



**FULBRIGHT**  
Alumni e.V.

GERMAN FULBRIGHT ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

# Frankly

The Fulbright Alumni e.V. Magazine

Introductions	Letter from the Editor	3
	Greetings from the President	4
	Greetings from Fulbright Germany	5
	Meet the Board	6
	Meet the Extended Board	7
Transatlantic Alumni Conference 2023	Reimagining Transatlantic Bridges for a Brighter Future	12
	The Powerful Lesson of Personal Presence from the Transatlantic Alumni Conference 2023	14
	Why don't we move from knowledge to action?	15
	Thoughts on Diversity	17
	Tech Trends	18
Building a Brighter Future	How Can We Create a Better Future?	20
	The German-American Revolution	22
	Embracing Diversity – Fulbrighters with Disabilities' Unwavering Commitment	24
	The Little Things	26
	Beyond Small Talk – The Secret Technique to Deeper Conversations	29
	Shaping the Organizational Culture of the Future with Mindfulness and Emotional Intelligence	30
	Data for a Brighter Future	32
	From Spectator to Architect: Co-Creating a Positive Future	34
	Why true Impact needs Hype Culture	36
Association Information	Utopia on Earth – A Vision of Planetary Possibilities	37
		40
Events	Amerigo Award	42
	Spring Ball	43
	ENAM Conference, Dublin	44
	Community Weekend	46
	Sailing Trip	47
	Avengers Assemble, London	48
	World Cleanup Day	49
	Welcome Meeting	50
	46 <sup>th</sup> Annual conference, Denver	52
	New Online Series: Brown Bag Lunch Started in August	54
Members		53
Regional Chapters	Frankfurt	55
	Munich	56
	Dresden	57
	Berlin	58
Programs of the Association	Jürgen Mulert Award on Mutual Understanding	60
	When silence is all we have left	63

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

It has been a busy year, and it is my pleasure to share with you some of our members’ latest accomplishments and activities, as well as their ideas and recommendations for building a brighter future for all of us. Thank you to all contributors, to Andreas Schoberth for his careful eye during the proofreading process, Sarah Martin and Rózsa Simon for their ever-present advice, Astrid Weingarten as always for adapting our vision for this magazine and the FAeV Board for their support!

This year’s theme was chosen in connection with the Transatlantic Alumni Conference co-hosted by the FAeV under the banner “Reimagining Transatlantic Bridges for a Brighter Future” in Erfurt this past June. The conference stimulated enriching debates on the role of the transatlantic world in shaping our future – learn more about the conference by reading Andi Dewald’s recap (p. 12), how it impacted Helena Harris (p. 14) and how participant Julia Hufnagl and panelist Alexandria Swanson reflect on the Sustainability (p. 15), Diversity (p. 17) and Tech panels (p. 18).

Following the success of “TAC,” we decided to keep the conversation going by inviting our alumni and friends to think about the topic of “Building a Brighter Future.” We are thrilled to have received so many inspirational, constructive and multifaceted takes on this theme that show: there is reason for optimism!

Ten authors set out to tackle a variety of issues and to identify key aspects of building said brighter future individually as well as collectively: Annabella Kadavanich encourages us to embrace simplicity and happiness as the starting point (p. 20). Johannes Ehrmann takes a historical approach by looking at the idea of freedom as a vision for the future in 1776 (p. 22). Geghie Davis-Tillie shares with us her insights into the importance of diversity and the inclusion of people with disabilities (p. 24). Janani Ravi lets us in on how we can do little things to play our part in fighting climate change and reducing waste (p. 26). Connor Widmaier advocates communication and understanding each other as the basis of a shared future – and teaches us how (p. 29). Johanna Rauls and Dr. Svea von Hehn also focus on a very essential way of how a brighter future starts with us: by developing mindfulness and emotional intelligence – not only on the individual but the organizational



level as well (p. 30). In order to create a better tomorrow, we seek to create impact, which is where Jan Moellmann comes in to identify the crucial role of data to measure this impact (p. 32). Joerg Geier gives us insights into how positive psychology, changing our perspective and visualizing positive aspects can pave the way into the future (p. 34). Isabelle Rogat picks up this thread of connecting creativity and impact by highlighting hype culture (p. 36). And Rózsa Simon closes this round of reflections by doubling down on the idea of optimistically and creatively envisioning a brighter future and bringing it into being by harnessing the potential of design (p. 37).

Fulbrighters, of course, do not limit themselves to pondering the future; we are actively out there trying to shape it. Find out more about the various activities our members have participated in and initiated throughout Europe and the U.S.: follow the different FAeV events and international functions we were invited to, see what the regional groups have been up to and join us in honoring this year’s Mulert Award winner, Mersedeh Ghazaei, for her significant and impactful exhibition “Wir Sind Hanau.”

A 2023 FRANKly cannot be published without addressing one of the most pressing issues today. We are jointly horrified by the heinous Hamas attacks of October 7<sup>th</sup> and the ensuing war in Gaza that have led to the loss of countless civilian lives. We mourn the innocent Israeli and Palestinian lives and deeply regret not being able to provide the opportunity to address the conflict and the need for peace in this issue more directly. By the time of October 7<sup>th</sup>, this edition was in its final stages. We, however, do not want to omit a matter of this magnitude, affecting so many people directly and one that refuses to leave our minds. We would thus like to give our previous FRANKly author Zachary Gallant the opportunity to share his thoughts with us in the final words of this issue (p. 63).

There can be no brighter future without peace.

Jana Frey





# Greetings from the President

September, 2023

Dear Fulbrighters and Friends,

I am very pleased to introduce you to the 2023 issue of the FRANKly magazine. Every year, our alumni magazine showcases inspiring stories, memories, and thoughts from our diverse alumni community. I want to thank all contributors and authors for their wonderful articles and give a special shoutout to Jana Frey. Jana, your work has been invaluable, and we are so thankful for it!

In this edition of the FRANKly, we invited all contributors to explore the future. As we experience numerous challenges right now, not only as a society, but as humanity, the future often seems dark and daunting. However, collectively we Fulbrighters have so many diverse talents, skills, ideas, and visions that we have the potential to build a brighter future for everyone. Our vision for coming generations of Fulbrighters is to keep the Fulbright experience going beyond our time in the U.S. so that this community can continue to build and strengthen bridges.

We kicked off this year with our General Assembly and Spring Ball in Hamburg in March, which was flawlessly organized by our VP Events, Caroline Gunderson, and Welcome Meeting board member, Christa Orlowski, for whose help we are very grateful. We honored the work of Mersedeh Ghazaei and her organization, Migrantifa Stuttgart, with the 2023 Mulert Award. Through her important work Mersedeh is fighting discrimination and hate, making sure the future is brighter for everyone. For this future, we also need innovative ideas and entrepreneurial thinking. Florian Fesch reignited our entrepreneurship group and gathered forward thinkers to connect and share ideas. We also want to thank Daniel Gossen and Marius Brinkmann for matching over 100 mentees and mentors in the successful continuation of our mentoring program and building even more bridges within our alumni community.

Our collaboration with other alumni associations was a big success this year, as it brought the second ever Transatlantic Alumni Conference (TAC) to Germany. Together with

other alumni from the German American Alumni (GAA) network, a big team of our members helped to make this conference a resounding success. Over 110 participants from 6 different alumni associations came to Erfurt in June to talk about “Reimagining Transatlantic Bridges for a Brighter Future”. The work on the European level has also been successful with representatives from our association attending two ENAM (European Network of American Alumni Associations) conferences and a community engagement workshop in London.

We are also looking into a brighter future in terms of our collaboration with our most important stakeholder, Fulbright Germany. We want to congratulate Hakan Tosuner as the new Executive Director and look forward to a successful collaboration in the future! Our podcast “Fulbright PULSE”, which is run by Mo Kari, is just one of the many great successes that originated from this relationship. We are also thankful for the collaboration and support from the U.S. Embassy in Berlin. Antonia Chibuzor has been incredible as the alumni relations coordinator and played a key role in making TAC possible. Furthermore, our new Fulbright Brown Bag format, which was initiated thanks to the effort of Lisa Schmitz, our chair for international relations, has also proven itself to be a great format for continued cooperation.

I am grateful for everything our alumni do, within the (extended) board, our regional chapters, as well as individuals in our ‘One Fulbright Community’. I encourage you all to help build a brighter future for us and for all generations to follow and to be inspired by the contributions shared in this year’s FRANKly.

Yours truly,  
Andi Dewald



# Global Connections: Navigating Diversity and Inclusion in Fulbright Exchanges

Dear Fulbright Community,

I am honored and excited to address you as the newly appointed Executive Director of Fulbright Germany. It is a role I embrace with unwavering dedication to the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and access. These values are not mere ideals; they are the cornerstones upon which our society stands, and they have shaped my journey in profound ways.

From the earliest days of my childhood, I contemplated the foundations upon which our society is built. Born to parents who journeyed from the heart of Anatolia to central Hesse in Germany, I was raised in a family that straddled transnational networks. These connections sparked my curiosity, especially in understanding how minority communities maintain ties to their so-called homelands. As I grew, informal networks and communities became increasingly important. I was nurtured by multilingualism and perpetually wondered how life as a minority functioned. Growing up within such a community furnished me with a unique life experience, mutual understanding and a profound interest in the workings of social cohesion. This was not just theory; it was life in action.

