a year, the community and the number of hours grew so much that we had to rent another room. By the end of the first year, the community had expanded to 6 members besides me, and the business was generating enough to support another full-time entrepreneur. This setup lasted for over half a year. Unfortunately, the other entrepreneur left, which presented a challenge for those who stayed. There was a clear need for a consistent, available, and reliable team member. The challenge was that the company was not at the point where it could hire someone. Eventually, we managed to mobilize our own resources to hire an employee, who started with reduced hours. Starting in January, they work full-time, alongside me, to manage the studio and the other freelance members. In the spring, the idea emerged to expand to another city, which changed the structure somewhat, as two members joined who are not physically present with us. This is still new and unfamiliar for all of us. This is where the community currently stands in terms of its professional development.

I'm most proud of the positive feedback we've received about our work and the fact that we operate in a calm environment where everyone's opinion is valued. I'm also proud to be surrounded by responsible individuals, with whom the potential for growth is open.

The biggest challenge was when someone left the community unexpectedly, several times. In such cases, we had to quickly redistribute their tasks among ourselves.

I think what helped was that we were able to view the problem as the next issue to be solved, rather than letting it negatively impact us. While losing a member from the community is a setback, it became clear each time that our ideas and interests didn't always align, especially in terms of what we wanted for the community.

The training helps me gain a better understanding of the community dynamics. I've become more conscious of my role within the community. When problems arise, I'm increasingly able to address them with open, non-personal, clear communication with the other members.

I place great importance on community building. While we all work here with a specific purpose, I would like to create a community where we can share more professional experiences with each other, take on more joint projects, and remain open to development. Frequent in-person meetings are crucial for me, where we not only discuss work-related matters but also make space for one another.

16. Connections

16.1. Crossing the Threshold

Currently, my family is my primary and closest community; I believe it's the only one I have. My mother, father, and older sister. Our extended family isn't too large either—my father is an only child, and my mother has one sibling. I never knew my maternal grandfather; he passed away a few months before I was born, so my maternal grandmother and my paternal grandparents made up the close family circle. For 22 years, my sister and I were the only grandchildren, so we developed a really strong bond with our grandparents. Three and a half years ago, our only cousin was born, and since his arrival, my uncle and his newly-formed family have also grown closer to us.

This year, everything changed. In 2024, I lost all of my grandparents. In March, unexpectedly and within a little over a week, my cheerful, otherwise healthy paternal grandmother was taken by illness, and then in September, just 11 days apart, we lost my grandfather and my other grandmother as well.

At the usual family gatherings, we will no longer be seven, only four.

We share the pain, the struggle, and the mourning. This has brought us closer together, yet at the same time, we've all somewhat turned inward. As the months pass, I feel that these many shared losses have strengthened the unity of our small group, and we try to value and make the most of the time we have together.

What has happened has pressed that button in me, showing me that my parents are not immortal either. Whatever that may mean, I think I'm now beginning to cross the threshold into adulthood.

Letting go of my childhood and crossing into adulthood is a path that I walk with difficult steps, and along the way, life continuously throws clearer and clearer signs and evidence that something indeed wants to come to an end. At the same time, I am also wondering whether adulthood is just an illusion and if there is a magical turning point where, suddenly, from one day to the next or from one year to another, we suddenly feel like adults? Would turning 18, going to work, and paying bills be the initiation ceremony into adulthood?

I have many questions, and I try to keep my eyes open in the world, paying attention to myself, my feelings, and what my environment and nature provide. One thing is certain: I've been seeing and feeling for a while now that I've gathered many lessons and insights in my backpack, and

although it weighs on my shoulder, it is leading me in a direction that serves my change, growth, and development.

It also matters who accompanies me and for how long. Friendships and relationships have come and gone, with their reasons and lessons. I feel that everything that stayed and everything that left helps me better outline what I want in a friendship or romantic relationship and helps me see and set my boundaries.

Currently, I nurture and seek connections in my life where I can truly be myself, share my emotions and thoughts deeply, where we can talk about anything, and also have fun together. Additionally, shared interests are important, but not necessarily required. For me, it means a lot to have a small or large group of friends around me where these things can be realized, but so far, I haven't been completely successful. I'm thinking of close friendships where we might even consider living near each other or even side by side in a small community. This is a very dear fantasy of mine, though for now, unfortunately, it's nothing more than that.

Honestly, there's a lot of confusion in my mind about what an ideal community looks like for me or even what "community" truly means. Old pictures and concepts shape what my elders have told me about village life. They gathered, celebrated, worked together, and knew everyone in the village.

This is a very dear image to me as well, and I want to believe that one day I will be able to live like that.

My generation has truly drifted far from this reality; we live our lives in front of screens. This is how we work, this is how we relax, this is how we socialize, and this is how we connect the most. Being born in 1998, I grew up with the internet and can say I encountered it relatively healthily at an age when I became a user. Because of this, I still want to believe that there is a way back for me, and I can develop healthier habits when it comes to entertainment and maintaining connections. Let this document be a testament to that intention and my reminder. I need much more personal presence and connection to move closer, not further, from the vision of how I want to live and surround myself with people.

Right now, it's still hard to imagine myself in a community. I've learned a lot about myself during the retreats of the Minorities Community Project, how I function in a community, which was all very new, educational, and transformative for me. I received a mirror that I try to hold in front of me, but the road is still long until I can put enough energy, heart, and soul into shaping a community, as it requires. And this is the path of self-knowledge. Living together in a small community—which I can imagine for myself—cannot be undertaken in a disorganized, erratic way, not knowing each other or ourselves.

I tend to set big goals for myself and then lament how far I am from what I desire. Because of this, it crosses my mind whether this is truly the only path for me or if it's such a distant final goal that many smaller milestones could precede it.

I'm probably trying to protect myself with this, while still remaining unsatisfied.

The further and more unattainable I make it for myself, the later I will take the risk of being vulnerable. I fear putting myself in such a situation and getting disappointed.

I need to insert smaller steps between the final goal and the present, such as forming a stable and desired group of friends or joining a community gathered around a hobby. Through these, I can learn a lot about myself and move closer to living within a community.

All things considered, I must take risks, learn about myself, and embrace the version of myself that isn't yet in the form I imagined. This year, I'm giving time, energy, and love primarily to myself, so that later I can share it with a community.

17. Community in Practice

“Goethe said: There are three difficult things in this world:

- To speak the truth in a way that doesn't hurt anyone.
- To speak beautifully without excessive flattery.
- To assert oneself without oppression.”

Establishment

I didn't found this community; I joined it in 2024. The initiator was a lady who decided to start a community project during the TreeMap camp, where she realized, “Nothing else makes sense.”

Members are related to each other

Several members are in romantic relationships with each other. Currently, out of 15 members, 8 are in pairs (4 couples). The shared cause is taking shape, and it seems that the members are emotionally connected to it.

There are currently 15 members. I joined in April 2024, and later 3 more people joined. For now, that's the size of the group. We are still looking for the official legal form for our community (foundation, association, cooperative, LLC, etc.) to be able to purchase land. We're looking for plots for communal living and to establish the place for our social enterprise. We're also clarifying the structure and activities of the business. We've defined the community's purpose and direction.

The community officially formed in October 2023. The 4 founding members decided to create the community and held several open days. I met them in April 2024. They seemed sympathetic, and I thought I'd try community life. We've had several in-person meetings and hold one online meeting per week. In August, we had a one-week project to renovate a wooden house, which the founders bought specifically to test how well we could resolve conflicts that arise during such tasks. It seems to work because a significant community conflict emerged, and we're currently working on resolving it.

Our open days usually go very well. The programs are well-planned, and both we and our guests are generally satisfied. Our greatest pride is the joint house project. The investor group within the community bought a house, and we successfully renovated its roof. It went very well.

For me, and it seems for many others in the community, the biggest challenge right now is one member's behavior. Conflicts have arisen from this, as they struggle to cooperate with others when things don't go their way. We're working on it, and they are trying as well.

So far, nothing has been fully resolved, but we've recognized the issue and communicated it honestly. I think that's already a good step. We're not avoiding the problem or sweeping it under the rug. We're in the process of clarifying the conflict. What helps is that the community empowered me from the start to bring up any difficulties anyone has with anyone else. It's also comforting to know I'm not alone in facing this challenge—others also notice the issue.

The training helps me view the community's functioning as a whole and not just individual problems when something goes wrong for someone. It was also helpful to recognize that different dynamics are important both individually and collectively. The strategies, operational methods, and integrative approaches—along with roles like strategist, operator, and facilitator—are not enemies, but when well-aligned, they can support the process we're in, whether it's planning, solving projects, or “assembling” during personal meetings. These elements make collaboration more interesting, effective, and enjoyable.

Our community's purpose, direction, and goals are becoming clearer. We've communicated these to each other and outlined a main path we want to follow. It's a “Community Building University,” and I'm very excited about it. I'm passionate about having the opportunity to participate at any level. My main goal is to teach others about this and actively contribute to it. I'm also eager to continue learning. I applied for the Community Organizer program at Kodolányi University, but unfortunately, my score was not enough. However, I'm not giving up, and I'm currently attending a communication training with Hungary's Community Building network. I'm also learning English and hope to expand our community internationally. It would be wonderful to participate in your *Képző* training to contribute intellectually to the spread of community-based ideas.

I'm interested in community life because I see that I can't reach my goals alone, or at least it's much harder. It's far easier in a community, where “many eyes see more,” and “together we push the cart”—where responsibility and effort are shared. Plus, I don't know everything. :)

I hope our community can succeed in achieving its goals and overcoming any obstacles, both within us and in the world. We aim to stay open to growth and become a model of a true, conscious community that helps others build similar communities. I believe this is the future and key to our survival. If it doesn't work, then humanity doesn't deserve survival. Because why bother? If we don't change and improve our lives, we'll keep rolling the same burden forward for generations, until it becomes too much and floods the world, and everyone drowns in it.

18. It's Easier Together

18.1. The Basis of Everything is Self-Knowledge

"The Conscious Body" is the name of my business. I focus on spine exercises and aim to bring people together who join these classes. The current experience, as of early September, is that although there was a strong demand for connection (this was the feedback I received in early summer), fewer people signed up for the organized events. It seems like people are tired after the summer, but perhaps this is just a phase.

I feel that this community is gradually forming around me. People would attend the events I organize, where they could connect with each other. However, I also want to create another kind of community where 4-5 people (currently, I feel it would be women) would work together on an equal footing, supporting and helping each other. At the moment, I'm not sure exactly what this small community would focus on, but I feel the need for it.

At "The Conscious Body," people come together because they have spine issues. It's primarily a physical concern, but many are also open to hearing about the mental and spiritual changes that may be connected. Some members have been friends for a long time, while others have only met through this community.

In the community I envision, everyone would be equal, with a friendly relationship and clear, expectation-free communication. Everyone would contribute according to their own expertise.

Currently, around 50-60 people are in contact with "The Conscious Body." The business started 4 years ago with smaller events (like Christmas promotions), but serious community-building efforts have taken shape in the past year. Starting from September, I'm planning 3 events outside of the spine exercises—like hiking and sauna sessions. For now, we don't have major goals; the most important thing is to spend time together in a good mood, maybe experiencing new and different activities.

The community was created in 2020 when I started teaching spine yoga for adults. The aim was for people to feel progressively better on a physical level. Setting up the "headquarters" took some time, and during these 4 years, I held classes in 4 different locations. In April 2023, I moved to my current place, which has become a little oasis for me. :) The interest in my classes began to grow, and I started combining spine exercises with the classes.

In April this year, I sent out a questionnaire since I had the feeling that people enjoyed talking to me about their concerns or just spending time in an environment where nothing was expected

from them, where they were praised and helped. I hadn't thought about targeted discussions, as I don't feel "qualified" for that. But I thought, what if, apart from the classes, I could create situations where people would feel good, relax, and ask me questions freely or connect with each other? The survey showed a strong need for this. That's why I organized my first hiking event in April, which 40 people signed up for. In the end, 30 people showed up, which was a great positive surprise for me. Since then, I've been working on setting clear boundaries and modifying the structure of my classes. The heat from summer may have also contributed to the current lack of enthusiasm for the upcoming hike in September. But we'll continue slowly and see where it develops. However, I need to take on an alpha role, which, although I thought it was my dream, doesn't feel so comfortable for me.

That's why I want to create another community.

For me, the biggest success in terms of community-building was the great interest in the first hiking event.