As I continued my journey, I sought out individuals who embodied values that resonated with me. My personal hero was Kofi Annan, whose remarkable diplomacy and approachability left an indelible mark on me. His calmness in the face of conflict was a source of inspiration. The pursuit of peace, both in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, became a guiding principle. My next step was to delve into the realms of politics, law, and economics in university. Simultaneously, I continued to engage in volunteer work centered on educational justice and equal opportunity, particularly for disadvantaged children. I witnessed the transformational impact of educational exchange during my first stay as an au pair in Virginia. It was a profound realization of the formative power such experiences hold. After my time as an au pair, a semester abroad, and an internship in Milwaukee, WI, I began to ponder how I could integrate these experiences and insights into my career. It was then that Fulbright advertised a position for a Diversity Program

Coordinator, and I felt the stars had aligned. My profile seemed to fit perfectly, and I could sense the potential for creating new programs, particularly those aimed at enhancing educational equity and equal opportunities within the context of international exchange programs.

Yet, my vision extended further. I realized that it was essential to strengthen this support within Germany itself, leading me to serve as Managing Director of Avicenna Studienwerk. Over the last decade, I dedicated myself to building the first scholarship organization for Muslim students. With this background, I am now eager to broaden the horizons for minority representation within Fulbright Germany. But why do I share these personal insights with you? Because communities matter, because the role models of our childhood and youth matter, and because it takes a village to navigate the complex journey of life, all while striving to build a brighter and better future.

Today, I invite you to immerse yourselves in the pages of this publication, which serves as both a reflection and a roadmap for our collective journey as One Fulbright Community. Our pursuit of a more inclusive and pluralistic society begins with recognizing the transformative power of cultural exchange and the profound significance of diversity, equity, and inclusion. In a world that is increasingly interconnected and fast-paced, understanding and appreciating diverse cultures, fostering equity, and championing inclusivity have never been more critical. At Fulbright, I have had the privilege of weaving these threads together for the first time and creating a space for minorities to be heard and represented in transatlantic exchanges.

As we stand at the precipice of a new beginning, I look forward to embarking on this journey with you all. Together, we will continue to build bridges, navigate the seas of diversity and inclusion, grant access to those left out, and strive for a society in which all voices are heard, valued, and celebrated.

Warm regards,  
Hakan Tosuner



Caroline Gunderson



Thomas Weißschnur



Amanda Gläser-Bligh



Andreas Dewald



Michael Vetter

# Meet the Board

## Caroline Gunderson Vice President Events

Caroline is a Fulbright ETA alumna who completed her grant at the UniverSaale Gesamtschule in Jena, Thuringia during the 2021-22 school year. Having so enjoyed her year in Germany, she pursued a second year at the Gymnasium Dörpsweg in Hamburg. She is a graduate of Southern Methodist University, in Dallas, Texas, with majors in Accounting and German. Despite having gained most of her professional experience in accounting and financial roles, interning in the financial control sector of PepsiCo and the National Federal Tax Services branch of Deloitte and Touche, it was her German studies and involvement in SMU's liberal arts-oriented University Honors Program that piqued her interest in the Fulbright ETA program. Her experiences as a Fulbrighter have been among the most meaningful of her life and have inspired her deeper engagement with the international community. To this end, she is currently pursuing a Master's degree in International Affairs at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin. She is excited to be continuing in her role as VP Events. Through this engagement, she hopes to help deepen the ties among Fulbrighters and facilitate broader engagement within the Fulbright community as a whole.

## Thomas Weißschnur Vice President Members

Thomas received his diploma in the Performing Arts program at the Freiburg University of Music. He spent an exchange year in Helsinki at Sibelius Academy and continued his studies on a Fulbright scholarship at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, in 2007 before finishing his musical education at the Berlin University of the Arts. He has held several positions in Orchestras like The Macau Orchestra in China or the Düsseldorfer Symphoniker and continues to work as a freelance clarinetist. In addition to music, Thomas studied Business Administration at the University of Hagen and started working as a freelance management consultant with several boutique firms, following his time as a Visiting Associate at the Boston Consulting Group. He joined the extended board in 2021. As VP Members, he is looking forward to the transition of processes into the digital age, bringing back local in-person events and welcoming U.S. Grantees and Returnees into our local alumni communities.

## Amanda Gläser-Bligh Vice President Communications

Since her Fulbright year 2005-06 as a Fulbright Enterprise Scholar at the University of Bremen, Amanda has worked in operations and communications for E.ON and Zalando in Germany. She joined the FAeV board as VP Communications in 2022, but had been part of the extended board since April 2021, when she started as webmaster and social media editor. Amanda hopes to increase followers and engagement on our own social media channels and welcomes you to follow along on Instagram, LinkedIn, X and Facebook. In her spare time, she puts on her Pikachu hat and plays Pokémon Go.

## Andreas Dewald President

Prior to going to the U.S. on a Fulbright scholarship in 2017-18, Andreas graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Engineering Management from Hochschule Darmstadt. He spent his Fulbright at Purdue University in Indiana where he pursued a Master's degree in Technology, Leadership, and Innovation. His passion for Fulbright led him to joining the board as VP Members upon his return to Germany in 2019. He currently works as an organizational consultant at LEAD Mindsets & Capabilities where he helps organizations to become more resilient. Andreas, who also goes by "Andi", has been president for the past 3 years now and wants to further strengthen the cooperation with the Fulbright Commission and other Alumni Associations, as well as to start new initiatives to activate our wonderful Fulbright alumni community. He loves sports, especially bouldering and inline hockey, and spending time at his Kleingarten.

## Michael Vetter Vice President Finance

Michael spent his Fulbright year 2007-08 at the University of Miami School of Law after finishing his law studies in Germany and graduated with a Master of Laws degree in 2008. He is currently working as an antitrust, state aid and compliance lawyer at one of the largest European energy providers. He joined the board last year as VP Finances after being VP Events 2021-22 and having been responsible for the regional chapter Düsseldorf Rhein-Ruhr a few years ago. Although it has been more than 10 years since his Fulbright experience, he is still passionate about international understanding and the vision of the German Fulbright Alumni Association – "we keep the Fulbright experience going." Michael loves to bring people together – virtually and in person – to meet and discuss.

# The Extended Board



Jana Frey, Lisa Schmitz

## Jana Frey FRANKly Editor

Jana has a Bachelor's degree in History and English from Saarland University and a Master's degree in Global History from Heidelberg University. She attended the University of Oregon on a Fulbright travel scholarship in 2014-15. Jana is happy to apply her history background professionally as project manager for PhD scholarships for candidates from Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, projects focused on questions of the restitution of objects and human remains from colonial contexts as well as accompanying social measures at the Gerda Henkel Foundation in Düsseldorf, Germany. In her non-FRANKly free time, Jana enjoys being out and about, traveling, going to the theatre or doing judo or other sports, just as much as getting lost in a good book or TV show at her home in Bremerhaven. She joined the extended board as the FRANKly editor in 2020 to create magazine issues full of relevant and creative content that inspire and connect us not just as Fulbrighters but as people.

## Lisa Schmitz International Coordinator

Lisa is a foreign policy professional with a focus on international security and conflict resolution. She lives in Berlin and is currently working for a Member of Parliament. Lisa holds a Bachelor's degree in History and English & American Studies as well as a Bachelor's degree in Journalism and Public Relations. She moved to Boston on a Fulbright scholarship in 2014 to obtain a Master's degree in Global Studies and International Relations with a concentration in Conflict Resolution from Northeastern University. In addition, Lisa holds a PhD in Political Science. She was already a member of the FAeV's Extended Board from 2016-21 and rejoined the board in 2022. In her capacity as the International Coordinator, Lisa is responsible for reaching out to and keeping in contact with other Fulbright Alumni communities around the world and exploring potential collaboration opportunities.



## Johannes Schulz Project Management

Following stints in Latvia and China, Johannes spent his Fulbright year 2008-09 at the University of Iowa and received his Master's of Laws in 2009. He started his career in the energy industry and currently works as senior regulatory advisor on EU electricity trading and decarbonization topics. Johannes has spent time in the Philippines at a local non-profit organization in 2012 as well as in England in 2018. He was the coordinator for the Rhein-Ruhr regional chapter for three years. After returning to Düsseldorf, he became active in the FAeV by helping to organize the Winter Ball 2019. After three years on the board as VP Finances, Johannes decided not to stand for re-election in 2022 in order to give priority to his professional development and family. This, however, did not mean that he would sit quietly on the sidelines. As the chair for project management, Johannes plans on implementing some of the ambitious ideas developed by the board over the past few years.

## Elke Handschug-Brosin Community Weekend

Elke founded the Fulbright Family Weekend, now known as the Community Weekend, because she wanted to stay active in the FAeV as a mother of three boys. Her twins were born in 2000, and the first Family Weekend started in 2001. It is meant to target everyone who feels part of the Fulbright Community – not only those who have turned into parents. The event takes place on an annual basis in Königstein near Dresden (Saxon Switzerland). Elke spent three years (1992-95) as a Fulbright Scholar in Michigan and Alaska. She graduated from MSU with a Master's degree in Park and Recreation Resource Management and headed the Visitor Industry Program at the University of Alaska Southeast in Juneau. Her heart has never really left Alaska, thus, she has turned her dedication to this beautiful state into a career, currently as the European representative of Explore Fairbanks Alaska. Elke lives in Radebeul near Dresden with her family.

## Dagmar Schreiber Sailing Trip

The coordinator of the biannual FAeV's sailing trip organizes the trip with operator Clipper – Deutsches Jugendwerk zur See e.V. This involves finding the right ship and determining the route, destination, time, crew, etc. From the invitation to all FAeV members, sending packing lists, and managing last-minute changes, the position entails doing sweet work while looking forward to a relaxing and inspiring week on the Baltic Sea with fellow Fulbrighters every other summer. Dagmar spent her Fulbright year 1991-92 in Washington, D.C., obtaining a Master of Laws degree in International & Comparative Law from George Washington University Law School. She has enjoyed sailing on old wooden ships ever since her first FAeV sailing trip in 1993 and tries very hard to get other Fulbrighters hooked on the same sea adventure.

Johannes Schulz,  
Elke Handschug-Brosin,  
Rózsa Simon,  
Zeynep Alraqeb



## Rózsa Simon Sponsoring

Rózsa, a globetrotting entrepreneur with German-Hungarian roots, embarked on her Fulbright journey to pursue a Master's degree in Strategic Design and Management at Parsons, The New School, in New York from 2016-19. Upon her return to Germany, Rózsa merged her passion for sustainability and ethnographic insights: As co-founder and former Chief Product Officer of "precycle", she dedicated her efforts to plastic credit trading. Recently, Rózsa shifted gears to delve into the world of venture capital and lent her expertise to a diverse portfolio of startups from Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, actively contributing to their growth in the venture development arena. Rózsa's mission extends to fostering innovation, particularly within Berlin's vibrant startup scene. She joined the extended board as Head of Sustainability in 2022 and has since transitioned to provide support to the Fulbright Alumni's sponsorship initiatives to strengthen financial sustainability for non-profit organizations. Her contributions aim to address common challenges and craft strategies for building sustainable funding models.

## Zeynep Alraqeb Diversity Alumni

Zeynep is a multilingual economist with experience in macro-economics, social entrepreneurship and politics. During her studies in Germany and the UK, she also studied abroad in Turkey and in the U.S., where she was a Fulbright Diversity Initiative scholar at the University of Kentucky in 2012. Last year, she was elected to the extended board of the FAeV, as head of diversity. She is the recipient of the Carl Duisberg Fellowship and has taken up the opportunity to further her research on transatlantic relations in New York City in the fall of 2022.



## Christa Orlowski Welcome Meeting

Christa obtained a degree in English and History from Cologne University where she subsequently worked as an assistant lecturer at the Anglo-American History Department before taking up teaching. She spent her Fulbright year as an exchange teacher at a high school near McAllen, Texas in 1995-96. She has lived in Cologne most of her life, except for a summer job as a tour guide in London and three years in the U.S. Christa loves traveling, singing, literature and the theater. Her involvement in different functions with a non-profit exchange organization formerly named "Fulbright Gesellschaft" started in the 1980s and is due to her dedication to the idea of offering students a unique opportunity of experiencing a different culture in an every-day context. Moreover, she is passionate about lessons to be learned from history and is part of several organizations focusing on this topic. To her, sustaining transatlantic bonds is another way of contributing to this endeavor.

## Alexander Rose Jürgen Mulert Memorial Award

Alex spent his Fulbright year at Purdue University, Indiana in 2019-20, majoring in Industrial Engineering. He enjoyed being part of several student organizations and the Fulbright community at Purdue and is excited to continue fostering the German-American understanding as extended board member for the prestigious Jürgen Mulert Award. After his time at Purdue, Alex joined an electric mobility pioneer in San Francisco and later completed his Master's degree at Karlsruhe Institute of Technology. Alex is now working as a management consultant in Germany and the U.S., focusing on Procurement and Operational Excellence. He is looking forward to many exciting applications for the 2024 Mulert Award with exceptional projects that promote mutual understanding.

Christa Orlowski,  
Alexander Rose,  
Daniel Hofmann,  
Sara Verma

## Daniel Hofmann Outreach

Before embarking on his Fulbright journey, Daniel graduated with a Bachelor's degree in International Retail Management from the Technische Hochschule Ingolstadt in 2017. He then spent his Fulbright at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge to pursue his MBA and received his degree in 2019. During his time at LSU, he was actively involved in campus life as Vice President of the LSU Men's Soccer Club and International Chair of the MBA Association. Since then, he has returned to his hometown, Fürth, and currently works as Executive Assistant to the CHRO at Schaeffler. This is Daniel's third year as the Outreach Chair of the German Fulbright Alumni Association. In his role, he aims to continue connecting our association with other German-American alumni associations, institutions and businesses alike, in order to offer our members various ways to meet like-minded and inspiring people. Daniel is passionate about sports, entrepreneurship and specialty coffee.

## Sara Verma Contact for U.S. Grantees

During the 2021-22 academic year, Sara completed her Fulbright year at the Berufsbildende Schule in Neustadt an der Weinstraße (BBS NW). She pursued a second-year as an English Language Assistant at BBS NW to continue building on relationships – tying her degree in Education and Curriculum Design from the University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign, with a passion for cultural exchange. Sara connected to German culture through a shared love for nature. In fall, she learned from the Volkshochschule about mushroom foraging in the Odenwald. With members of her cohort, she organized a winter alpine ski trip. In spring, she joined the Alpenverein. Finally, summer sun was for Sunday walks. As the U.S. Grantee Representative, Sara aims to bridge the newest cohort with the Fulbright Alumni association – engaging the association with fresh perspectives and the cohort with meaningful tools and experiences.

## Tristan Cristofolini Fulbright Alumni e.V. Office

Tristan Cristofolini is the manager of the Fulbright Alumni e.V. office in Frankfurt am Main. Although he is not a Fulbright Alumn, his devotion to the Fulbright cause is rooted in his interests as a student of American Studies at Goethe-University. As Office Manager, his responsibilities include connecting members with questions to the board, upholding contacts with various partners and clients, and to keep things running smoothly. Tristan started his American Studies Master's degree in the fall of 2019. He hopes that the Fulbright idea of connecting people of different cultures through scholarly exchange will persist in its current form and that the FAeV will continue to thrive, even during difficult political times.

# The Extended Board

## Alexandra Drexler Mentoring

Alexandra ‘Allie’ Drexler made Berlin her home after studying International Affairs at George Washington University. She is currently Assistant Director for Placement Programs at Cultural Vistas and manages several exchange programs including the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange/Parlamentarisches Patenschafts Programm. In 2016, she participated in the International Parliamentary Scholarship (IPS) in the German Bundestag and continued on as a research associate for a member of the Bundestag. She received an ETA Fulbright Scholarship to help teach English in two Berlin schools. Excited to pursue a career in international education after her Fulbright experience, Allie joined the CIEE team at their Global Institute in Berlin in 2018, where she designed, organized, and implemented custom exchange programs, before joining Cultural Vistas in 2020. Allie is currently the president of the North American Bundestag Network and has been involved on the board of the FAeV in various roles previously.

## Marius Brinkmann Webmaster

As a Fulbright Scholar, Marius completed a Master’s degree in Electrical Engineering at Florida Polytechnic University from 2018-19. After returning to Germany, he completed his second Master’s degree in Electrical Engineering and Information Technology at the Technical University of Munich in August 2021. Since 2022, Marius has been pursuing a PhD at the Technical University of Munich in collaboration with Rohde & Schwarz focusing on radar signal processing and microwave imaging. His hobbies include rock climbing, photography, and baking sourdough pizza. In May 2022, he joined the extended board of the German Fulbright Alumni Association as the new Webmaster, hoping to increase page views and simplify processes. In addition, Marius also supports the automation of the matching process for the mentoring program.

## Alexandra Schaller Sustainability

Alexandra is part of the FAeV Extended Board and her main focus lies on Sustainability, but she is also the helping hand for the upcoming Spring ball. She’s been involved in several sustainability initiatives through her role on the FAeV board, World Cleanup Day specifically. With her work for the FAeV, she wants to connect people and make the world a bit greener. Back in 2019-20, she did her Fulbright in Long Beach, California where she studied journalism. She holds a Bachelor’s degree in Media Management and an Master’s degree in Journalism and International Conflicts. She is currently working as an Audio- and Video Journalist in Berlin.

## Jürgen Simon Archive

More than 35 years after its foundation, the German Fulbright Alumni Association has accumulated documents, publications and notes, which reflect the spirit of the past decades as well as the ongoing activities. To develop the structure for preserving the Association’s documents for future generations of Fulbright alumni, this extended board position was created in 2015. With a Fulbright travel grant plus a direct exchange fellowship from Christian-Albrechts-University at Kiel, Jürgen continued his student life at the Kelley School of Business at Indiana University, Bloomington. Years later he returned to Germany with an MBA and a PhD in Business. He worked in various positions in banking and finance, followed by jobs as administrator and instructor for universities of applied sciences.

Tristan Cristofolini, Alexandra Drexler, Marius Brinkmann, Alexandra Schaller, Jürgen Simon, Marc Wasserek



## Marc Wasserek Data Management

Marc participated in the Fulbright “Leaders in Entrepreneurship” program at Louisiana State University in 2021. He studies Industrial Engineering and co-founded an E-Learning platform. His previous experience on the boards of associations has shown him the importance of handling “know-how”. Passionate about education technology and the transfer of know-how, he decided to join the extended board as the person responsible for data management, the efficiency of which he hopes to improve within the Fulbright Alumni Association. In doing so, he focuses on digitalization and simplification of the process of knowledge transfer.

## Connor Widmaier Event Support General Assembly

Connor Widmaier was a very grateful 2021-22 Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in Konstanz, Germany. Before Fulbright, Connor grew up in a German American household on Long Island, New York. His father’s habit of shouting “Gesundheit” instead of “God-bless you” inspired him to one day reconnect to his heritage. He loved every second of teaching in German classrooms. However, at the end of his second ETA year, he decided to enter the private sector. Now, Connor works as the first sales hire for an educational startup where he has helped the team scale monthly revenue from \$95,000 to \$300,000. In the future, he hopes to foster the growth of equitable, internet-based educational shifts. Connor joined the extended board in 2023 to help with the planning of the FAeV’s General Assembly.