For me, the biggest challenge was finding the leader role within myself—especially the healthy leader role. In the early stages of the business (which, looking back, was too democratic), I turned to my participants with excessive democracy. I asked them for their opinions on every decision, asking them what they wanted to do at the beginning of each class. The group that attended my classes were very kind and sensitive, so they didn't abuse this situation. Perhaps that's why it took me so long to realize how unhealthy this was. Over time, I began to notice that this approach started to shift, and it reached its peak this past summer. I was holding classes at times and at prices that didn't work for me anymore, just to make my participants happy. The result was that even the mildest exercises caused me excruciating pain. I burned out. It took me two months over the summer to recover (though I'm still not perfect). The realization came when my decisions were being questioned, and people began trying to control the situation. This was something I didn't like. As a result, the management of the business shifted to a "dictatorial" style. I no longer ask for or accept doubts and opinions. I guess this isn't ideal either, as there is now a palpable distance between me and those who have always been loyal and never tried to influence me. Perhaps this is also the reason for the relative lack of enthusiasm for the hike. This is a process, and I expect that those who can't accept the lack of input in decisions will slowly leave, and we can become a more accepting, clean community again.

This is still an ongoing process. I'm hoping (and I believe) that those who don't like this will drop out and distance themselves.

For me, the biggest realization from the training process is that I don't feel comfortable in an alpha role, even though I always strived for it. I am much more comfortable and even happy being in a beta role not only in business but also in personal relationships. Furthermore, I've realized that if I find the right people, I'm very willing to work in a team. When communication is clear, people's intentions are positive, and there's a supportive community, I can really

"soften" into that environment. In my professional life, I've never experienced such a nurturing environment, and I find it very appealing.

My goal is to create events where participants can join freely and without tension. I want them to experience organic conversations where they can hear information that can be incorporated into their own lives. Essentially, they could experience that "there's another way" to live, decide, talk, or feel. Right now, the focus is on organizing the events I mentioned, and we'll see who responds and who doesn't.

19. Together, for each other

19.1. An honest supportive environment, where you can be yourself

The Beginning

Our story starts in the summer of 2022. I'm rushing with some friends to a training session. Naturally, I'm late. (I'm always late for everything, even for parties I organize at my own home...) So, we rush, trying not to miss much, but the people who arrived earlier have already done a lot—they've been chatting, connecting, and breaking into groups. In fact, they've formed three groups. When we arrived, the leaders tried to catch us up: we, the latecomers, were to be split into the existing groups to balance the numbers. Among the attendees, I spotted an old friend, the kind of friend you run into once every couple of years, and it feels like no time has passed, picking up where you left off. I immediately knew I wanted to join the group where he was.

There are times when I want to take action, speak up, or react, but I hold back because I don't want to come across as too much. (I know these people are strangers to me, so why does it matter what they think? I understand that with my mind, but often I don't act accordingly.) That's why, when I was about to say I wanted to join his group, the last available spot filled up. Left with no group that truly spoke to me, I simply said: "I'll let it be." That's how I ended up in a group of open-hearted people who have since become an integral part of my daily life, and I wouldn't trade them for anything.

Getting Closer

I came to this training because I wanted to grow. By that time, I had already completed three years of therapy, but somehow, I felt that working on myself individually wasn't as effective as working within a community. After all, we know that wounds from relationships heal in relationships, whether small challenges or huge traumas. Each group had two leaders: an experienced trainer and an assistant. It was reassuring that I knew our second leader, perhaps that's why I didn't feel too uncomfortable. The days were filled with intense learning—gaining knowledge on group dynamics, connection, the formation and functioning of communities, but what mattered most for me was learning about myself. After that week, I looked at myself and the dozen people in my group with entirely different eyes.

I want to share one of the most impactful experiences from that week. We were given a task: build a ship that could travel from point A to point B. We weren't given many instructions, so the task was left to our creativity. We started with an idea: the ship had a crew, a captain, and

personnel for different roles. Léna volunteered to stand at the bow and steer the ship. We agreed, but when she got to the front and we started suggesting other things she could do (since she was already there, right?), Léna stopped, turned to us, and firmly stated that she had agreed to be in charge of the direction but wasn't willing to take on anything else. I had never heard such clear communication or seen such a sharp boundary drawn. This experience has stuck with me: it taught me to speak up when I can't handle more, when I feel overwhelmed (even if I've allowed it to happen), because I hadn't made my boundaries clear. Perhaps I push my boundaries and take on tasks that are too much for me to please others, to be loved, to stay part of the group? But what kind of community is it where I can't be myself, where I can't share my weaknesses and boundaries? Do I dare to speak up? And if I did, what would the reaction be? This situation highlighted for me that often I don't communicate my needs properly, and by doing so, I help not just myself but also those around me.

Together is Good!

That week together brought a lot of new experiences, knowledge, and also new friends. After we all went our separate ways, many of us felt that something very important, intense, and life-changing had happened. We were certain we'd meet again soon. It didn't take long because some of us were passing through the city where I live, so I became a kind of meeting point. This was a great opportunity to practice setting boundaries. I try to pay attention to the motives behind my actions. After the training, I hosted several gatherings, one reason being practicality, but if I look deeper inside, I wanted to secure my place in the community, saying yes to organizing something even when the tasks involved weren't comfortable for me. (Spoiler: I've improved in this area over the past two years and can now recognize and stand up for myself more easily.) I suspect I'm not the only one who grew up in an environment where you have to earn love, to be enough. Our parents and grandparents didn't really know the concept of unconditional love, so it's no wonder we often find ourselves in situations where we put others' needs before our own. Of course, I'm not trying to avoid responsibility here. I see why things are the way they are, and I'm constantly working on communicating when something no longer feels comfortable. And fortunately, with practice, I'm getting better at it.

There's also the situation where helping genuinely drives us. Léna and her family were renovating their apartment and needed help in the early stages. She jokingly mentioned that anyone who had time could come and help, and to her surprise, several of us offered to assist. Looking back, I think this contributed to strengthening our bond. During the training, we spent long hours learning and working on tasks, so we didn't have much opportunity for deep, one-on-one conversations.

By the first half of the year following the training, a core group had formed. We met up several times, and there was a greater need for connection. It was hard when half of the group dropped off. Some of them expressed feelings of being neglected or that we didn't care about them

anymore. Personally, I tend to overthink things, but I felt strongly that those who couldn't actively participate in our community were simply overwhelmed by work, family, and other obligations, which pushed us to the periphery of their lives. This theory was confirmed multiple times, as when we did manage to reconnect, online or offline, the feedback I got reassured me.

A Year Later

It wasn't a surprise when we met again in the summer of 2023. The training, which had been held online for a year, concluded with another week together. I remember the news spreading that the groups would be rearranged, which posed the risk of separating us. The core group had already decided that this would not happen, and I even said, "If we're not in the same group, I'll stand up and go home!" In the end, they split up the groups, but of course, no one left. However, this situation taught us a very important lesson. I felt that our little community was perfect just as it was, and nothing needed to be added or taken away. But let's be real: people move on, life pulls them in different directions, and at the same time, new people may join. So, we need to remain open and accepting, ready for possible changes.

The situation was softened a bit when our core group stayed together and was joined by the friend I mentioned at the beginning. This proved to me that although change is often frightening and pushes us out of our comfort zones, if we remain open to new things, wonderful things can come of it. And indeed, that happened. The week we spent together again gave us even more.

Joint Activities

We ended our week together by committing to organizing an event. We had already worked a lot on its basic concept, but there was still much to be done. As the weeks and months passed, and the event kept getting farther away from realization, the idea started to form: maybe we shouldn't force it. This created tension, as some were determined to carry out the idea no matter what. It took time, but eventually, we all agreed that we weren't willing to move at such a fast pace. The symbol for our group, the logo we chose, was a snail, which represented that we weren't focused on deadlines but rather on going slowly, paying attention to each member's well-being.

As we grew closer, the training came to an end, and we all felt we wanted to continue together on this shared journey. Fortunately, our request was heard, and the group leaders created new training materials, offering us another opportunity to work together. And this was a whole new dimension. Going on a journey of self-awareness, knowing that no matter what happens, the people around me will support me; that there are no wrong answers; that I can be myself freely, without unnecessary masks or pretenses; that I am loved even when I give nothing, even when I'm feeling down; and most importantly, that I'm good just as I am. This is priceless. The kind of communication that doesn't bring you down, doesn't belittle you, doesn't judge, yet remains honest and straightforward.

Another great treasure is our weekly check-in, introduced by one of our pillar members a few months ago. We're all there, whether in small or large numbers. And what's sure is that everyone can bring whatever is on their mind or heart. I believe this is the greatest gift we can give to each other: the attention we give, and the certainty that if anyone needs something, we'll be there for them. Because—quoting a classic—sometimes, when a person falls, they have to catch themselves, but in this group, I am sure there's no longer a need for that, because we hold each other up.

20. Things are happening – sometimes where you least expect it!

We've been talking for a while in our university class about starting something together, and a smaller group has formed, who wants to do something "more" with our connections. At the moment, we haven't really started this yet – because we had to focus on the many school assignments since we came up with the idea – but the class itself is already functioning as a kind of community.

It's interesting to be part of this whole process knowing that, based on what we've learned so far, I can already observe the dynamics from a bit of a "meta" perspective. I've also felt it, from my own experience, that we are beginning to get closer to each other, not just because of our academic interests, but also because a more trusting, secure space is beginning to form between us. Others are also helping to create this space: many of us are in a special life stage where we have significant experiences, such as relationship changes, job changes, health issues, childbearing, and other milestones. Moreover, in many classes, we've been able to share personal experiences related to social issues, creating a kind of inner group space where many of us shared details about our childhood, social environments, or specific social interactions. On one occasion, we were witnesses to a very special sharing when one of our classmates shared a deeply moving childhood story with us.

Personally, I feel that this wasn't necessarily related only to the course material, but that space was created where she felt safe enough to bring it up. In such moments, I feel like "something" is happening, and I realized that the community-building process had already started; I just hadn't embraced the responsibility and risks involved. When I brought up in our Facebook group that we could take this forward in some way, quite a few people expressed interest. I still feel a bit uncertain about what it will mean if this smaller group, by becoming somewhat separated, causes any issues in the larger group, but we'll take it step by step and see how the process develops. I also try to be very conscious about not taking a leading role in a way that suppresses others' ideas. Of course, I have something in mind about this, but it shouldn't just be about what I want, and I feel I need to work on being very conscious about that.

Initially, there was a more superficial relationship based on interests related to studying and related information, but this quickly developed into a more intimate dynamic. The focus of our relationships shifted: we started talking about special life situations we were facing or health issues, any work-related problems – here, we could share thoughts on anything we felt comfortable with. For example, when we studied the sociology of contemporary youth, our own childhood and family life took center stage, resulting in deep exchanges. I see that it helps a lot that we didn't know each other before; we are outsiders to each other's families, friends, and workplaces. My relationship has deepened with many, although I haven't had the time to connect with everyone, but I sense that within the group, deeper connections are forming in several ways.

There are about 20-25 people in the group, with some variation because a few people from previous years join some courses, but they can integrate into the community as “honorary” classmates if the chemistry is there. Our class is flexible in that sense, meaning that when a new face shows up, there's always a “click” that is eager to talk to them, to connect. I see this as a healthy sign that we're not exclusionary (though there are still some who keep a distance, or some criticism develops in a few cliques, but that can't be avoided; it's part of healthy functioning – the key is that there is no malice within the group). We've known each other for more than a year, and our training began in 2023. We already look back on this time with nostalgia as if it happened “a thousand years ago,” because so much has happened during the first two semesters... During breaks, after class, and in Messenger conversations, the bond has been strengthened through shared projects, small presentations, and assignments, with some variations, but we still tend to organize ourselves in similar groups (I also have that 1-2 person I prefer to work with, though it's never a problem when things turn out differently – I feel there's flexibility in the team). This fall, we started organizing more consciously, and the group came together enthusiastically; this inner circle now consists of 12 people, which is about half of our class. We are currently looking for a common time for brainstorming, which is challenging during the semester. Fortunately, one of my classmates is also helping with the organization, taking a lot of the burden off me so that I'm not the only one carrying this forward.

At the moment, we just want to outline what everyone expects, what they'd like to do together, and what ideas people have. I don't want to push the schedule too much, because we are all tired and overwhelmed, juggling so many things, but at the same time, I fear that the enthusiasm will fade, and the whole thing will stall. This is hard for me because I don't want to wear myself out, but the enthusiasm keeps me going... By pushing myself, I might be putting others in a similar position, and maybe we're not at a point where someone would feel comfortable saying it's too much and they'd rather step back. We are still in a phase of finding balance, in a bit of a process of exploration, which can be frustrating at times, but the fire of novelty is still working, which feels really good. This environment, where there's unconditional space, skilled facilitation, and the “you're okay” approach, is very rare in other settings, like at home or in the workplace. It's so rare that when I have the chance to experience it, it feels like an overwhelming sense of being accepted and held, even though I might be struggling with something. It's hard to put into words how valuable that feeling is.