Connor Widmaier, Mo Kari, Florian Fesch, Jan Homburg

## Mohamed Kari PULSE Podcast

Mohamed spent his Fulbright time in 2016 on graduate studies in Los Angeles. He holds both a Bachelor’s and a Master’s degree in Business Information Systems and is currently a PhD student in Computer Science at the interface of machine learning, computer vision, and human-computer interaction. He is working towards augmented reality experiences that seamlessly blend with a user’s space and mind. As part of his PhD, he has conducted research at ETH Zurich, Porsche, Apple, and Meta Reality Labs Research. With the Fulbright PULSE Podcast, he aims to bring to the surface the extraordinary stories of Fulbrighters and the personalities behind them.

## Florian Fesch Entrepreneurship

To give back to the Fulbright community and bring all entrepreneurial minds amongst you together, Florian joined the extended board this year as the new board member for entrepreneurship. In his Fulbright year, he completed a Master’s degree in Industrial Engineering and Operations Research (IEOR) at UC Berkeley. After graduation, Florian stayed in the Bay Area for another year to work as a data scientist for a circular hardware company. Coming back to Germany in 2020, Florian started his own data science consultancy. In summer 2022, he co-founded Emidat, a Munich-based startup that builds climate intelligence for the construction industry. In his free time, he loves to go to the mountains for hikes and skiing trips.

## Jan Homburg IT

Jan has a background in Media and Communication Sciences and he currently works as a research associate at HAW Hamburg (University of Applied Sciences). His U.S. journey began in 2008 when he was awarded a Fulbright scholarship to study at the University of Kentucky – a life-changing experience that continues to inspire his career. Over the years, he has made numerous trips to the U.S., working at NBC in Philadelphia and New York, exploring the Midwest with Chicago as his base, and participating in scientific conferences in Washington, D.C. Just recently, he made a dream come true by having his first U.S. family vacation on the East Coast – traveling the U.S. is the only thing you buy that makes you richer. In 2016, he organized the Welcome Meeting in Hamburg, hosting over 200 participants. He joined the board in 2021 as the IT officer. In this role, he is responsible for maintaining and updating the communication infrastructure, which was modernized in 2022. He looks forward to any questions and suggestions from all alumni.

not featured  
Paul Künzle – Grant Management





The participants of TAC 2023;  
photo: Marius Brinkmann

# “Reimagining Transatlantic Bridges for a Brighter Future”

Organizing the Transatlantic Alumni Conference 2023

by Andreas Dewald

It all started back in July 2022, when alumni of the German American Alumni (GAA) network came together in Berlin and decided to plan the second Transatlantic Alumni Conference (TAC). In August 2022, the planning team met for the first time to map out the road to TAC 2023. What followed were months of hard work from many motivated alumni from different alumni associations. Every other Sunday and on many days in between the planning team came together to organize all the different aspects, ranging from logistics, to speakers, to our event website etc.

Following the call to “reimagine transatlantic bridges for a brighter future”, we were happy to see a great turnout of over 110 participants from both sides of the Atlantic coming to Erfurt and Berlin for an exciting program over 3.5 days. The main program in Erfurt featured inspiring keynote speeches, panels and interactive sessions around the topics of Diversity, Geopolitics, Sustainability, and Digitalization. Participants were also invited to the U.S. Embassy where they met Ambassador Gutmann and had the chance to visit the Bundestag in Berlin.



A huge THANK YOU goes to the wonderful organization team!  
Photo: Marius Brinkmann



Impressions from the first Transatlantic Alumni Conference held in Germany; photos: Marius Brinkmann



Photo:  
Mark Straus (U.S. Embassy)

What made this conference special was the incorporation of our motto “from alumni for alumni” into all aspects of the conference. Our 19 speakers were almost all alumni from different German-American exchange programs, and we also featured alumni who are early in their careers to highlight the future of the transatlantic community and elevate our young alumni.

My passion for this wonderful opportunity to bring so many alumni together inspired me to invest a significant amount of time alongside my role as president. But of course, I wasn’t alone in this endeavor. The entire volunteer team played an essential role, and I am grateful for the collaboration and support. I want to extend my deepest appreciation to our alumni Jana Frey, Rózsa Simon, Alexander Rohlf, Allie Drexler, Alexandra Schaller, Marius Brinkmann and Jörg Geier for their contribution to making this conference a success.

**Andreas Dewald** is currently the President of the FAeV



Find the conference report here:



# TAC 2023 – Bridging The Gap In One Place

## The Powerful Lesson of Personal Presence from the Transatlantic Alumni Conference 2023

by Helena Harris

I recently had the privilege of attending the Transatlantic Alumni Conference 2023 hosted by the German American Alumni (GAA) Network in Erfurt. My journey to this event was far from ordinary; it involved a passport fiasco, last-minute flights, and a whole lot of determination. This experience not only reaffirmed my belief in the power of in-person events but also opened my eyes to the profound impact they can have in our digital age.

As I stood in the bustling city of Erfurt, surrounded by pioneers and self-starters from various corners of the globe, I couldn't help but reflect on the significance of our physical presence in today's interconnected world. In a time in which digital communication dominates our interactions, this conference served as a reminder that there is unmatched value in face-to-face engagements.

### 1. Pioneers and Self-Starters Thrive on In-Person Connections

TAC 2023 brought together individuals who were not just content with the status quo but were determined to redefine it. Meeting these pioneers in person, witnessing their passion, and sharing stories ignited a unique energy that cannot be replicated online. The spontaneous conversations, the shared laughter, and the unspoken understanding among us were the building blocks of lasting connections.

### 2. Building Community Through In-Person Events

In the digital realm, it's easy to lose sight of the human element behind our screens. In-person events like TAC provide a tangible platform for building genuine communities. As we engaged in workshops, panel discussions, and networking sessions, I witnessed the formation of bonds that surpassed the limitations of virtual communication. The shared experiences, empathy, and encouragement exchanged during these moments were invaluable in creating a sense of belonging within our alumni communities.

### 3. The Deepest Relationships are Forged in Person

My initial skepticism about the necessity of physical presence was challenged and eventually shattered at the conference. The depth of the relationships formed in person is unparalleled. The empathy expressed, the challenges overcome, and the victories celebrated together fostered a sense of camaraderie that I had never experienced before. These meaningful connections not only enrich our personal

lives but also enhance our professional networks in ways that virtual interactions simply cannot achieve. Leading the 'Careers Across Seas' workshop with my co-host Mary Taylor, allowed us to hear the interest, concerns, and questions alumni have about navigating their career within the international exchange network.

My journey to Germany was a testament to the enduring relevance of in-person events in our globalized world. The hurdles I faced to attend the conference highlighted the lengths to which individuals are willing to go to be physically present among their peers. While digital platforms offer convenience, they cannot replace the authenticity and impact of face-to-face interactions.

In conclusion, I urge all of you to embrace the power of the present. In-person events are not just gatherings; they are transformative experiences that shape our perspectives, broaden our horizons, and enrich our lives forever. As alumni, we are part of a vibrant, dynamic community that thrives on connections. Let us continue to come together, share our stories, and strengthen our bonds in person, for it is in these moments that the true essence of our community shines brightest.



**Helena Harris** is a Study & Work Abroad Mentor, Author, and CBYX Scholarship Award-ee, passionate about helping young-professionals elevate through career networking and international exchange opportunities. After her study abroad year in Germany in 2013, Helena worked in event management in the tourism district of Downtown Atlanta followed by speaking and work opportunities at CIEE, Cultural Vistas, Delta Airlines, Ignite Recruitment, The Exchange Alumni Ambassador Program (U.S. Department of State Initiative). She also supports the Exchange Alumni Ambassador Program to recruit more diverse candidates. Seeing a job-hunt struggle in the study-abroad community, she recently wrote a book, "The Ultimate Traveler's Guidebook: 7 Skillful Careers and Remote Side-Hustles To Earn An Income and Travel The World After University", available on Amazon.

# TAC 2023 – Why don't we move from knowledge to action?

## Transformative Learning as a Response to Sustainability Challenges

by Julia Hufnagl

After visiting the Keynotes "Transatlantic Bridges" by Prof. Peter Neumann and Dr. Kira Vinke, and the session Climate Change: Moving from Collective Understanding to Individual Action with Florian Kapmeier and Dr. Kira Vinke, I asked myself: We know so much about climate change and other sustainability challenges: Why don't we act on them? As a researcher in educational science, I have sought for answers in my discipline. It seems like pedagogy has recognized that it is reaching the limits of its traditional approach, and the discussion about a change in learning culture is in full swing. At the latest since the formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the designation of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Global Citizenship Education (GCE) as transformative educational approaches, there has been talk of a transformation in education. GCE and ESD share common policy guidelines (SDG 4.7) and address global challenges with a holistic educational approach and transformative learning goal.<sup>1</sup>

One problem with researching transformative education for sustainability is the jargon used, so here are some simple words to help clarify the terminology. The terms ESD and GCE are often intertwined. It's hard to draw universal conclusions about the terminology debates, as they vary across countries and languages. Many scholars see similarities between ESD and GCE. Some believe that ESD is a type of GCE, while others argue the opposite. GCE is set apart from ESD by the postcolonial views it occasionally includes and its emphasis on the role of the Global Citizen. In contrast, ESD often prioritizes environmental sustainability. According to

the Dublin Declaration, GCE and ESD fall under the broader category of Global Education.<sup>2</sup>

However, education has had a transformative nature for a long time, which was already recognized by two significant German educational theorists, Friedrich Schleiermacher and Wilhelm von Humboldt. Bildung, a German term, acknowledges that education can be transformative, more so than the term education. Education and transformation always go together – education brings changes to one's relationship with oneself, others, and the world. It's an empirical fact that transformations happen.<sup>3</sup>

Transformative learning has been an interdisciplinary field for some time. It is a theory of adult learning that goes beyond cognitive knowledge acquisition. Discussions on transformative learning and transformational educational processes often occur in the context of SDG and GCE. These could be a basis for the transformation process started by the 2030 Agenda. Both approaches (transformative learning and transformative education) address how learning processes change the attitudes, judgments, and opinions of adults, enabling them to think critically and independently. They both recognize the changes in subject thinking and behavior and acknowledge that education and learning are closely linked to personal experiences. In these theories, critical theory and social constructivist theories of learning come together. Mezirow's transformative learning theory has been influential in adult education literature for many years. It emphasizes individual perspective changes more

<sup>1</sup> Khoo, S./Jørgensen, N. J. (2021) Intersections and collaborative potentials between global citizenship education and education for sustainable development; Klemm, U. (2021). Agenda 21 und nachhaltiges Lernen.  
<sup>2</sup> Chung, B. G./Park, I. (2016). A review of the differences between ESD and GCED in SDGs; Feinstein, N. et. al. (2013). When does a nation-level analysis make sense?; GENE (2021). The European Declaration on Global Education to 2050. The Dublin Declaration – A European Strategy Framework for Improving and Increasing Global Education in Europe to the Year 2050. [https://www.unesco.at/fileadmin/user\\_upload/final\\_GE2050-declaration.pdf](https://www.unesco.at/fileadmin/user_upload/final_GE2050-declaration.pdf); Nordin, B./Avery, H. (2021). Global learning for sustainable development: A historical review; Nygren, T. et. al. (2020). Global citizenship education for global citizenship?  
<sup>3</sup> Scheunpflug, A. (2019). Transformatives Globales Lernen – eine Grundlegung in didaktischer Absicht.  
<sup>4</sup> Lang-Wojtasik, G./Erchen-Morgenstern, R. M. (2019). Transformation als Herausforderung. Globales Lernen als lebenslanger Bildungsauftrag für alle; Maratzki W (1990). Entwurf einer strukturalen Bildungstheorie; Mezirow, J. (2009). Transformative learning theory; Taylor, E./Cranton, P. (2012). The handbook of transformative learning; Thompson, C., Jergus, K. (2014). Zwischenraum Kultur „Bildung“ aus kulturwissenschaftlicher Sicht; Weselek, J. (2019). Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung als Basis für die Sustainable Development Goals?; Zeuner, C. (2014). "Transformative Learning" als theoretischer Rahmen der Erwachsenenbildung und seine forschungspraktischen Implikationen.  
<sup>5</sup> Rieckmann, M./Schanck, C. (2016). Sozioökonomisch fundierte Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung Kompetenzentwicklung und Werteorientierungen zwischen individueller Verantwortung und struktureller Transformation; Slopinski, A., Porath, J./Križan, G. M. (2020). Nachhaltigkeit in der Lebenswelt Betrieb – Verständnis, Wahrnehmung und Relevanz von Corporate Social Responsibility aus Sicht kaufmännischer Auszubildender.





Facilitators for the Panel "Culture & Career Masterclass: Building Bridges in your Career" – left to right: Mary Pat Taylor, Helena Harris, Allie Drexler; photo: Helena Harris

than Marotzki's approach. Since transformative learning's origins are from the Western world, it's unsurprising that it's predominantly embraced and influenced by scholars from the global North.<sup>4</sup>

Contrary to advancements in schools, the significance of transformative learning in businesses has been undervalued. Discussions about sustainability in the corporate world have mainly focused on Corporate (Social) Responsibility. This is unexpected because workplace education is crucial for remaining competitive during skill deficits and when a company's dedication to sustainability is crucial to their appeal to potential employees. As studies show, young individuals already comprehend the intricate concept of corporate sustainability involvement and recognize businesses' actions in this field. Furthermore, with multinational companies becoming increasingly powerful and less influenced by nation states, the issue of corporate responsibility in addressing global challenges has become more relevant in the context of incentivizing corporate engagement related to the SDGs.<sup>5</sup>

We need to discuss more how we can introduce transformative education in Germany and the United States. The past changes in the German and American education systems should be examined, along with the current status and future prospects of transformation in education. In education, not only schools, but also companies must contribute to lifelong learning. Companies can play a vital role in transformative education for sustainability, moving us from simply knowing about sustainability to taking action.

## Further thoughts on the Diversity Panel

In Germany and the U.S., the meritocratic principle is commonly accepted. Consequently, many are convinced that education and performance determine personal economic outcomes. However, merit is not necessarily awarded with success in Western countries. Having the same professional position, women receive 25% less in performance-related bonuses than men. Moreover, women compared with white men receive a smaller increase in compensation even when they achieve the same performance scores. Considering that 90% of American companies pay performance-related salaries, women oftentimes need to work harder to receive the same economic benefits as white men. What makes this situation even more challenging is that some companies still believe they evaluate people based on their skills, abilities, and merit. As research confirms, managers working in organizations that explicitly present themselves as meritocratic are less objective and tend to discriminate against women more. Accordingly, decision-makers who are convinced of their objectivity reflect less on their behavior, which leads to biased decision-making and less equity in the workplace. Yet, a company's adherence to the meritocratic principle can be increased through anonymous recruitment practices and the usage of gender-sensitive language in job postings.<sup>1</sup>

Anonymous recruitment is one way companies can increase their adherence to the meritocratic principle. Prioritizing skills in the recruitment process makes it easier to identify the highest-performing talents and, therefore,

# TAC 2023 - Thoughts on Diversity How to Make Recruitment More Performance-Linked

by Julia Hufnagl

helps to manage bias in the application process. Several examples support this argument: After the New York Philharmonic Orchestra had changed their audition procedures to blind auditions, the number of women increased dramatically. Inspired by that, GapJumpers, a Silicon Valley start-up, assessed the specific skills required for an open position by giving applicants mini assignments. From the top talents invited to an interview after the assessment, about 60% came from underrepresented backgrounds. In another study with 5,000 applicants, removing identifying details from résumés led to an increase in the number of women invited to an interview from 5-54%. Taking into account that both studies were conducted in the male-dominated tech industry, their results can be considered a remarkable success. In short, a skills-first approach is a powerful tool for companies to reduce bias in the recruitment process.<sup>2</sup>

The usage of gender-sensitive language in job postings is another way companies can increase their adherence to the meritocratic principle. According to research, women find jobs less attractive if more masculine than feminine wording is included in job adverts. Correspondingly, advertisements attract 40% more women if the focus lies on enthusiasm and innovation instead of aggressiveness and competitiveness, which are words associated with male stereotypes. Since women are not aware of this problem, the companies are the ones obliged to address it. Made by Many, a company for digital design, proved that adapted language works: After having highlighted teamwork and user experience instead of ambition and egoism in their job posting, they saw an immediate rise in the number of women applying. In contrast, in a study on 4,000 job postings, employing gendered wording in job recruitment materials led to a maintenance of gender inequality in traditionally male-dominated occupations. As can be seen, paying attention to the choice of words in job adverts is an advisable way to increase the number of women applying for a position, which in the long run leads to a more merit-based company culture.<sup>3</sup>

In conclusion, anonymous recruitment practices and the usage of gender-sensitive language in job postings are two powerful ways to achieve a greater correlation between qualifications and personal economic outcomes. Even though research shows that having a diverse workforce is key to business success, women are still often disadvantaged in the application process, leading to a sub-optimal talent selection in many companies. By contrast, it should be of interest for businesses to employ those with the best qualifications instead of choosing by name, gender, and background. Acknowledging personal subjectivity and reflecting on sexist behavior are important steps everyone can take to reduce biased decision-making and increase equity in the workplace.<sup>4</sup>



**Julia Hufnagl** is a CBYX alumni and member of the board of the PPP Alumni association. After completing her vocational training as a bank clerk, she studied at Skagit Valley College, Washington as well as at Georg-August University of Göttingen, Friedrich-Alexander University of

Erlangen-Nuremberg and Karl-Franzens University of Graz and gained practical experience at the Burlington Chamber of Commerce in Vermont and at several companies in Germany. Julia has been a fellow researcher at University of Bamberg since 2022 following various positions at the universities in Göttingen, Nuremberg, Nijmegen (Netherlands) and the Leibniz Institute for Educational Trajectories in Bamberg. Her research interests are Education for Sustainable Development in vocational and further training and intersectional discrimination processes in vocational education and training.

<sup>1</sup> Castilla, E. J. (2008). *Gender, Race, and Meritocracy in Organizational Careers*; <https://doi.org/10.1086/588738>; Castilla, E. J./Benard, S. (2010). *The Paradox of Meritocracy in Organizations*; <https://doi.org/10.2189/asqu.2010.55.4.543>; Cooper, M. (2015, Dezember 1). *The False Promise of Meritocracy*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/12/meritocracy/418074/>; Uhlmann, E. L./Cohen, G. L. (2007). "I think it, therefore it's true": Effects of self-perceived objectivity on hiring discrimination; <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2007.07.001>.  
<sup>2</sup> Goldin, C./Rouse, C. (2000). *Orchestrating Impartiality: The Impact of "Blind" Auditions on Female Musicians*; <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.90.4.715>; Cooper, 2015.  
<sup>3</sup> Gaucher, D., Friesen, J., & Kay, A. C. (2011). Evidence that gendered wording in job advertisements exists and sustains gender inequality. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 101(1), 109–128. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022530>; Desvoux, G., Devillard-Hoellinger, S., & Meaney, M. C. (2008). A business case for women. *The McKinsey Quarterly*. <https://internationalwim.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/A-business-case-for-women-2008.McKinsey.pdf>; Pinnock, I. (2014, Juli 18). Can a few well chosen words improve inclusivity? <https://www.madebymany.com/stories/can-a-few-well-chosen-words-improve-inclusivity>.  
<sup>4</sup> Pinnock, 2014

# TAC 2023 – Tech Trends A Transatlantic Perspective (For a Brighter Future)?

by Alexandra Swanson

When looking at the topics of technology and digitalization, providing a transatlantic perspective is one that offers diverging pathways and a fine understanding for the institutional and cultural forces behind it. For the transatlantic eyes reading this, it goes as no surprise that Germany and the U.S. have embraced differing tech and digitization paths. My fascination for this topic started during my Fulbright in Kirchhain, Hessen. Moreover, studying and working in the Federal Republic gave me a better understanding of how these path dependent routes are embedded within our psyche, language, cultural norms and history.