In a way, this training program has shown me that I'm part of something bigger than just myself, and that everything I do isn't just about me. There were many moments when I felt the hesitation or fear inside me, that inner voice saying, “What if this doesn't matter to anyone? What if I fail?” But now, I realize that failure is just another part of the learning process. Sometimes things just are what they are, and they don't have to be evaluated only through the lens of success or failure. Sometimes, accepting things as they come, and recognizing that they are part of the journey, is the key.

The training has taught me to trust the process more and realize that stepping into this kind of group, and even leading it in a way, doesn't have to be a daunting thing. I don't need to be afraid to build community, even if I'm unsure whether it will work. Just starting something and seeing how it evolves, without attaching all this pressure to it, feels like the right way to approach it.

The process itself, of learning about others, and being present in these authentic moments, creates a bond that is strong and can carry us through any difficulty. We don't need to be perfect. I've learned that it's okay not to have everything figured out, and that we can support each other through those uncertainties. The important thing is the willingness to be vulnerable, to share those deep moments, and to be part of a collective that values growth and understanding.

This experience has shown me how the power of community and connection can really transform our individual journeys. And I'm grateful for the opportunity to be a part of it, to have the chance to work with such a diverse group, and to witness how it grows and strengthens over time.

Ultimately, this is about much more than just academic learning. It's about creating something meaningful that will last beyond this classroom, and I feel fortunate to be experiencing that with this group. Even though it's challenging and sometimes uncomfortable, the process of creating this kind of connection is something I'm truly grateful for. It's not just about achieving a goal, but about being part of something larger than ourselves, and knowing that we are all contributing to that growth in different ways.

21. Let's Move In Together, Side by Side, Everyone!

21.1. A Short Story About the Importance of Patience

The Forest of Friends

...with its infinitely pathetic ring, but what can I do, that's how we refer to it.

To be honest, I never thought in terms of community. I was here a little, there a little. I had a work community, a family, and of course, friends (who, to quote my mother loosely and exaggerate greatly, were always more important than my family). But I never thought of them as a social phenomenon. At that time, I couldn't see communities as a tool for improving life quality or a future. Looking back, I find it quite funny that life led me to a peculiar man, in others' eyes, and to such close friends with whom, even without knowledge about communities, we started down a path toward getting closer and building a community together.

At first, there were only four of us (though we are not much more now): Matyi, Ági, Samu, and I. Matyi and Ági are a couple, just as Samu and I are. Ági and Samu are the connection between the four of us, having been best friends for nearly 20 years. They met during their high school years, hung out together, and then both aimed to create something big and unforgettable at the art university. I came into the picture 12 years ago when I started dating Samu. Ági was the only girl in the group at that time who hadn't decided before meeting me that I wasn't the right one for Samu, so she immediately liked me. Well, why not!

A few years later, Ági found her soulmate, Matyi, who, with his giant heart, endless questions, and strong moral principles like Samu's, instantly became everyone's "cute dad."

Over the years, the relationships between us have formed in interesting ways. Samu often traveled, Ági moved to Canada for a year, so Matyi and I spent a lot of time together and became really good friends. When the two world travelers returned home, we became inseparable, a 'fantastic four.' We often gathered to play Katan, Bange, Cslovecse (Who laughs last?), and none of us could imagine birthdays or New Year's without the other three. Sometimes, with a sarcastic grin, sometimes with tearful eyes, we concluded that not many people around us understood our philosophy of life. This manifested in small things like not going to McDonald's, not using words, or buying lentils without a bag. We found our real, deeply rooted common ground in little, unnoticed things by others.

Then came the idea

Let's move into two small houses, all of us.

The plot will be shared, the vacuum cleaner too, just the houses will be privately owned. After all, we already have a shared Katan and a lot of shared topics. Why couldn't we also have a

shared laundry room, where the girls can gossip about the boys, who will secretly be drinking beer in the toolshed while debating the fall of the Roman Empire, all unaware of their partners' emotional rollercoasters? I know, we painted a slightly stereotyped picture of ourselves back then, but we laughed so much about it and were so excited about the future that almost everything fit into our daily humorous box. Of course, we all knew that in this group, there's no "NoGo" humor, and if there is, no one among us would find it funny.

Searching for the plot was like a newlywed couple renovating a bathroom: either you endure hell's worst with a huge dose of fake humility and clenched teeth, or, shamefully, you give up right at the start and file for divorce. Lacking conflict resolution tools and facilitation techniques, we chose the former. Everyone wanted something different, no one had money, and some had even less. To this day, I don't understand how we managed. Those who didn't have money contributed energy and a lot of enthusiasm. At that time, I decided that we needed a relationship support person, someone who understands what's going on inside and between us.

Samu was the spark, the idea, and the search master, while Matyi was the advocate for the right questions and potential obstacles. Ági and I always sought balance and tried to assist Samu whenever action was needed. We visited a romantic chestnut tree plantation, a homeless barracks, and even a millionaire neighborhood's fancy rose garden to try our luck. Nowhere did we succeed.

Meanwhile, Ági and the others became uncertain, which could only be explained with the good old "Well, why not?" They found a beautiful apartment. With an inner courtyard, a small corner garden, and many quiet retired neighbors right in the middle of the city. It seemed like even with that enormous loan, it wouldn't be an insurmountable problem, though knowing them, I think Xanax would've been the true interest rate for the loan. Samu and I talked about it a lot, but we understood, accepted it, and kept looking. Well, the royal "we" might be a slight exaggeration. Samu kept searching with unwavering determination. I told him to forget it, the ship had sailed, but he was right.

The Forest, or the Lucky Scam

Living next to a forest will be great because there are lots of trees, and you don't have to chop so much, at least if you're building a passive house.

On a truly ugly, gray, autumn day, Samu found a nearby plot at a good price. We ran to it. We bought it. The four of us. Was it that simple? Oh, no.

The realtor had withheld some important information from us, which we only found out after signing the contract. We panicked. We were scared, there was no turning back. I called the owner, a 60-year-old, reserved woman, who, looking back, might have been a bit suspicious. Honestly, without shouting or malice, I explained our story to her: how much we wanted to live in a nature-friendly place, grow a food forest, and build small wooden mobile homes. We wanted to slow down, plant trees, inspire others, but all of this would be impossible if she was lying, and

we were investing all our money into a scam. The woman reacted surprisingly. She told me she was in debt and needed the money. She explained that the plot wasn't a complete scam, but there were still a couple of steps left before it could be used for construction, so it wasn't as valuable as we had agreed. She mentioned that there was a forest above the plot, the same size, which, although not usable for construction, guaranteed that no one would build on the plot above us. She offered to put this additional plot in our name for the same amount as stated in the contract. And so, the 1000m² turned into 2000m², and after much complication and stress, a true business transaction emerged from what initially seemed like a scam.

We Need to Talk About This! *Frustrated? Communicate!*

The process of choosing the plot involved significant compromises, and after the purchase, we had to make countless agreements. What will happen if someone wants to back out? In whose name do we register the wooded part of the plot, which can officially only belong to one person? Then came questions like: 'Where will the well be?' and 'Do we really need the dream laundry room?' These issues were ironed out after many neighborly meetings—or rather, neighborly sittings. But I think we managed to come to an agreement on almost everything. We voted, debated, argued, and I admit, Ági and I even secretly teamed up when necessary. But it was worth it. I think by this point, each topic had its own facilitator, even though we didn't know that's what it was called back then. We planned everything. Then, as life usually goes, "life happened," and Ádám, Ági's first little son, was born. Two years later, Botond, their second son, arrived. Meanwhile, we were building a house, keeping every promise, and sticking to every rule. Of course, we slightly missed the planned timeline, but soon we'll be ready to move in. Matyi and Ági are not.

I'd like to be angry at them, it might make it easier, but since we haven't had that clarifying conversation, I can't even get mad. It's impossible to build a house in the woods with two kids, doing it all yourself, with two hands and no money. Obviously. And sometimes, we blame the kids for everything, but poor kids have nothing to do with it. Matyi brews beer, and it's fantastic. He owns a pub where, if the toilets aren't clogged, the beer runs out, or the cash register breaks down. He's already got a project that requires 24/7 attention, so it's hard to find time for anything else.

Szilárd and Vica *You don't choose your neighbors.*

The plot has brought a lot of good things into our lives, including the indestructible acacia trees and endless terrain work, but among other things, it also brought Szilárd and Vica, our neighbors. We couldn't have found more like-minded people if we searched the whole city. It was as if the wind blew them to us, and here they are, they don't eat at McDonald's, the mall is not their element, and they're not repulsed by compost toilets. We're on the same wavelength. We haven't yet officially asked for membership (like a marriage proposal), but everyone knows the day is

coming soon. They help us with everything, and we try to do the same for them. The shared creation, work, and common interests have bonded us as a group, and the campfire has merged us as people.

So, here's the risk I'll take: our community now consists of seven adults and two adorable kids. Three of us already live on the site (Vica, Szilárd, and his retired sailor father, Tóbi), Samu and I are moving in this spring, and the four-person family... is getting ready.

Road Renovation Every Year *The power of working together sometimes equals a perfectly facilitated team-building session*

The dirt road leading to our place is technically owned by the city, but for decades there's been no money for its upkeep, so after heavy rain, it barely functions. In the local garden district, at least 25 weekend houses exist, and it's very difficult, sometimes impossible, to access them by car. Those of us planning to live here year-round are a bit panicked when thinking about the winter months.

Three years ago, we called the neighbors together. Szilárd brought the digger, Matyi brought the beer, and I cooked the goulash. The others brought shovels and good spirits to help with the hard work. We fixed it. Two months later, the rain washed it all away. A year later, the scenario repeated. We learned from our mistakes and bought channels to divert rainwater. The rest stayed the same. There was goulash, beer, and big spoons. Lots of great stories were shared in the noise of shoveling. The entire garden district gathered. We agreed that next time, we'd plant trees.

In this setup, we managed to clear a forest spring, and last year, when the nearby lake froze to its bottom, we gathered some neighbors for a good ice hockey match. Locals say that, in the past, a neighborhood soccer championship was held every year on the field above our plot. Photos prove it was a blast. Maybe next year...

Lessons and Things to Learn

The hardest thing I've learned so far is waiting for others to be ready for something.

I feel this is especially relevant now, and we haven't really moved forward yet. I'm not scared. I promised patience, and I'm keeping that promise. It's just this darn waiting. Will they really build that house? Will they move in? But when? It helps to ask. What I can answer, I don't burden them with. What I can't, I'll throw into the group as soon as the time is right. I ask a lot more questions than I used to, and it works. Until now, I've talked more and given more advice. But listening and showing interest have proven to be far better methods.

I've also introduced "sharing circles." First, just between Samu and me, then among the four of us. I hope soon we can do it in a larger group as well. I believe it already helps that I see us as a community. It's a bit like marriage. There was love before, but now there is also a sense of responsibility and commitment.

I've learned, well, I'm learning, the dynamics of relationships without expectations and unconditional love. In parallel, I am consciously trying to establish more visible, audible, and perceptible boundaries that serve my well-being. Example? Matyi.

Matyi is always late. Honestly, I don't think he ever quite grasped the concept of time, just like the Spaniards. There's been times when I've sent him off to warmer places, but really only because I think no one would be bothered by his time management there. But here?! A disaster! I used to get frustrated with his lateness and never told him why I was so tense. Now, though, I try to categorize the delays. If there's no responsibility tied to the situation and I don't feel like he's playing with my time, then there's no reason to be angry. But when it's at the expense of my time, I communicate openly and set a boundary that benefits me too. I often try to empathize, thinking about why he's late, and that it's not intentional, but I have to eventually tell him that it's just not fair. There's less tension, and more boundaries.

Not Everyone Likes Talking About Their Feelings...

Well, that's fine, but some people aren't even capable of it. Yet. I believe this can change and be shaped, but here's where I can't expect it. After my first community training, I became obsessed with emotions, searching for depth in everything, wanting to understand everyone's emotional world. At that time, there was a bit of a storm between Ági and Matyi. Meanwhile, I had been thinking for a while that we should have a "why does everyone feel useful in our community" circle because it was obvious that Matyi was acting like an outsider. I planned, tried, pushed, and forced it. It didn't work. I was angry, at Matyi and myself. I tried to push him into it, but he ended up telling me about a radio play instead of sharing his emotions. I talked it over with Ági; she was just as clueless, and, oh, it felt so good to share the hopelessness. To make a long lesson short: I can't force anyone to feel anything, nor can I force them to be interested in what they feel. Even less can I force them to tell me about it. They'll say it when they want to, when it's time.

Shared Future *Shared Business?*

Ági and I start a new business venture every week. In theory. We've had a kindergarten, a retreat organizing agency, a cooking school, and an eco-center. Samu has long decided that his cameraman job could shrink to a hobby if he fulfilled his dream and started a vegetable community. Matyi's dream is a gravity brewery—don't ask what it is, because we don't know either.