On the one hand, we have the risk-loving, innovation-encouraging institutions and innovation-open culture in the U.S. On the other hand, we have Germany, a risk averse culture, with highly bureaucratic institutions, and lack of a so-called “Fehlerkultur”. While Germany remains the Data Protection pioneer in the transatlantic relationship, there is common ground when it comes to developing tech trends. Common ground can often be found when it comes to the integral role that tech will continue to play in both economies, but also on the importance of regulating Big Tech, to make sure that tech works for everyone. I believe that this common ground, based on values, is one that can help contribute to a brighter future. This idea was briefly touched upon at a panel at this year’s Transatlantic Alumni Conference (TAC) in Erfurt. During the Q&A section, questions and comments touched upon the downsides of large language models (LLMs) and algorithms, as well as what happens when Big Tech isn’t regulated. And if you are wondering what an LLM is, ChatGPT can help here (literally). ChatGPT is perhaps the most famous LLM, but there are hundreds if not thousands in use or being created this very second. When looking at examples of what happens when Big Tech isn’t regulated, we just need to look at Cambridge Analytica.<sup>1</sup> This unprecedented case demonstrates how users’ data was unknowingly and illegally used to influence and persuade voter behavior both during Brexit and the 2016 U.S. Presidential Elections.

This short piece is an attempt to further the TAC discussion on what current tech trends are happening to help design a brighter future. When it comes to transatlantic industry, there are currently three trends that are dominating the discussion: sustainability and the green transition, digital transformation and artificial intelligence (AI). For the sake of this short impulse, I would like to focus on one specific area where I see promise for the transatlantic relationship providing a brighter future. Two words: **Green Tech**.

On a meta level, when leveraged effectively, digitization has the potential to play a significant role in helping to solve climate change. In fact, Germany and the United States work together on various aspects of technology, driven by shared interests, the pursuit of innovation, and the recognition that cooperation can accelerate progress in these fields. This collaboration spans research, industry, government initiatives, and international organizations, contributing to advancements in tech on both sides of the Atlantic. A majority of these collaborations focus on the fields of renewable energies for example solar and wind, but also focus on transatlantic exchange between the countries. More specifically, both governments have signed a Joint Declaration of Intent (JDOI) to confirm the content and structure of the U.S.-Germany Climate and Energy Partnership,<sup>2</sup> which was launched by Chancellor Merkel and President Biden on July 15, 2021. According to the JDOI:

*“The partnership will provide a framework for deepening cooperation on climate policy, transformational energy technologies, cross-sector decarbonization, and advancing the energy transition in emerging economies. It is intended to be used to develop shared climate, energy and decarbonization policy priorities to accelerate both short-term commitments and long-term economy-wide net zero goals, identify areas for enhanced bilateral cooperation, and facilitate renewable energy and innovative energy and climate technologies and services to support economic growth and well-paid jobs in both countries.”*



Panel discussion on Tech Trends: A Transatlantic Perspective For a Brighter Future? Right to left: Alexandra Swanson, Alwin Hopf, Florian Fresh, David Patrician (Moderation); photo: Marius Brinkmann



Alexandrea shares her impulse statement on her pathway to Tech in Germany through her Fulbright; photo: Marius Brinkmann

In short, Green Tech and the transatlantic commitment to mitigating climate change is not only an American, German or EU priority – but also a transatlantic one. At the heart of this priority is of course technology. Without technology – research and development, university collaborations in renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, and battery initiatives, start-up accelerators, and academic exchange programs (like Fulbright) focusing on creating forward-looking solutions – it would be impossible to move towards climate neutrality – for both countries.

So, with all of the facts and figures out there on climate change, why do I remain optimistic? One big cause for my positive outlook is the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (IRA).<sup>3</sup> The IRA aims at achieving many things, but puts real investments, \$369 billion to be exact, towards reducing carbon emissions by roughly 40 percent by 2030. This is a historic moment for the U.S., and it is the first serious and credible strategy for decarbonizing and transforming the U.S. economy. While it caused quite the uproar across the pond, with heavy criticism towards protectionist policies, the EU is currently working on its own European response to the IRA. In Germany itself, movement is also happening: on June 7, 2023,<sup>4</sup> as part of the Green Transition Facility, the KfW announced it is making €100 million available for venture capital funds to be invested in environmental and climate technology startups. This funding serves to finance innovations for the development and expansion of new sustainable, environmentally sound and climate friendly technologies and thus makes an important contribution to the ecological transformation of the economy and of society.

It is pivotal moments or better called critical juncture points in history, where through competition and economic incentives, transformative and disruptive technologies are created. With climate change being the world’s existential crisis and governments grasping for solutions to meet climate goals, key investments in technologies such as: renewable

energies, battery and energy source technologies, industrial process innovation, and hydrogen are essential to creating a greener future. Both countries have clearly defined goals and strategies to mitigate climate change. The next big challenge will not only be implementation, but also scaling of the technologies. Interestingly enough, this is exactly where the transatlantic relationship can come into action to help provide innovative solutions for a brighter future. With Germany’s strong fundamental scientific research landscape (Grundlagenforschung), and the U.S.’s implementation and scaling powers, the transatlantic bridge is precisely where we must engage for tech trends to help create a brighter future.



**Alexandrea Swanson** currently serves as managing director for the #SheTransformsIT initiative at the Federation of German Industries, which aims on getting more women into IT and digitalization. After completing her undergraduate studies in International Relations and

German Studies, Alex moved from Omaha, Nebraska to Marburg, Germany to pursue a Fulbright ETA Scholarship in 2014. It was during her Fulbright year that she became passionate about digitalization and decreasing the digital gender divide. After her Fulbright, she went on to complete her Master’s degree in Politics, Economics, and Philosophy at the University of Hamburg. Her research interests are in the areas of gendered innovations and political equity. She currently lives and works in Berlin. In her free time she teaches yoga and serves as a mentor for women seeking refuge.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/netflix-doku-ueber-cambridge-analytica-wenn-daten-die-welt-100.html>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.bmwk.de/Redaktion/DE/Downloads/J-L/joint-declaration-germany-usa.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=8#:~:text=It%20is%20intended%20to%20be,energy%20and%20climate%20technologies%20and](https://www.bmwk.de/Redaktion/DE/Downloads/J-L/joint-declaration-germany-usa.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=8#:~:text=It%20is%20intended%20to%20be,energy%20and%20climate%20technologies%20and)

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.democrats.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/inflation\\_reduction\\_act\\_one\\_page\\_summary.pdf](https://www.democrats.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/inflation_reduction_act_one_page_summary.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.kfw.de/Über-die-KfW/Newsroom/Aktuelles/Pressemitteilungen-Details\\_765952.html](https://www.kfw.de/Über-die-KfW/Newsroom/Aktuelles/Pressemitteilungen-Details_765952.html)



# How Can We Create a Better Future?

by Annabella Kadavanich

In a world full of possibilities, creating a better future is not a distant dream; it is a responsibility shared by us all. The magic lies in the fact that each and every one of us holds the power to make a difference starting right now. In this article, we set out on a journey of self-discovery, exploring how anyone and everybody can individually contribute to a brighter tomorrow and, equally important, how we may support the next generation, ensuring a lasting legacy through the transformative power of education.

## Rich Hearts of Cambodia: Embracing Happiness in Simplicity

As I invite you on a magical journey to a land where time dances to the rhythm of simplicity, I hope that this story serves you as a reminder of your potential to bring positive change in the future. **In the heart of Cambodia**, where the sun casts a golden glow over the landscape, a touching tale of how to find true happiness unveils. In a remote village near Phnom Penh, young children go on a long journey every day, walking 10 kilometers to reach their school. These kids must face the harsh truth that their families lack the resources to enjoy the luxury of a tasty breakfast at home. Therefore, they stop along the way to skilfull climb mango trees so they can have a quick and filling meal before school.

During the summer months, many of them decide to skip school in order to assist their parents with the difficult but necessary chore of harvesting rice, **giving up the opportunity of a better future for themselves**. Some people might assume that these families don't have a lot of wealth. But the truth runs deeper, and their richness lies in the depths of their hearts.

For these Cambodian children and their family, **life is an exercise in finding happiness**

**and fulfillment in even the most simple conditions.** They understand that true happiness is not related to the abundance of material possessions, but comes from a profound connection with the land, the community, and the bond they share with one another. They are filled with gratitude for all the little wonders life gives them each day.

During my time in Cambodia, the volunteers loved gathering alongside the children under the vast canvas of stars. Laughter and stories filled the air, filling the night with **the kind of warmth that money cannot buy**. I remember the children's eyes sparkling with hope, and their spirits dancing with dreams, embracing life's challenges with unwavering strength and a magical belief in **the beauty of simplicity**.

In the stillness of twilight, they lay their heads on beds of dreams, knowing that despite the challenges they face, they are rich beyond measure in the wealth that truly matters – **the wealth of love, compassion, and a happiness that radiates from within**.

**"Happiness is the foundation upon which we build the most beautiful future."** – James Allan

In Cambodia's embrace, we learn an invaluable lesson, that **true riches lie not in the grandeur of possessions, but in the richness of our hearts**. And as the sun rises on another day, may we carry this wisdom with us, cher-



Beyond material wealth: does simplicity elevate the soul to happiness?



The future is brightest when we embrace the simplicity of happiness in every moment



Collective impact: together, we create a brighter future for cambodian children



Photos: Omer Maayan

ishing the little moments, finding joy in simplicity, and recognizing that during the journey of life, true happiness blooms within us all.

## So how can we create a better future?

In the attempt of building a better tomorrow, we recognize the **complexity of this question**, acknowledging that there is no singular answer.

While you are in the pursuit of a brighter tomorrow for our world, it's important to recognize that creating a better future begins with the simplest of steps we take today. Take a moment to appreciate the small blessings in your

life – the morning breakfast, the abundance of groceries in your fridge, the privilege of education. Instead of becoming entangled by materialism, get off your phone and focus on building **genuine connections with those around you**.

Above all, I encourage you not to simply read these words and let them fade into the background. **The time for action is now, today**. Within each of us resides the power to shape an extraordinary future, and it all begins with finding inner happiness. As you unlock this inner radiance, you'll become a lighthouse, guiding the way towards a profoundly magnificent tomorrow. So, let these words be your catalyst for meaningful change, and let us embark on this journey together, towards a brighter future we create with every step we take.



**Annabella Kadavanich** is a former Fulbright scholar from Germany who is currently living her dream life in Orlando, Florida. Her diverse experiences include three months of dedicated volunteering at an orphanage in Cambodia, and she is passionate about sharing the heartwarming memories of that journey with the world.

Headshot by Alexandra Boldanova

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*In July, 1776, America's rebels formulated their universal ideals of freedom and humanity. German immigrants were crucial in disseminating them.*

In the early days of July, 1776, Philadelphia's printing quarter was bustling with activity. Several printers along Second Street received express orders from the Continental Congress. The makeshift parliament of the 13 American colonies convened only a brief ten-minute-walk away in the Pennsylvania State House on Chestnut Street. On July 4, the delegates had voted on the finalized text of their Declaration of Independence.

Among the printers who worked overnight shifts were German-born Melchior Steiner and Charles Cist. Their task was the first and by far most important translation of the document. It was targeted at the vast number of German immigrants in the colonies. They were estimated to be 250,000 people or roughly ten percent of the population. In Pennsylvania, it was more than a third of people who spoke German as a first language.

The Germans were the largest non-English-speaking group of the colonies. It was crucial to win them over for the revolution if it was to have any success. Steiner and Cist were certainly aware of this. They had both been born in Europe. Cist came from a German family in St. Petersburg and had later studied medicine at Martin Luther University in Halle. Steiner was the son of a pastor from the German-speaking parts of Switzerland.

For his printing business, he sometimes used an Anglicized version of his surname: Styner. This helped gain him trust among the English, who still held some resentments against the Germans, these "Palatine boors," as Philadelphia's most prominent citizen, Benjamin Franklin, had once labeled them. Steiner's partner had even made up an entirely new English-sounding surname from his initials: Carl Jacob Sigismund Thiel turned into CIST.



The two German printers worked on what was truly a revolutionary document. The concept that every human possessed certain inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, continues to shape our world to this day. The Declaration of Independence also marked the dawn of a new form of government and society. What Steiner and Cist meticulously typeset letter by letter in their printery on Philadelphia's Second Street was nothing less than the foundation of modern democracy.

On July 5, the German-language newspaper *Der Pennsylvanische Staatsbote* was the first to report the news out of Philadelphia. It did not print the full text yet, which appeared in English a day later in the *Pennsylvania Evening Post*. Soon after, Steiner and Cist printed the first copy of their German translation. They had deliberately set it in Gothic type (*Fraktur*), the style of lettering that German readers of the time were used to.

Job well done: The rebels' claims of liberty and self-government were now being distributed amongst the Germans also. But would they really give up English protection and risk the tentative wealth they had acquired just for some fiery ideals and the vague promise of a new form of government?

# The German-American Revolution

by Johannes Ehrmann

The most prominent German-American of his time was not so sure. Heinrich Melchior Mühlenberg, the head of the Lutheran churches in the colonies, was a man of the old order. He had sworn allegiance to the king more than once, upon his arrival in Philadelphia and later, when he was naturalized as a British subject. And hadn't this very king always ensured that preachers like Mühlenberg could freely practice their religion and build their churches? Just like the Apostle Paul had written to the Romans: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God."

Simply put, Pastor Heinrich Mühlenberg had no idea what side of this bloody conflict God had chosen. So he could and would not decide himself either. But Mühlenberg was faced with a serious personal crisis: His own children started to defect from him to join the rebel cause.

Two of his sons would leave the Lutheran ministry and fight for the goals of the revolution. Friedrich or Frederick, his second-oldest son, would later become the first Speaker of the newly formed U.S. House of Representatives. And Peter, Mühlenberg's eldest, was involved in the war from early 1776 when he formed a German regiment from his congregations in rural Virginia. Peter fought in Brandywine, in Germantown, and in Yorktown, where the war was decided in favor of the United States in 1783. He then became a Congressman as well.

The Mühlenberg sons were not an exception amongst German-Americans who fought against the British in great number. But their father continued to struggle with the path they had chosen. Their worldly careers seemed sacrilegious to him. The patriarch died in October 1787, just days after the U.S. Constitution was passed and sent to the 13 states for ratification. In Pennsylvania, where it was ratified quickly thanks to Frederick Mühlenberg, the text was then sent for printing: 3,000 English copies, 2,000 in German.

When father is arrayed against son ... It was during my Fulbright year as a History student in Philadelphia that I first discovered this fascinating German-American family story. I was struck by the Mühlenberg's deep generational conflict, by the schism between the old and the new world. My professor encouraged me to tell the story as my Master's thesis. Almost 15 years later, I finally felt ready to turn it into a whole narrative non-fiction book. "Söhne der Freiheit" was published this fall by Klett-Cotta in Germany.

Why is this story of almost 250 years still relevant today? In fact, the ideals of July 4<sup>th</sup> – freedom, equality, self-government – have not aged a day. They continue to be fought for, in Europe, America, and elsewhere. No doubt, the spirit of 1776 is very well and alive. It is guiding us into a better future.



**Johannes Ehrmann**, born 1983, is a contributing editor with ZEIT ONLINE and the author of several non-fiction books. After studying North American Studies at FU Berlin's John F. Kennedy Institute, he graduated with an M.A. degree in History from the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia in 2007 where he studied as a Fulbright grantee. "Söhne der Freiheit" is his fifth book.

Headshot: Manfred Esser



# Embracing Diversity

## Fulbrighters with Disabilities' Unwavering Commitment

by Geghie Davis-Tillie  
copy-edited by Itto Outini

What enters the average person's mind in response to the phrase "diversity and inclusion"? For some, these words may conjure up images of corporate boardrooms ticking off checkboxes. For others, they may call to mind well-intentioned policymakers striving to create more welcoming professional atmospheres. In reality, however, these words ought to evoke more than corporate policies. They are ideals whose realization demands consideration of the vast and vivid tapestry of human experiences, abilities, and perspectives that occur throughout the world.

Consideration of this tapestry – and with it, the commitment to diversity and inclusion that it inspires – animates Fulbrighters with Disabilities (FWD), a global, virtual chapter of the Fulbright Association.

FWD is the first chapter of the Fulbright Association to focus on supporting students and scholars with disabilities. To this end, we've embraced a virtual model to increase our global reach and foster national, cultural, geographical, linguistic, and ethnic diversity without requiring that people with limited mobility travel long distances, live away from their families, or forsake their local support systems. This, we believe, is an essential strategy for building a more diverse and inclusive future. Since our launch in 2021, we've made significant progress toward building a diverse, international community, advancing advocacy efforts, and collaborating with other chapters and partner organizations.

Our board consists of four members: President Geghie Davis-Tillie, Vice President Keegan Julius, Treasurer Istou Diallo, and Secretary Frank Mondelli. We all identify as people with disabilities. Our efforts are supported by the contributions of many wonderful volunteers. As a Neurodivergent woman with multiple invisible, physical disabilities, I consider it a privilege and honor to lead such an extraordinary team toward fulfilling our potential to contribute to the Fulbright community and better the world.

Our chapter's founder, Itto Outini, worked long and hard to get FWD off the ground. A totally blind Fulbright alumna, journalist, writer, Steinbeck Fellow, and international public speaker, Itto has since gone on to launch her own international media platform, The DateKeepers, in partnership with her husband. Both projects reflect Itto's commitment to elevating diversity and inclusion beyond the banal verbiage of the boardroom and bringing together individuals with diverse perspectives and abilities, from all walks of life and every corner of the globe, to strive together toward a common cause. Without Itto's unwavering vigilance and dedication, neither our chapter nor The DateKeepers would be here today.

In 2022, a year after founding the chapter, Itto passed on the presidency of FWD to me. At the time, I'd just returned from my Fulbright in England and had connected with Itto via LinkedIn, where she was seeking scholars with disabilities to interview and profile. This encouraged me to share with her my stories from my time in England, including how the Fulbright Association and my university had helped me acquire official ADHD and dyslexia diagnoses and access therapy, which I wouldn't otherwise have been able to afford. Spurred by the revelation that I'm Neurodivergent, and that there's a vast community of Neurodivergent individuals all over the world, I ended up writing my thesis on sensory processing differences (SPD) and how implementing more accessible and inclusive design practices can help those of us with such conditions more easily navigate public spaces. Back in the U.S., I wanted to do more, deepening my engagement with the international Neurodivergent community while also giving back to the Fulbright Association. Sensing my passion, Itto encouraged me to take a leading role in FWD.