The only problem is, I've never, ever felt like "this is the time," so I assume it won't happen now either. We wait, we dream. And then Samu...

22. Közös Ló

We participated in a two-year project called "Community Facilitators - From Solitary Quest to Community Enterprise," where we all trained as community facilitators. In the spring of 2023, one of our members brought up the idea of creating a community near the Órség region in Zala County, and began recruiting members.

He and his wife, along with their young son, had moved from Budapest to a 150-person village in Zala County. They wanted to use the large property with outbuildings for a community project, developing camps, trainings, and a shared living space that would strengthen the connection between the city and the countryside.

He shared this idea with us, and we, the three of us, became more actively involved, creating a simple application process. In the summer of 2023, we incorporated this idea into our training, and by the time of a one-week camp, there were already 11 of us working on it. The camp provided us with the support to lay a strong foundation for this collaboration, and we developed a pilot project—a weekend event we organized in the fall of 2023.

The shared goal brought us together, but I feel deep friendships have also formed, and now it's the bond over our common mission that keeps us united, while we reflect on the future direction of our project.

The community started forming in the spring of 2023, and by autumn, we had grown to a group of 9 members. Many of us are from Budapest or its surrounding area, but we also have a member from Zala County, one from Vas County, and another from Bratislava. Currently, two members are less active, and it's uncertain whether they will continue with the community, but in the meantime, the partners of four of our members have joined certain programs and shared activities, and they are beginning to integrate into the group. Officially, there are 9 of us, with an additional 4-5 people connected to the community.

We began to form in the spring of 2023. In July of that year, we launched with great enthusiasm at the aforementioned camp, where we developed a shared vision to create a community enterprise that would also function as a community space, engage in economic activities (such as workshops, training, and camps), generate revenue, and strengthen the city-country connection with a positive social impact.

In October 2023, we held our first joint weekend event, which was the pilot project, where we spent 3-4 days working on tidying up the area, getting to know each other better, and refining our values, principles, and future projects. The weekend was very successful, and the joint preparation and work brought us closer together.

In autumn 2023, we set up workgroups, file-sharing systems, and began regular calls to establish the operational functioning of our community.

In November 2023, we met again in person for a day and decided that three of us were more enthusiastic and, while we would continue leading the community, we would be more actively working on developing a community enterprise, regularly updating the others on our progress.

In December 2023, we took over an association to give us a legal structure that would help us apply for future projects and establish the community space.

In January 2024, we met again to discuss our focuses and plans for the first half of the year and decided to seize a great opportunity by organizing a 3-week international volunteer camp with the Szatyor Association.

In March 2024, four of us went on a study trip to Slovenia as part of the "Value of Waste" international project, where we built connections, learned a lot, and got to know each other better.

In March 2024, we held our second joint weekend event at the project location, working on the summer kitchen's flooring and brainstorming about our official name. This weekend was also very successful and contributed to deepening both individual and collective connections.

In May 2024, the three of us—the community leaders and most active members—organized and ran the volunteer camp with the participation of Hungarian and international youth. By the time the camp began, we had prepared the necessary facilities, and during the three weeks, we continued developing the site. The barn was transformed into a venue for meals and community programs, and we further developed the summer kitchen, created outdoor furniture and tables, and improved the garden, including a herb spiral, garden path, and new vegetable beds. The camp was a great success, and feedback from participants and a few visiting friends was overwhelmingly positive. Despite this, the functioning of our leadership trio was not without challenges—we experienced surges in differing opinions, work styles, and minor conflicts that we managed to clear up, but doubts arose about whether we could continue working together in the future.

In June 2024, during a new project, a larger conflict arose in our leadership trio, which we attempted to resolve with external assistance and through clarification discussions. In September 2024, we met again in person, and it was then that we realized we no longer wanted to continue working on the community enterprise together.

In October 2024, we held our third joint weekend in a new location at one of our member's homes in Nógrád County, where we focused on community time, garden work, and hiking.

This fall, we need to clarify how the dissolution of our leadership trio will affect the community's functioning, what our future plans are, and how we will proceed. Will we stick to our original goals, or transform into a more relaxed community with different objectives?

- We established a very well-functioning operational system, including communication channels, file sharing, and clear rules, which has been working for over a year.
- We formed various workgroups, each with leaders and active members, so everyone could participate in what they were most interested in.
- In May 2024, we successfully completed the 3-week volunteer camp, and the feedback from participants was very positive—heartfelt letters and emails followed after the camp ended.
- What I'm most proud of is that we managed to resolve a major conflict, and even though it ended with us no longer wanting to work together in the future, we were able to talk things through and, I believe, preserve our friendships.

One challenge was that the three of us were very active and wanted to progress, while others could contribute less time and energy to the project. It was difficult to reconcile these two speeds at first, as we were building the community together, while the three of us were also more actively working on the community enterprise idea.

Another challenge was the volunteer camp in May 2024, which was our first major project, and where we experienced firsthand what it was like to work intensively for 4-5 weeks. There were tensions and minor conflicts that arose.

In the case of the two-speed problem, we discussed the situation with the community during an in-person meeting, and we tried to create a structure where our trio could work actively, while the larger community could function in parallel, with regular updates on what we were working on. For the volunteer camp challenges, we tried to address and resolve them at the location. When the larger conflict arose in June 2024, we sought external assistance for clarifying discussions. In general, the fact that we learned and experienced community living together provided an amazing foundation, and this mutual understanding helped in many ways.

I think I would like to regain my motivation and organize an in-person meeting to clarify the situation and discuss together how we would like to continue functioning as a community. The conflict in our leadership trio has been quite demotivating, and I don't feel very enthusiastic right now. However, I've invested a lot of time and energy into this project, and I've formed deep friendships with many members. I don't want to let it all go to waste, but at the moment, I don't know where to move forward from here.

23. 11-11 Gateway to My Community

23.1. When something ends, something else begins

We are in Budapest at the MEMO House on November 11, 2023, at an event with nearly 100 attendees. This day marked the conclusion of my community facilitator training (www.kozossegifacilitator.hu), which I participated in along with 40 others, learning about ourselves, our relationships with each other, and the roles we play in our communities. This memorable day was also an opportunity to share with the outside world everything we had learned, experienced, and the results of the year and a half that shaped us.

It was the closure of a meaningful day and training, but also the moment when something new was born. What do I mean by this?

Two facilitator colleagues, Juli and Dorka, who also participated in the training from Vojvodina, came to me on that day, as we were saying our goodbyes, asking me to tell them about the "Suska Circle." A rush of emotions ran through me at that moment.

What kind of emotions?

I'll tell you that in a moment, but first, just a few words about the Suska Circle, as this term may not be familiar to everyone.

The Suska Circle is a bartering circle, which offers a unique accounting system for exchanging goods and services among its members. I co-led this circle from 2013 to 2017 in Szeged, Subotica, and several other cities. During this period, we connected with many people, and without sufficient community-building knowledge and experience, we took on the role of coordinating it rather than truly leading it. As a result, there were some disappointments, although there were also uplifting and friendly connections. Around 2018, I made a strong statement:

"I will never start and lead a Suska Circle again."

This declaration resurfaced in my mind, along with everything I had experienced while coordinating the Suska Circle.

And then, standing next to me were two facilitator colleagues with whom I had built a connection during the past year and a half.

What should I say now? You can imagine that I was still strongly holding onto my previous statement, yet another thought came to mind:

"From dream to reality, there's just one secret: never say never."

After that, I'm sure you can guess what happened next—I said "Yes" and we set a date for December 17, 2023, when Dorka and Juli announced a meeting for the Waldorf Community in

Vojvodina, and I was given 30 minutes to present the Suska Circle and discuss a possible restart in Subotica.

Thus, the door to one of the most important training programs of my life closed, and at the same time, the door to a community that would become incredibly significant in this chapter of my life began to open.

Lessons learned: it's better to use a time marker like "not right now" instead of the word "never." Also, let's remain open and curious about the wonders that can happen when we allow them to unfold.

The Restart of the Suska Circle

Subotica, December 17, 2023: After some online preparations, I again talk about the Suska Circle, the experiences connected to it, and the potential for its restart. I see openness in the people who came to the meeting, and I also feel an exciting sense inside me that it was worth embarking on this thought experiment of restarting.

I invited two of my good friends from the original Suska Circle to share their experiences and help with the restart.

We agreed on several new rules that hadn't been in place before, and I also felt that now I could take responsibility and was eager to see what would unfold in this newly forming community.

We decided to hold monthly Suska meetings where we could unfold our value-creating abilities through the exchanges. This way, we could strengthen connections among people.

Since one of the main goals of the restart was to ensure that the Waldorf Community in Vojvodina not only meets at programs related to Waldorf pedagogy but also connects through other activities, it became an opportunity for people without children in preschool or school to connect with others who share this spirit.

Thus, we began organizing monthly meetings, where we primarily brought handmade items, food, and offered our services.

The first three months were filled with curiosity about what would happen at the meeting, what we would bring, and what we could exchange. However, some people began to feel they had nothing to bring. Interestingly, this actually encouraged creativity in others, and this was another goal of the restart: to develop our creative selves. This part was partially successful, with some good initiatives, but I feel we haven't fully tapped into the potential of this unique exchange system. The system has certain flaws that we haven't found good solutions for yet.

One initiative I found particularly useful was suggested by Kira, one of the Suska members, who organized online discussions in Serbian to help us practice the language. The goal of these conversations wasn't perfection but to have the courage to speak and converse in Serbian. These discussions lasted for over six weeks, and it was noticeable how the participants became more open and their self-confidence grew.

The Suska Circle: Lessons from the First Year and Community Growth

After the first three months, we felt that while what we were doing was valuable, it seemed like we had reached a standstill. The group hadn't expanded much, and a core group of regular participants had formed. The system, however, would have benefited from involving more people, but that didn't happen. One reason might have been the rules we set in the early meetings, or the fact that people sometimes didn't know what they could contribute to the circle.

To change this, we decided to organize a picnic event, which would be an open meeting to invite new members into the circle. The picnic went well and attracted some new faces, even those who hadn't attended the previous meetings. However, this one event wasn't enough to bring people in and get them actively involved in the exchange process. To try again, we held another open event in July in Palic, coinciding with a large festival. Although the idea was good in theory, the festival distracted some of our participants, and the event didn't lead to significant new involvement. As a result, the group decided that instead of strictly holding meetings for exchanges, we would dedicate some of our future gatherings to community-building activities, like Kaláka.

Kaláka refers to a traditional community work event where people help each other with tasks, such as house or garden work, in exchange for food or other services. This idea had been introduced earlier in February, after I saw a Kaláka group forming in Hungary. I shared this idea with the Suska group, and everyone liked it. In April, we organized our first Kaláka event at Dorka's, where we helped clear a path for a community house. This was followed by a couple of other Kaláka days in Martonos in July, where we helped transform a Waldorf school's grounds into a child-friendly space. These community efforts were welcomed by both the members of the Suska circle and the Waldorf community.

In the summer months, our activities slowed down due to the summer holidays and the back-to-school season, which disrupted the flow of regular gatherings. This hiatus allowed me to reflect on the dynamics of the group. As the organizer, I initially felt frustrated due to the lack of communication, but conversations with other members later helped me understand the situation better.

In October, we reached a turning point. After several discussions, we organized a Kaláka event focused on building a fence, which brought together people from both Serbia and Hungary. The event was more than just about labor; it was also about creating space for connection, songs, and conversations around the campfire. The positive feedback and the feeling of deep connection between the participants made it clear that Kaláka could play a significant role in our community's growth.

This experience taught me valuable lessons, such as the importance of communication from the leaders, both to understand the dynamics of the group and to ensure transparency. I realized that by being open to others' needs and providing support, we could create more meaningful relationships within the group.

In terms of leadership, two key trainings helped me build the skills necessary to take responsibility for the community: one was the Community Facilitator Training, which gave me insights into community-building roles and self-awareness, and the other was the Minorities in Communities Training, which taught me how to lead effectively and seek support when needed.

Looking ahead, the goal for our group is to continue growing and to involve more people in the Kaláka events. Our focus will remain on eco-conscious activities such as natural building, organic gardening, and preserving traditional skills. We want to strengthen the bond between the Serbian and Hungarian communities, offering a space for both to collaborate and share their cultures.

Summary:

After nearly a year of experience, I've realized that successful community-building requires:

1. Clear goals for the group.
2. Responsible leadership, with leaders willing to share the responsibility.
3. Regular "How Are You?" circles that foster open communication and help build relationships.
4. Active listening and attention to changes in people's needs, both for the project and personal well-being.
5. Leaders who are engaged in personal development, community-building courses, and group dynamics programs to continuously improve.

The most gratifying part of this year was seeing the transformation of Tamás and his group, who, after receiving the courage to organize their own Kaláka event, experienced both personal growth and visible improvements to their property. This success reinforced the importance of empowering individuals to take initiative.

For us, moving forward involves fostering a more open and inclusive community, building on the lessons we've learned, and continuing to support each other through collaboration and collective work.

24. Waldorf School Initiative:

24.1. The Path Towards a Community School

The story of the Fénysugár Waldorf School initiative was born from a deep inner commitment. Since it was crucial for me, as well as for the people around me, that our children learn in the right place and in the right way, we decided to offer an alternative education for them. In 2021, I started to delve deeper into the Waldorf pedagogy, and it became clear to me that this was the right path for our daughters. I decided to study it more seriously and signed up for a three-year postgraduate program, which took place in Solymár and was, of course, self-financed.

Fortunately, Kinga joined me, and we embarked on this exciting yet challenging journey together. At that point, a core group began to form, meeting every Wednesday evening to work on spiritual matters, which laid the foundation for us to connect more easily with each other in the future. The community facilitator training we participated in helped us see the process of community-building from a different perspective, and it made it clear that the goal was not just to establish a school, but to create a supportive community that would be able to work independently and sustainably in the future.

Community Training and the Launch of the Fénysugár School

The foundations of our community-building were laid through the facilitator training, and it became increasingly clear that our aim was not only to create a school but also to establish a community that would support one another. After finishing the training in May 2024, I had no choice but to gather a community around me, consisting of families with children who were around the age of entering first grade and who also wanted their children to attend a Waldorf school.

At that point, I began searching for other families who shared this vision, and it soon became evident that the true power of the community lies in the collaboration between parents and educators, working together to lay the foundation for the Waldorf school. In the early stages, only two families were certain that they wanted to send their children to a Waldorf school, but it didn't take long for the parent group to grow. The teaching community also began to take shape: three committed teachers joined us, each bringing their dedication and enthusiasm, and now there are several other professionals representing different fields, including English teachers, a music teacher, a woodworker, and other educators who are all passionate about Waldorf pedagogy.

Challenges and Obstacles in Establishing the School

Naturally, like any new initiative, our community faced various challenges. One of the major difficulties was that although there was initial enthusiasm, many people who had initially joined the cause dropped out when they realized the scale of the task ahead of us. However, we kept pushing forward, and the first conferences and meetings helped strengthen the bonds within the community, keeping our focus on the common goal.

By the end of 2023, after I reached out to several experienced educators, we formed a group of ten teachers by January 2024. We started working on the internal structure of the school. During our monthly meetings, we explored Rudolf Steiner's writings and began developing the concept of the school. One of the key insights we had was that the school must stand on three fundamental pillars: the teaching community, the parent group, and the support group. These three groups need to work together, building trust and making decisions based on consensus.

The Future Outlook and Further Plans

The expansion of the school community continued, and by March, we succeeded in attracting more families who expressed interest in joining the initiative. In the summer, we began the practical preparations for the school. We organized community workdays, where around thirty people gathered to help renovate the school building. We cleaned, painted, drilled, and collected furniture from other schools and cultural associations. The enthusiasm was contagious as we prepared to welcome our first graders.

Looking ahead, I am optimistic. Though there is still much work to be done, the community has become stronger, and both parents and teachers are fully committed to establishing the Waldorf school. The fact that six families and six children joined us reassures me that our dedication and community work will achieve its goal. I believe that the Fénysugár Waldorf School will provide a new, healthy alternative for the local community.

With enthusiasm, the teaching faculty and I put together the program, deciding on songs and dances that would bring everyone together and create the ceremony in which we would welcome the first grade into our midst. A large gate was built, which the teachers and parents decorated with beautiful flowers, and on September 1st, Kinga was waiting for me at the school-side of the gate. She welcomed me as the first-grade teacher, and we hugged. I then called my little students over to me. Their families accompanied them to the gate, but it was up to the children to cross it alone. This gate symbolizes the institution itself, and we are certain that when the children graduate, we will send them off through a similar wonderful gate.

It was an emotional day for all of us—September 1, 2024. Since then, we have begun to take things to the next level. We can now see more clearly that it was a good idea to not require

Waldorf training right away, but in the long run, we will be able to stay on the same page only if everyone learns about Waldorf pedagogy and explores its essence. So, gradually but surely, we are beginning to encourage those who are connected to us to explore the training courses. If they feel called to do so, we urge them to start the journey, and we will support them in every way we can—initially with encouragement, but later, perhaps with scholarships (we hope to find a suitable application for this).

Let me return for a moment to the parent group, as I left out an important point. In June, we held our first parent evening. This is like a parent-teacher meeting, but much better. We sit in a circle, and deeper sharing can take place. I explained how the idea of brotherhood manifests itself in the Waldorf school among families. If there are any families who cannot afford to pay the base fee for the school, they can signal this, and then, at the fundraising evening, other families who can afford to contribute more will do so.

In our case, the base fee wasn't very high, but the contributions were arranged interestingly, exactly as they should have been. In the first grade, we have six families, which means six couples and a total of six children in the 2024/2025 school year, but this will naturally expand in the long term. Currently, the common cause that binds the members together is the belief that the children should be saved from the harmful, dumbing, and competitive effects of the state system and placed in an environment where they receive acceptance, encouragement, nurturing love, and the most important thing is that they can be who they truly are—not what we expect from them.

It is clear that things were moving on several fronts. I regularly participated in our civil organization's weekly meetings, met monthly with the teachers, and also had monthly meetings with the parent group. There was one very important topic I had not discussed with the parents because I thought it was so self-evident that it didn't need special attention. That topic was the use of smartphones—when children might have their own smartphones and what they can do with them and for how long.

Our first truly real parent evening, unfortunately, didn't go as planned. Several life situations came together, and as a result, the planned 120-minute event turned into a 45-minute rush. The parents received all the vital and important information, but they had no time to connect with each other, and there wasn't even enough time for me to connect with them. They couldn't even see their child's work properly—it was a rush from start to finish. Initially, this situation led me to great acceptance, but as the days went by, I felt that, in many ways, it wasn't quite right. I gathered my thoughts and sent an email, explaining how important the parent evening is to us and asking the parents to take it seriously. The dates had been provided as early as August, and everyone had time to arrange their schedules so that at least one adult from each family could attend.

The October meeting came quickly, and just before it, we ran into a serious problem. One of the students brought a smartphone to school. While this was understandable, as the student travels a long distance and must be in touch with their grandparents after school, it's clear that a simple mobile phone would serve the purpose just as well, and we had not discussed this issue before. I gave them "homework" from Kim John Payne's book *"Loving Discipline"*, asking them to read eight pages on the world of digital devices and social media. I tried to calm myself down, reminding myself not to see the situation as a catastrophe or failure. At this parent evening, there was a completely different energy. There was time and space for people to arrive, and deeper connections could happen in just a few minutes, something that hadn't been possible in the previous months. There was both crying and laughter. When I saw that we had arrived at a good point, I brought up the phone issue. We shared what we had learned about it, and after some funny moments, the conversation became more serious. I asked the representatives of the families to answer the question I had posed at the September parent evening: *Why are they here? What do they expect from the Waldorf school? What would they like their child to be like when they leave this school at the age of 15?*

The answers came back saying that they didn't have high expectations; they only wanted their child to grow up into a confident, curious young person who won't be anxious. They wanted the child to be able to easily connect with other people, even strangers, and not be afraid of new things.

After this, I asked them what they thought about giving their child a smartphone. How would it help or hinder their child? And I also asked how they felt about this topic—when would they consider buying their child their own smartphone?

I was almost speechless because the families shared exactly the same views that I have. They expressed their agreement that, as long as possible, we want to delay the moment when our children will have their own devices, and how unprepared a child's nervous system is for the effects they experience through them. After all, even for us adults, addiction is a serious issue—we struggle to put our phones down ourselves (even if we use them only for work). So, how can we expect a young child to resist something that is extremely addictive?

The discussion took an interesting turn when one mother, whose child already had a smartphone, started to feel increasingly uneasy and eventually asked to speak. She didn't understand what the problem was with her child already having a smartphone. She argued that her child uses it very little and, in exchange, spends a lot of time outdoors, playing, moving, riding a pony, and hardly ever has the phone in hand, except when video chatting with a friend who lives far away or when the mother works late and needs to "remotely control" her children, telling them when to eat, bathe, and go to bed. Unfortunately, the father isn't very reliable... This changed the perspective on the issue, but the fact still remained. In the end, I shared why our family chose Waldorf

education. One of the things that disturbed us the most about society was its obsession with screen addiction, which led us toward Waldorf. We wanted to belong to a community where, in agreement with everyone, we would not give our children smartphones for a certain period of time. This not only makes things easier for us but also strengthens our position, because we are stronger together as a community. I said this as a parent.

As a class teacher, I also explained how the use of screens fundamentally alters children's imagination. In Waldorf education, we work a lot with fantasy, which is completely destroyed by gadgets. These devices fill children's heads with ready-made "dead" images, and eventually, the child loses their imagination. For this reason, I will not accept any child into the school who already has a smartphone. So, they should think it over—either they put the phone aside until after eighth grade, or we will have to part ways, no matter how much I would regret it. Since this whole process is just starting, it is crucial how we react, because our actions will serve as a model.

This was quite a shock for the parent, but I had to set clear boundaries. Otherwise, very quickly, our initiative would have collapsed, and not even the Waldorf school would have been possible. The November parent evening went excellently, and we were able to listen to some very good and deep discussions and shared reflections based on a quote from Rudolf Steiner:

"THE CHILD MUST BE RECEIVED WITH RESPECT, RAISED WITH LOVE, AND RELEASED IN FREEDOM."

We agreed with the parents that it is essential for us to draw from the same foundation in child-rearing. Therefore, they agreed that we would work through Kim John Payne's book *Simpler Childhood*, chapter by chapter. I am truly happy to be part of a community where we are willing to listen to each other and respect each other's boundaries.

The children are also progressing well in becoming a community. There was one little boy who, during the first week, only wanted to stay within my two-meter radius every day. He has made huge progress. There were also some girls displaying more "grown-up" behavior, and there was some teasing between them, but I don't allow that to happen at all. I ask them to look for the beautiful and admirable qualities in each other and to express those. Our mistakes are there to help us learn, so it's okay to make them because that's how we learn effectively. And this is where we are now.

25.The Kecskemét Szatyor Shopping Community

25.1. The Meeting of the Old and the New - Community Rebirth

Beginnings At first, I was just a customer in the short supply chain that couldn't yet be called a community. I enjoyed the benefits and took advantage of the opportunity, but I didn't contribute to its operation. I couldn't have, as I was building my own business with two small children. It happened that I met a guy who was organizing a basket community, and he told me a lot about how their community operated. Thanks to him, I got interested in learning more about the work going on in the background here and who I could join. This was almost five years ago.

The association had been operating for 15 years but was only nominally a community when I got involved. Initially, there was a lot of enthusiasm, and they even opened a store, but neither the store nor the community lasted long. Five years ago, a lady was running the grocery community alone from her garage, with just a handful of producers. The association's members were passive. After many discussions and a course about starting a basket community, we decided to renew both the members and the system, to expand and refresh the producer base. For me, being able to buy high-quality food from trusted producers for my family was so important that I was willing to invest energy into it. The work began, and I faced the difficulties of working with people who had a loose commitment to the community, age differences, and the fact that I was seen negatively since I was new, coming out of nowhere and wanting to do everything differently. At that point, I had some experience as a Waldorf parent community organizer, which I could rely on, and I had read and talked a lot about how to build a team from this handful of very different people. A few months later, more young, motivated people joined the cause, including one of my best friends. That's how we started our journey. It took a long time to clarify the old members' goals and framework, and the new members' somewhat different goals and ideas. A year and a half of discussions, consultations, planning, and work with producers led to the formation of a core group of 6-7 people, with whom we truly felt we were on the same path.

Deep Waters We faced a big challenge: could we renew a demotivated and scattered team, add our own vision to theirs, and integrate the older, more rigid members into a new, youthful, and energetic group? All this had to be done without harming anyone, considering their experience, efforts, and pace. Then, as we began working on this, it turned out that defining our own vision and mission was a huge task. We worked on it for three years, and now we have succeeded.

Everyone played a part in it.

The older members had to adapt to a different pace, learn the basics of online communication and running a webshop, and accept that this new team had many different ideas and ways of doing things compared to how things were done in the past at the association. The lady who had been running the "shopping community" on her own for years had to accept that she was no longer alone, that she didn't have to solve everything by herself, and that other solutions might be just as effective. She had to adjust to the fact that she wouldn't be making all the decisions alone anymore, and often, the decisions made by the community would not align with what she had envisioned. The new members, on the other hand, had to accept the challenges that arose from age differences, practice patience, and put a lot of energy into teaching.

Demo At the end of this period, as a demo, we launched the real implementation using a rented software with 13 producers, specifically for the families of my children's Waldorf school, in a small 10 m² wooden house on the school's grounds. This setup was great for us to get used to the system and identify system errors. It operated for three months, and then we moved to a bigger space provided by one of the producers, where the grocery community continued for another three years, with a small group of volunteers and the core team that had started with us.

We did it and continue doing it every week! I believe it was a huge achievement that we started and operated weekly, serving about 40 families and building good relationships with producers.

In the second half of the third year, many of us distanced ourselves due to life circumstances, value differences, and internal conflicts. At the same time, new people joined, whom we were able to bring closer, so the community continued to function, but by then, not with me. Since then, they have won a grant and started operating a civil house in early September, which also serves as a drop-off point. I've gotten a bit closer, but not on a completely voluntary basis, and I am no longer in a leadership or organizing role. I participated in strategic planning, designed the branding and website, and will support the civil house's communication visually. This hasn't started yet. I offered my facilitation help to the team, but they haven't used it yet.

Present I am not sure how many active organizers there are currently, as I am no longer an active member of the community. As of September, the core group consists of 6-7 people, about 5-7 loosely connected members, and around 10 volunteers who are not involved in planning and operating processes but help with drop-off days and moving. There are also looser members like me, who handle tasks like IT, communication, and occasionally event organizing—about 4-5 people.

The relationships among community members are very mixed. There are friendships, close bonds, and people who cooperate and are in a team spirit, who care about the cause. Not everyone can express themselves honestly, and not everyone is willing to confront their fears and pains, but we are gradually moving in this direction. Feedback is really lacking. I think the reason for this is that many people don't know how to give feedback without causing harm, or their fear of doing so holds them back. I have experienced that this is a skill that can be learned,

and it's something we must learn because it's needed in all areas of life—whether in a family community, at work, or anywhere we show up and represent ourselves, we give and receive signals. A lot depends on it. A lot.

Let's Visualize! The common vision and mission came together in September this year. The School of Public Life held a strategic planning workshop, and as a result, the vision, mission, and even a strategic plan with short- and long-term goals were created. I think the fact that they had to operate a civil house due to a successful grant with serious financial expectations played a role in this—something that could no longer be achieved without it. In my view, the team moved ahead and, finding themselves in a situation that required growth, they sought help and, with the support of professional experts, were able to birth this new vision. I am sure that the 2.5 years of pondering this topic before played a role in this. I also participated in the workshop because they invited me, they appreciate my insights, and they consider me a valuable member of the team. I had a role in the formation of the vision. This long journey and process was a very important experience for me, and I learned a lot from it!

Who Am I Among You, With You?

The most important lesson I feel I've learned from the facilitator training is that I have a clearer understanding of myself and my place, and I am much better at maintaining my boundaries. As a result, and considering the life circumstances of the past two years, I have taken a step back and now observe events from a distance. I'm here when needed, and if called upon, I step in. I am still part of the association, and my opinion is sought in decision-making situations, but I no longer participate in the day-to-day work. I didn't feel comfortable within the team; I disagreed on crucial issues with most of the team, and I lost my patience, faith, and motivation. At the same time, I have learned about myself which roles feel natural to me, what I want to improve on, and what I can contribute to my community in the future—maybe in this community or perhaps another. Thanks to the training, I was able to see myself—in the reflection of my peers and mentors—in the role of facilitator, and it felt very good to identify with this quality and to be in it. I decided to continue my education and seriously explore what additional value I can offer a community, whether I am a member or not—perhaps through a workshop or retreat. I received a lot of inspiration and knowledge from my mentors to walk my own path and to find that part of myself who can hold space for a group with authenticity, confidence, and if needed, gently or firmly, but with great attention, honesty, and acceptance.

I have come to realize that if something is not working well for me and I step back, that's not necessarily a bad thing. I now have the opportunity to observe events from a distance and from a different perspective. Thanks to the training, I've also gained the knowledge to interpret and truly see what is happening, not just observe it. Of course, I am still at the very beginning of this learning process, but I can already feel that I am much more aware than I was before. I believe

that the community will benefit from having a facilitator in my person who, when needed, can help and guide processes. Perhaps I also need to arrive at a place where I believe in myself and my ability to do this.

I think my goal is to develop myself both professionally and spiritually, and then to use this growth to support the team with what I can offer. I would love for us to succeed in sharing more knowledge about natural leadership and its importance because the team is lacking leaders or they are not in their rightful place, and responsibility areas are still unclear, as I see it. This is changing, the team is working on it, and I believe it will define the future how well they manage to clarify this.

Greater Perspective: Natural Leadership and Its Absence

The biggest issue I see is that most of the community members are resistant to taking on leadership roles, and we tried to make all decisions as democratic as possible, discussing everything. A lot of time, energy, and endless conversations/debates formed, and often no decision was made. When a decision was made, those who disagreed would only reluctantly accept it, and there were problems because they didn't feel the decision was theirs, so they didn't implement it. This led to the change we introduced: we wrote a team agreement, established decision-making rules, and created workgroups. Unfortunately, the workgroup system fell apart. I don't know why, as I was no longer involved in the daily routine. We established decision-making rules, and then broke them, which caused a great internal tension within me. The fact that there were no individuals in decision-making positions and that the community did not empower anyone based on their competencies to take responsibility for certain areas—and in return, receive more attention and weight for their opinions—is, in my view, a labyrinth within communities. I see other communities, and from my observations, it strengthens my belief that we need individuals who, not just nominally or out of necessity (because there is no other choice), but out of commitment and suitability, take on leadership roles and greatly support the survival, progress, and day-to-day life of their communities. Constant negotiations, stagnation, and disagreements can very quickly lead to burnout.

My Internal Labyrinth

And here's something very personal. I've been in leadership roles during the founding of the Waldorf Parent Community and during the rebirth of the buying community, and I've had moments where I felt I was taking on some leadership qualities. I regularly received feedback that I was too quick, too decisive, too much. These weren't always clear and honest pieces of feedback; I interpreted and applied them to myself. The most intense moments of this happened in relation to human relationships within the community, that is, when tension, conflict, or communication problems arose, team members would approach me to help untangle, resolve, or listen to them and offer advice. I didn't understand, I couldn't reconcile this duality within myself. How is it that I am too much, too raw, too honest, and too intense, yet people still turn to

me for help? There is so much work done in this training by the mentors, and those who truly embraced the tasks and dared to face themselves during the process went on a huge journey of self-awareness. They dared to be honest with themselves. I learned so much about myself, my temperament, emotional regulation, attention, silence, and my relationship to all of these things. I realized that while I have strong strategic ideas, a clear vision, goals, and values, there is also a part of me that is feminine, gentle, sensitive, compassionate, and supportive, which might be even more important and useful to my community than the strong strategist part of me. Because as long as we are not well with each other, as long as we cannot stand up for ourselves honestly but without hurting others, as long as we cannot turn to each other with patience, no matter how loud and bold our strategic plans are, they will not work. And if we can create a safe, holding space, then others can bring out their own strategic plans, and the subtleties can emerge—who is good at what, who feels good where, and we can create a community that moves at its own pace, on its own path, and it feels good to belong. This is how I saw myself, that in this feminine facilitator part of me, I function much better than in the masculine strategist part of me. Both exist, I love both and I manage both, but my focus is on human relationships and the internal paths, and on how we can move forward together along these paths.

26. Community of an Amateur, Hobbyist Theater Group

My primary community is an amateur, hobbyist theater group that operates under the framework of a civil organization registered in Serbia. This organization celebrated its tenth anniversary this year, though this is not the entire story. The organization is actually the legal successor of a previous one that could no longer function due to internal conflicts.

The Near Forgotten Past

The amateur theater group, which formed in the mid-2000s, consisted of several young adults and high school students. The group enjoyed creating their own plays, mostly satirical ones, which were youthful, energetic, and even humorous, sometimes shocking. Both the high school students and the adults dedicated their free time to working on staging the plays. At that time, the professional theater world was not fully prepared for such more liberal theater, which led to frequent criticism of their performances. This did not discourage the group, as the main goal was to enjoy the play itself.

However, over time, the focus began to shift towards professionalism, leading to arguments, conflicts, and a deterioration of the rehearsal atmosphere. Members gradually drifted away or lost the motivation to attend rehearsals. It's no surprise since no one likes doing something they are supposed to enjoy in a stifling atmosphere, but for some reason, they no longer do. Eventually, the inevitable happened: the community was reduced to just a few people, and the then-leader left, passing on their role to someone else.

Starting Over

The new leader wanted to start with a clean slate. The old group had to be let go, as many had moved abroad or gone to university, and were no longer reachable. The idea was to preserve the good and beautiful moments of that community under the old name, but to build a completely new community. The organization took on a new name and began recruiting new members. The efforts were successful. The group's main principles remained the same: to enjoy what they did and to stage unique, original plays, all while still being amateur actors.

My Arrival into the Community

After moving from Hungary to Serbia, I began exploring the cultural life of the small town I had chosen as my new home. I participated in book launches, chamber theater performances, quiz nights, and many other interesting events. One such event was an amateur theater performance, in which one of my acquaintances, a market vendor, was performing. The performance was intriguing and very likable to me. I had previously been a student actor and studied drama and theater for five years. Despite having performed in professionally written plays by playwrights, I

was drawn to this more freeform theater. Perhaps it was the relaxed rules, flexibility, and eccentricity that attracted me. It had been years since I had participated in any theatrical performance, and I thought I would at least gain some recognition. So, I reached out to the market vendor and expressed my interest in joining the group.

He was very pleased with my interest and invited me to the next rehearsal. As it turned out, he was the leader of the group and the director of the plays, often writing them as well. I was excited to meet the others. It was strange to find that, apart from me, there were only three other people in the group. They quickly brought me up to speed with the organization's history. Then, I was thrown into the deep end, as I was immediately assigned a role in the duet drama, a play I had previously seen. This was a huge challenge for me since I had to embody multiple characters within a single performance. The group members were kind and helpful during the rehearsal process. In fact, I even went with the other actor to a local pub one evening, where we got to know each other better, making our collaboration easier.

Throughout the rehearsals, we joked around, shared stories. The group members were all adults with everyday problems. There were times when we were almost entirely focused on discussing current issues rather than the play, but these conversations often turned into good, bonding moments for the group. I especially appreciated the fact that, although there was a play, we were free to innovate and change it according to our ideas. The director had his vision but was flexible enough to be open to new ideas, which, if successful, were incorporated into the performance, even if it meant rewriting parts of the play.

Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, this duet drama didn't get many performances, though it was preserved in a unique form as a slide-film presentation.

Becoming Part of the Group

The idea for the next performance came up during a casual conversation when the director came up with an idea that we quickly developed. We needed more performers for the play, so we began recruiting. Luckily, we found three women who were bold enough to join us. The group now consisted of a market vendor, a producer, an accountant, a production engineer, a waiter, a heating technician, and a journalist.

Everyone viewed the weekly rehearsals as a break from the routine of daily life. The women balanced out the mostly male group very well. Age differences were not an issue, as most of the group members were middle-aged, and only two of us were in our thirties or around that age.

With a larger group, there were more challenges to face. As before, the everyday concerns of members crept in, but we always tried to help each other out, sometimes with kind words, a pat on the back, or even a beer. Differences between people also emerged, which often resulted in debates. However, these were never deeply serious arguments. The group was always

characterized by a spirit of camaraderie. Since everyone was dedicating their free time to the rehearsals, there was always mutual respect for that. The care for each other and honesty helped us overcome many hurdles. At times, these situations were not easy. The group members went through personal and professional crises. Yet, we still managed to bring a play to the stage, despite some people changing jobs, going through divorces, or even becoming parents.

By this time, I felt like an integral part of this community, not just because I was no longer the newest member, but because I felt heard and valued, both as a performer in the play and as a person within the group.

In the summer, we typically took a break, and in the fall, we began working on a new performance. We managed to perform the previous play in surrounding towns. Sadly, due to changes in work and personal lives, two women left the group for the next season, but we managed to recruit two young high school girls to fill their places. They brought freshness and youthful energy. It was interesting to see how I had positioned myself as a kind of generational bridge within the group, as some members had children older than the group's new members.

This mixed-age community created very interesting dynamics. The older members tended to be more paternalistic or motherly toward the younger ones, offering advice both on theater and life in general. Meanwhile, the younger members were more reserved and didn't feel comfortable sharing their problems with the group. They usually confided in one of us privately after a rehearsal. There were also times when we handled conflicts by discussing them openly in the group or supporting the younger members in difficult situations, ensuring they didn't feel their voices were less valuable just because they were younger. Over time, the younger members overcame this hesitation and began to voice their concerns openly.

Our collective effort paid off when we participated in an amateur theater festival and received great reviews. This gave the small community a tremendous boost for future work.

In the next season, one of the older women left the group, and another young high school graduate joined. The new girls knew each other, and the more experienced members motivated and supported the younger ones. A very positive dynamic emerged in the rehearsals for the new play, an updated version of an older one. Thanks to great ideas and fresh energy, this new version was much better than the original. The young members brought in a lot of creative energy, which had a very positive effect on all of us.

I would like to say that this was characteristic of the entire season, but unfortunately, I cannot. The human side shows up here as well. The young people who were about to take their final exams were frustrated by the very nature of the exams, but they also had their private issues. These often caused friction. Absences, lack of motivation, emotional and/or physical exhaustion,

stress. Furthermore, seeing the previous successes, the director also tried to organize as many performances as possible. Unfortunately, there were times when we no longer enjoyed rehearsals, as it started to feel overwhelming, and we expressed this. It wasn't a fortunate year for us because, at the beginning of the rehearsal process, one actor left the group, our previous rehearsal space ceased to exist, and we had to find a completely new one. Still, somehow, we managed to weather these obstacles. Many times, we lifted each other's spirits, cheered each other up, or were there for one another when someone needed it. This sense of togetherness was what kept the group intact. This, along with our return to the amateur theater festival, where we received positive feedback, helped us perform seven shows in the region in just over a month, in several towns.

The Past and Present

After the successful closure of the season, we had to part ways with three of our young members. We had known this would happen and had been expecting it, but it was only during the last performances that it truly hit us. The final performance of the season was therefore both a very good and a sad one. After every premiere and the final performance of the season, we usually celebrate. It's a sort of ritual we've created for ourselves. While we were greatly relieved during our end-of-season celebration, it was also surrounded by the sense of loss. We knew that in that form, this community would be together for the last time, there and then.

The summer brought uncertainty. Although we didn't focus much on theater, we rested. We occasionally ran into other group members around town, but we didn't really talk about the future of the community. Some suggested taking a year off, as there were few of us left, although it wouldn't have been the first time we worked with such a small group.

With the arrival of autumn, we held a gathering where the director brought up a topic that immediately piqued everyone's interest. He also acknowledged the problems of the previous season and offered solutions, which we collectively agreed upon. Additionally, he introduced our new member, who found our little community appealing and wanted to join.

The woman in her late twenties was very honest with us from the beginning. She shared details about herself and why she wanted to be part of our group. Based on what she said, it quickly became clear that she would fit well into the team. During the first reading rehearsals, she seemed uncertain, which was understandable and something we tried to ease. In any case, her enthusiasm and motivation had a positive impact on us, especially as an encouragement. Integrating new members is always an exciting and risky endeavor. However, it usually becomes clear after the first few rehearsals if our expectations have not been met. In such cases, we let the person go without anger. What is always interesting, though, is what the new members bring into the community—what energies and dynamics they introduce.

Summary

Our community is a flexible, open group that is united by friendship, comradeship, uniqueness, and the love of theater. Although the director is the heart and soul of the group and its driving force, they exercise their leadership democratically. The plays we write ourselves are also shaped by the actors, sometimes even leading to changes in the storyline. Perhaps this could be called community theater, if such a thing exists. Everyone contributes to the creative work equally. As a result, we all feel a sense of ownership over the play we are working on because our own creative energy is embedded in it.

The diversity of our community is also very important, as we all come from different backgrounds, professions, and fields. We are proud of this diversity because it always works to our advantage. Our rules are unwritten, though it should be noted that we do have explicit rules for the rehearsal process. The clarifying conversation helped us a lot to resolve past tensions. We had to face our own limits, as everyone in the community has their personal life, family, and workplace. We do this theater work in our free time, to entertain ourselves and others. It's important to remind ourselves of this from time to time! This time, we set clear boundaries and precisely defined what we would take on in this season and how we would go about it.

As for my role in the community, I feel that I am primarily the connector. I believe I'm the one who says what needs to be said or recognizes when it's time to be quiet. In addition, I am now more involved in the creative work, more easily stepping into the flow of things.

One of my plans for the future is to strengthen the human side within our group. I find it important, and it is also quite unique to our community, that alongside our main activity, we are able to pay attention to each other as individuals. I strive to reinforce and develop this quality of our community moving forward. Additionally, I aim to work on "softening" two veteran members, as they are quite strong personalities, but they also have the potential to become more flexible and open to accepting the dynamics of our community more easily.

27. Supportive Self-Help Groups

The idea itself, that we solve each other's issues in a small community, vent our feelings, is not particularly original—such frameworks already exist, such as labor unions. However, unfortunately, the impersonal nature of unions takes the focus away from the individual. In this small community, one of the binding forces is precisely that we get to be heard by each other, we communicate what's on our minds—not only what bothers us but also what's good. In this space, however, there also has to be a listening force—someone who listens non-judgmentally and accepts us as we are. They don't offer solutions or try to fix things. They are just there.

The need for such a space is the main driving force that brought us together—it crystallized over several months, even years, of work and conversations. We had a shared need for an accepting, sustaining space.

As a community, we have identified the following as the most important goals:

- Preventing burnout
- Playful togetherness
- Venting—discussing home or other personal matters

Relationship between the members

It is a colleague/friend relationship.

The workplace is an important space in all of our lives—most of our time is spent in this environment. In my own life, I've spent the last 12 years in such environments, in subordinate roles. Personally, I've experienced that in these settings, the group and group work take precedence, and the individual, their responsibilities, and problems tend to be pushed to the background.

Such dynamics are even the subject of entire industries, with organizational developers and HR professionals working on them.

Despite these organizational solutions, I find that, for me, it's much more effective if, together with my colleagues, we solve or relieve what the system (slowly) might be able to address through communication without external pressure. For example, personnel officers often take months to organize meetings, and I have forgotten about my issue by the time they reach out to me. Several companies also employ psychologists or offer confidential support sessions personally, I don't use this, as I prefer individual therapy but my colleagues respond with terms

like "shame" and "impersonality" when asked about it. Shame because a psychologist is listening to them (there's still this prevailing mentality, which is an interesting issue), and they don't feel the personal presence, especially with the online version available only in Slovak.

For us, it has become natural to spend our time together—at least 6-7 hours daily—trying to find solutions or relief for our problems, whether personal or work-related. The main spaces for this are the break room, the smoking area, and sometimes the reception area. Occasionally, we even arrange personal meetings during work hours.

We are still in the formation phase, and we haven't had an official founding meeting yet. In fact, this is also a process that we should "come out" about—it's time to show that such a workplace community exists.

There are about 40 people involved, but the core group has formed with 4 people.

There is definitely a need for someone to step into a leadership role, which I have hesitated to do. However, since our retreat last spring, there has been a change in this regard. It has been significantly helped by my enrollment in the Semmelweis University's Mental Health Institute's program for Corporate Help Professionals.

Since we are still in the forming stages, we can't really talk about history. That being said, it's worth noting that we're not talking about a labor union here. Work does not solely bind us together. The members are connected in multiple ways, primarily outside of work—coffee machine talks, joint lunches, breaks, and casual conversations before and after meetings.

The early days can be considered the start of our journey. However, a turning point came when the labor union representatives were elected, and a labor union was established. A union that several members later became disillusioned with.

It's important to highlight the significance of lunch and coffee break conversations. For me, it's crucial that we don't only focus on formal conversations, but dive into deeper topics right away—not just the typical "how are you?" or, in the case of familiar relationships, "how is your daughter/mother/father?" questions. I know that this often leads to deeper conversations and openness. Of course, nothing is mandatory—but I've noticed that sometimes a little pressure can be helpful.

Successes

I managed to get those working in the open office to think together about preparing for the winter heating season. Environmental awareness is fundamental to all members, and everyone considers

it important to reduce environmental impact. The period around the end of October was a key moment for this discussion.

The shared space, where 20 people spend at least 8 hours of their day, is affected by heating it's possible to use gas-powered radiators or electric heating, and there are large windows that allow for fresh air through ventilation. Combining these energy sources efficiently is in everyone's best interest.

The shared area is divided into three sections, each with a radiator and electric ceiling heating.

As it became apparent in our discussions, many needed fresh air, but without drafts. Some of them sit far from the radiators, so for them, electric heating seems the most practical solution. Others are hindered by dust allergies or are more susceptible to colds.

After several consultations with the entire team and an external expert (a colleague who doesn't work there but is part of our group and is the technical manager of the warehouse), we established rules for heating the shared space for the winter season. Everyone accepted them and is trying to adhere to them. We still don't have written feedback, which will be the next step I'm aiming for.

Challenges

Formation Right now, we haven't even completed the formation process smoothly. Several members believe that we shouldn't take this too seriously and are content with just the current state, which is primarily lunch or coffee break discussions and venting. Extending this to others seems uncomfortable to them, although they haven't explicitly stated this yet. There is a lack of commitment and ownership of leadership roles.

Communication We don't have a dedicated communication network or system for this cause. In other words, in this day and age, we only use face-to-face meetings. We don't communicate online, and we don't have a Facebook group or any other network.

Labor union activities and employer nihilism—We all understand that the employer only allowed the labor union to form due to the legal environment. The leadership of the union absolutely doesn't represent the workers (their nearly one-year activity is almost invisible). We are trying to support the union, not as an opposing force but by leveraging its strength to reach more members and connections. This could not only help several of our personal ambitions (mental health support, burnout prevention, community building) but also create opportunities for the organization to provide services.

Solution

Building out activity areas more discussions are happening about responsibility and plans. Everyone is trying to bring their own desires into the process, but we haven't yet succeeded in taking responsibility for those desires. Personally, I believe that my start on the helping profession path and my facilitation practice will significantly contribute to changing this situation.

The training process helped me personally by giving me insight into leadership roles and, above all, the importance of taking responsibility. Without these, we cannot move forward.

Choosing communication channels. Holding space and establishing core values—so that we can take them on personally. Unfortunately, this won't happen without responsibility.

The importance of self-esteem and self-awareness while we want to help and organize, it's equally important to focus on our own development.

Establishing a framework not only at the organizational level but also at the level of organizing.

Development goals

- Semmelweis University training, labyrinth walks, and organizational development
- Participation in educational events.
- Conducting helping conversations and surveys to assess the mental health of employees.
- Providing meditative and relaxing events and opportunities.
- Supporting and initiating self-awareness journeys.

28. Enyves

The idea was born out of scouting. We didn't have a specific plan to become a community; we just had a need to meet up, talk, and share the daily tensions that surrounded us, or on the other hand, the good things that happened to us.

Relationship system in the community

The members share a friendly relationship, and our common goal is to have a connection where we can be ourselves without judgment, where we help and support each other. We formed in 2016, most of us are scouts, but we also have some "civilian" members, whom we met in other ways and invited into our community. Currently, our group consists of 8 members, but when we started, there were 7 of us, and a few members have changed over time. The original formation was mainly shaped by scouting, as it consisted mostly of scout mothers and adult scout women. As time passed, this naturally evolved and changed. We never advertised ourselves or recruited members; we simply invited people into our circle when we felt they might benefit from being a part of our community. If they liked it, they were happy to join. The community is made up of diverse personalities, and even our professions vary, although we have the most teachers among us.

I remember the first Christmas cabbage soup cooking competition in the city back in 2015, where the scouts also participated. We spent the whole day outside, making cabbage soup, which we later distributed among the residents in the late afternoon. Many communities, companies, and associations joined the competition, and it was during this event that I met one of our community members, who had just returned from the Czech Republic. She was looking for a connection, both new and old, and one of our scout mothers introduced us. They were schoolmates and were trying to reconnect, so we organized our first meeting to get to know each other. At first, there were just three or four of us, but word spread quickly, and by our first official gathering, we were already six. We always tried to come up with a theme for each meeting, and the first one was about beautification.

Our new member, who had just returned from the Czech Republic, brought us a great face scrub recipe, which we all tried together – a mixture of honey and coffee, which she carefully applied to all our faces. We also captured this first experience in a photo, and from that initial shared experience, the name "Enyves" was born, because we all got sticky. After that, we always prepared something for each gathering, often baking or cooking something we shared together, but we also went on hikes and did pottery. We always met at different members' homes, but there was never a set date for the meetings; it was just when we felt one of us needed to connect.

That's how we organized bachelorette parties, birthdays, and we've been there for each other through both successes and failures. Over the years, two of our members got married and had children, so our gatherings became less frequent, and the world revolved around babies. Sometimes we brought our kids along, but it was different, as it's hard to focus on each other when kids interrupt. As our children got older, we introduced a regular monthly meeting. We also tried to set a theme in advance so that we wouldn't just gather to gossip, but this is still a work in progress.

Success

We've never set a specific goal that we needed to achieve together. However, what I can highlight is the safe, supportive friend group this community has given me. That is a huge gift for me.

Challenges

Since our community is a group of friends, there are naturally some frictions between members. Not everyone has to agree on everything, and it's actually good when we voice our opinions, because we agreed from the beginning that in this connection, everyone should be themselves, without wearing masks. However, it's difficult to resolve tensions when two members of the group are in conflict. This happened between me and one of our members. The problem didn't come from the community itself but from our personal relationship. We tried to resolve it with a conversation, but I feel it didn't bring real success. Personally, I don't feel the contradiction, but I sense that the other person hasn't made peace with me, and I don't really know how to handle it to prevent the relationship from deteriorating.

Resolve

Our problem is still unresolved; it's an ongoing situation. I know what could bring relief, but my fear is stronger — I'm afraid I will hurt the other person. Accepting the truth is also an issue of self-awareness, and if I can't speak honestly because it would hurt the other person, I'd rather remain silent, risking that I'll be the one to fade away from the community. We still meet, but the trust that gave me a sense of security outside my family has now vanished. I don't feel as strongly connected to the community as I once did. I try to resolve this internally, to put it in perspective, understand it, and give it new meaning every time we meet.

Training process

I can say that I've run a marathon in terms of self-awareness, considering where I started and where I am now. The training has helped me move much faster toward self-discovery, and it has completely transformed my communication. I'm now quicker to gain insight into certain problems and find solutions. My main goal was to learn how to communicate correctly, and I can

see that I'm on the right track. I've made progress in every area: my personal life, my relationship with my husband is much deeper, even though we've been together for 17 years; my communication with my children is clearer, which is beneficial for them because they imitate me, and they now understand and express their emotions more easily. I've also grown in my emerging career. I've become bolder, I recognize my weaknesses, which no longer scare me, and I see them as challenges that I address with love. This self-awareness process is also helping the community to grow.

Goals

I would love for the members of the community to realize how important self-awareness is, and for us to participate in a self-awareness group focused on the community, so that everyone has the opportunity to grow.

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29. Case of the Community

After my son was born, I did everything I could to ensure that I was raising him in a safe emotional attachment. However, when I thought about the time when I would have to soon "let go" of Merlin, fear struck me because I didn't want to hand him over to the current system. I wasn't satisfied with it.

Inspired by my beautiful birth experience, I decided to enroll in the doula training that we organized in Vojvodina. On the first day of the training, the speaker was delayed because of the border, and we started chatting with the participants. I told them that I had heard about Waldorf education, which takes into account the body, soul, and spirit of the child in the educational process, and that I would love to create a Waldorf kindergarten and school. Two other participants, both educators, were excited by the idea because they had burned out from the state system, and they liked that Waldorf sees things differently. After the training, we connected and sought help in a Waldorf group on social media, where we found Szabolcs Emich, an anthroposophist, biographer, and organizational developer. He had mentored the creation of many Waldorf schools and was originally from Vojvodina but was living in Budapest at the time. We approached him with our dreams of finding parents and a place to open a school. Szabolcs smiled and began explaining how this process usually unfolds. He said that the first step is not to search for a location, but rather to establish a strong community that could also maintain the school. This would take time, not just a few months. We agreed to organize an open day where we would invite Waldorf teachers to introduce the pedagogy to the people living here.

Among the members, there are about 10-15 people with whom a deep trust has developed. Some of us connect not only through Waldorf, but also as doulas who meet regularly, so the connection with them is stronger. The core group of three people who started the Waldorf community have built very strong, trust-based friendships. There are others with whom the relationship is not as deep, but I think overall we have gotten to know each other well because we do many things together as a community. A significant boost came when we started using the community currency, which helped us understand each other's skills better, and more personal connections formed beyond the community meetings.

There are 30 families and about 10 adults in the community. The community operates 3 institutions, so now, in the larger community, 3 smaller communities have developed, and we meet less frequently all together, which we want to change. We have been together for 3 years.

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Thus, the first open day was a great success, with 30 families attending the full-day event. It wasn't just about lectures; they also demonstrated the practical differences of Waldorf education, and parents could relive their childhood, which we all really enjoyed. After this event, the number of active families grew, and we had an email list of families with similar interests. We didn't stop there; we organized more open days. Meanwhile, Szabolcs advised us to start reading Rudolf Steiner's books weekly, calling it a "spiritual workshop," because if we were not spiritually ready for the school, it would not materialize in physical space. It had to be conceived spiritually first. This became an important part of our core group, and we dedicated Wednesday evenings to this after putting our children to bed. We not only learned more about Steiner but also about each other, sharing the emotions and thoughts these readings brought up. These evenings helped solidify our community.

As the open days required more organization, smaller teams started forming within the community, with Szabolcs advising on how to run a community effectively. Each person took responsibility for a task, and we trusted their judgment. This approach was new to everyone, and it was a revelation to us that every part had a leader, and this mutual trust allowed us to move forward. After each open day, we conducted joint evaluations, which provided feedback on what worked and what could be done differently. Another key point was that, alongside the spiritual workshop, we held weekly online meetings to discuss current issues related to the Waldorf organization circle. This group occasionally changed, as sometimes a member couldn't commit for a while, but after some time, they would rejoin. The core group consisted of three people who had enthusiastically begun the doula training (Kinga, Szandi, and me). Kinga and Szandi enrolled in a 3-year Waldorf teacher correspondence course in Budapest.

We created 3 institutions in 3 years, where 28 children are currently enrolled. We have built such a strong community that, beyond the Waldorf institutions, we introduced initiatives like "Suska" (local currency) and revived the "kaláka" (communal work) in Vojvodina, where we help each other. This has also attracted people who believe in the power of community, not just those interested in Waldorf. I am also proud that we have significantly raised awareness about Waldorf education, and people often praise us for our spirit of cooperation. Furthermore, we've managed to do all of this without seeking help from any political party, remaining fully independent. We have created a parent community that has developed deep friendships, and we can rely on each other in all things.

Our first conflict happened during a child-free meeting, when one of the parents felt like they couldn't get involved with the organizing team. They also shared that they were hurt by a

comment made by another mother about a particular parent, whom we'll call Zoltán, who was often critical. Zoli couldn't communicate his feelings at the time and held them in for months, feeling bad about it. As three of us had already studied group dynamics and facilitation, we knew that conflict in a community is not a bad sign, but an opportunity for growth. We discussed the issue and the mother apologized. However, Zoli eventually left the community, not necessarily because of this issue, but because Waldorf education was no longer as important to him, and he no longer sought our company.

Another ongoing challenge is deciding on the final location for the school, as we are members from different towns (Subotica, Kanjiža, and Zenta), which are 30-40 minutes apart. This has been a difficult issue for us to resolve, but we've had several discussions about it, and it remains a major task for the future.

We had to accept that if someone no longer wanted to be part of the community, we could let them go. It was crucial that we had learned about group dynamics and understood that conflict, when handled properly, can be beneficial for growth.

Training process

It has helped tremendously. Learning how to be a facilitator and understanding how natural leadership can emerge has taken a huge burden off my shoulders, allowing me to understand what is happening with us and giving me confidence. Working on myself has also made a big difference because I bring my personal growth into the community. I want to continue working on myself, not just for my own sake but for the benefit of the community. Understanding the alpha, beta, and gamma roles has also helped me understand many situations in the group dynamics, and now I can smile when I see someone in a particular role because I know there's a place for everyone. As a facilitator, the experience I gained during the training has given me confidence, and the feedback I received has helped me improve.

Goals

Determining the school's location remains a significant challenge since we don't live close to each other. There are several ideas to resolve this, from moving closer to using a minibus solution. We need to focus on this topic because there may be an opportunity to apply for a location grant next year, but until we are spiritually ready for this decision, I don't believe the location will come together.

30. How Can One Recognize a True Community?

It would be difficult to highlight a single community in this vast world that I feel so deeply connected to that this attachment almost overshadows all others. In the 21st century, amid the reality and virtual realities that fill the landscape, finding the answer to what today's human needs is a challenging task. This essay aims to offer an overview for both me and the readers on how to recognize a true community. Although I believe the very concept of a true community is overly idealistic to be fully realized, the experiences, research, and insights we gather over time continuously bring us closer to the elusive goal of a genuine community.

Throughout humanity's long history, people have always relied on their communities. Individuals needed to adopt a certain behavioral culture, adapting to the rules of the community. If someone failed to follow these rules, they were ostracized. In response to these constraints and the shame they caused, people sought refuge in individualism, but it seems that this didn't provide enough meaning for life. The biggest question is: Can we live in a community and still maintain our connection to ourselves, while being part of a functioning and true community?

In my own words, a true community is a living, breathing organism defined by mutual respect, trust, and understanding. Members do not merely live alongside each other but live for each other. They are bound together by shared goals, values, and experiences. This bond is evident not only in good times but also during tough periods when members rely on and support each other.

In true communities, people are free to be themselves. There's no need to play a role or conform to a predetermined image. Members accept each other's flaws and weaknesses and work together for the common good. This kind of acceptance and support provides security and stability, enabling individuals to blossom and bring out the best in themselves.

True communities don't only have a positive impact on the lives of individuals; they also benefit society as a whole. They strengthen social cohesion, promote a culture of tolerance and inclusion, and ensure the fundamental values necessary to maintain the collective well-being.

In the virtual world, it's easy to forget the importance of true communities. But we must not forget that real connections, face-to-face interactions, and shared experiences cannot be replaced by anything. We must seek out true communities, build them, and support them, as these relationships provide real meaning and significance to our lives.

I believe that as humanity distanced itself from nature, it also distanced itself from its natural way of life, though perhaps this, too, is just an illusion. We cannot be entirely sure that the world we perceive through our senses is real and that everyone perceives it the same way.

On one hand, we've never been more interconnected with the world; technology allows us to connect with anyone, anytime. On the other hand, we've never been more lonely. Personal relationships are often superficial, and we seek refuge in the virtual world to escape the struggles of the real world.

The concept of community, once seen as a source of safety, support, and shared identity, has become increasingly blurred. The rise of individualism, globalization, and the rapid pace of change all contribute to people becoming more reliant on themselves. Traditional communities, such as religious congregations, rural communities, or workplace communities, are losing their appeal, and people are increasingly turning to virtual communities for solace.

The rise of "woke" ideologies and increasing attention to social justice undoubtedly adds color to people's attitudes but also breeds polarization. People are increasingly grouping based on opinions and identities, making it harder to foster dialogue across different perspectives and find common solutions.

Shared goals and values are essential for a community to function. Trust, respect, and empathy are indispensable elements of mutual acceptance. The ability to accept flaws and forgive is key to the development of a community.

31. My Fundamental Need for Community

I am a member of several communities simultaneously. As I was reflecting on why community is so important to me, I suddenly found myself sitting at my sibling's graduation ceremony in my former school, where I am still an occasional member of the alumni community. The principal was giving a speech to congratulate the graduates, and though I don't remember anything from the speech itself, I vividly recall the tears flowing down my face and the overwhelming sense that this is a fundamental need for me. I realized that no matter what cause I stand behind or try to align myself with, it doesn't work for me; I can't function without a supportive, unifying community behind it. That's when I understood that this means everything to me.

What I am about to describe is a community I am a part of. The leader of this community is Palya Bea, a singer, and the members are united by the mission of becoming more authentic through the work they invest in their voices. This is a year-long, deep self-discovery journey called ÉSZA, which stands for "Énekeld magad szabaddá" ("Sing Yourself Free"). Together with my mentor, Palya Bea, and my companions, we are embarking on a wonderful journey—through this program, I have experienced firsthand the character-shaping, liberating, and community-building power of music. In the program, we work with music, which is considered one of the queens of self-awareness. It's incredible, almost unbelievable, how this technique can bring us closer to our true selves on a visceral level. Of course, this requires the sustaining power of the community, a master who can hold space in a way like no other, but without music and singing, none of this could work.

The program has an online component, which can be divided into two parts. There are pre-recorded wisdom videos, and every Monday at the same time, there is a video call session. This session includes algorithmic elements that strengthen the community, provide a sense of security, and establish a routine or feeling of familiarity. Additionally, each of the four main sections of the program has an offline session, which is a longer workshop where we can meet in person and resonate together. The first year of the program had around 40 participants, and I was part of that cohort. It's amazing that Bea also ensures there is a way to remain "around the fire" even after the course ends—there are master training sessions once a month, which are more like joyful celebrations, and there are many other opportunities for community gatherings. All of these opportunities strengthen our bond with the community, alongside the live online communication.

This program has helped me immensely. It has given me the space to quiet my mind and reflect on my own path, on how I engage with my communities, and how to reframe that relationship. It provided me the chance to experience, on a physical level, what it feels like to be safe, to be trusted, and to be relied upon. It helped me become grateful for what I have, for what has been

given to me, and I have gained many new perspectives on how to think about leading my community.