This year, we attended Fulbright Advocacy Day on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., where we engaged with policymakers to secure Fulbright funding. In July, I had the honor



Advocacy Day at Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., from left to right: Leland Lazarus, Geghie Davis-Tillie, President of FWD, Catherine Harbour, and Keegan Julius, Vice President of FWD; photo: Leland Lazarus.



Itto Outini (left) and Mekiya Outini (right), founders of the DateKeepers; photo: Julia Walters



of flying to London to attend the first Fulbrighter and Community Engagement Workshop, where over 30 Fulbright alumni and friends from all around the world gathered to brainstorm strategies for improving social connectivity. Possibly our proudest achievement has been our successful implementation of the first-ever sensory room at the Fulbright Association Conference in Denver – though speaking at the Youth Summit and participating in the table-top event are close runners-up.

Fulbrighters with Disabilities is more than a chapter. We are a movement united by the common vision of seeing diversity celebrated and inclusivity becoming the norm. Our commitment to pushing boundaries through advocacy, education, and innovation knows no bounds. As we advance toward the horizon, I hope FWD can serve our community as a guiding light illuminating paths toward a world where every thread of our diverse tapestry is recognized and celebrated and where no one is left behind.

For more information about Fulbrighters with Disabilities or the DateKeepers, please reach out by emailing the chapter at [fwd@fulbright.org](mailto:fwd@fulbright.org)



**Geghie Davis-Tillie** is a human-centered designer with a focus in UX/UI East Tennessee in the U.S. She currently serves as President of the Fulbrighters with Disabilities chapter within the Fulbright Association. With a deep connection to her Appalachian heritage and her

personal experience as someone with multiple invisible disabilities including Neurodivergence, Geghie brings a distinctive and multifaceted perspective to her storytelling, making it truly unique.

Photo: Geghie Davis-Tillie



# The Little Things

by Janani Ravi

With climate change being an overarching existential crisis looming over us, it can be a challenge to feel as if our individual actions have any real impact. Climate change is seen as indiscriminatory and affects every living organism on the planet. Following the pandemic, our collective has been more vulnerable. In particular, the younger adult generations of Generation Z and Millennials express the most anxiety about climate change’s impact.

According to the Pew Research Center, the majority of Gen Z and Millennials, at between 67-71%, believe that climate change is a top priority and are more active both online and offline in engaging with climate change issues and promoting action. Gen Z has expressed anxiety about the future because of climate change and are more likely to advocate for alternative energy sources or other mitigation efforts.<sup>1</sup> Gen Z adults are witnessing the change in their environment as they grow into their adult years and have grown up with climate change content on social media, leading to increasing anxiety about the future.

However, I would argue that we feel overwhelmed by climate change due to the enormity of the process – it is difficult to really conceptualize global phenomena from an individual perspective. We are focused on the macrolevel of climate change, feeling anxious by the statistics. When faced with the global destruction caused by the changing climate, we may feel meaningless and ineffective in our actions, and it is normal to question our individual impact against these global events.

Nevertheless, if we look at the little things that we can impact, we can see how our small actions accrue into a large transformation over time. If the average life expectancy in the U.S. is 76 years old<sup>2</sup> and respectively about 81 years old in Germany,<sup>3</sup> that gives us several decades of influence on our own lifetime usage of sustainable goods. If, over the next few decades, we individually make smarter choices, we also could influence our direct family to the same. If many of our routines are impacted by how we were raised – for example, the way we wash our dishes, how we do our laundry, how often we wash our car, and what kind of appliances we buy – then our decisions influence the people in our household, encouraging others to make sustainable choices. As younger adults,



Food waste generates at least half of the greenhouse gas emissions released by landfills. The methane released from decomposing food has a large impact on our environment; photo: Paul Schellekens on Unsplash

millennials and Gen Z have the next several decades to make small changes to their lifestyle, and with that in mind, our children can make massive differences to their carbon footprint by learning more sustainable behaviors from us.

Although, many climate events are now inevitable due to the accumulation of the last couple of centuries of industrial activity, by engaging in preventative action now, we can still mitigate the future impact of our carbon footprint. We do not all need to go out and buy the latest sustainable products like an at-home compost machine, bamboo towels, ecofriendly washers, or sustainable mattresses. Although some people may be able to afford entirely environmentally-friendly lifestyles, for most of us, our choices are limited and are often already influenced by major corporations. However, if we focus on the small impacts we make, we can change our unsustainable habits over time and influence our future generations to do the same. Let’s take a look at how much the little things we do can build over our lifetime and impact the environment.

## The cat is out of the (plastic) bag

The average American produces .34 kg, or about .75 lbs., of plastic waste per day. If the average American is expected to live until 76 years old, then he or she will produce over 20 tons, or over 9,000 kg, of plastic waste in his or her lifetime. To put that amount into perspective, the average semi-truck weighs approximately 20 tons. Imagine the impact that our semi-truck-weighted plastic can have on our environment if we disrupt the lifecycle of our plastic products by repurposing or even eliminating certain products that we use.<sup>4</sup>

If we consider that half of the plastic produced is used in one single instance and then thrown out, then simply reducing the amount of our daily plastic use would have an impact. The average lifecycle of a plastic bag is about 15 minutes, and then it is disposed.<sup>5</sup> Reusable plastic bags are a positive investment if you do not have sturdy shopping bags. They tend to be roomier and can carry heavier items than standard plastic bags, but there is a difference in the impact of cotton and non-cotton reusable bags. Cotton bags have a higher upfront sustainability impact, requiring more land and water use, and therefore, these bags must be used hundreds of times to reduce their impact on the environment. Non-cotton PP reusable plastic bags have a lower environmental cost and need to be reused 90% less than cotton bags to even out their environmental impact.<sup>6</sup>

Where you may think that the solution is to buy reusable shopping bags, the answer is much simpler than that. Instead of buying reusable plastic bags at all, why not use the bags you already have? The most sustainable option is to use what you have in your household currently, such as that Ikea bag you bought once, the sturdy shopping bag you received from another retailer, or even your backpack. The only challenge is remembering one’s own bag until it becomes instilled as habit.

## Our uneaten leftovers

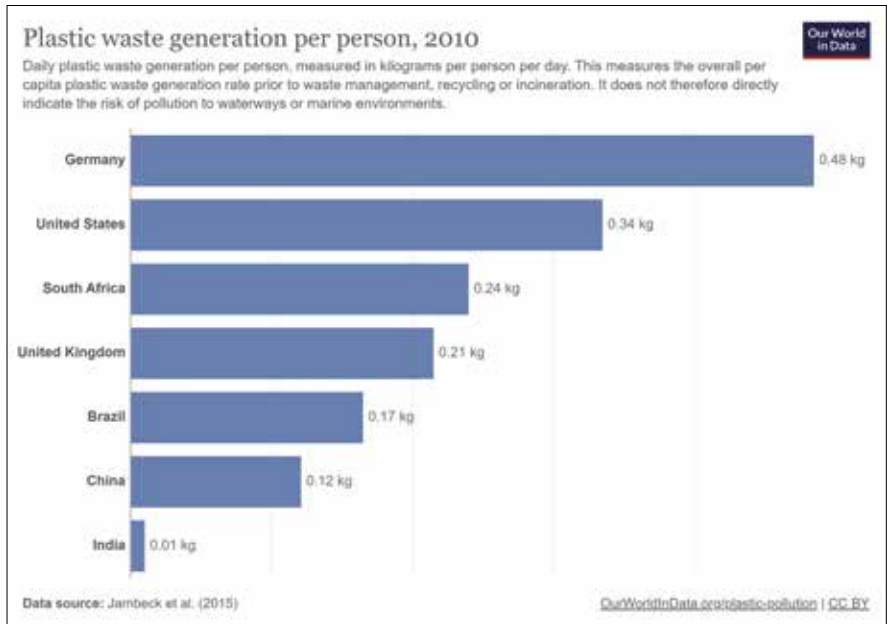
Food is a big part of our culture and our daily lives. There can be a lot of enjoyment in trying new cuisines, visiting a new restaurant, cooking with friends, or even discovering something new at the grocery store. However, as a society, we are also terrible at consuming all the food that we buy. In the United States, approximately one-third of all food grown for human nutrition is wasted. The carbon footprint of the food we throw out is greater than the impact of the airline industry.<sup>7</sup> The largest percentage of the food wasted happens in our own households, when we do not consume our perish-

able food in time. The food wasted does not just have the environmental impact of land and water use when grown, but food waste creates problems once reaching landfills due to the enormous amount of methane produced by its decomposition. Methane emissions from food waste account for 50% of the emissions recorded in landfills.<sup>8</sup>

One of the smallest things we can do is to be more mindful in what we are buying in the grocery store, how our food should be stored, and when food expires. If we focused on eating those leftovers and using the produce that we purchase, then we could reduce the impact our food waste has on greenhouse gas emissions. Composting is also a great option for recycling food scraps. Food waste disposal may be available in your neighborhood or community. If composting is not an option, then simply reducing the amount of uneaten food in our households would still accrue a positive impact on the environment and reduce the amount of methane-producing waste in your local landfill.

## The iPhone we threw out of that drawer

So, we finally got around to cleaning out that drawer or box of random cables, old unused phones, and maybe some old batteries. Many of us probably treated the contents of that drawer much like all the other clutter and tossed them straight into our garbage. Most of us do not think too carefully about throwing out our batteries or broken electronics. However, we collectively produce millions of tons of e-waste, and less than 20% of this electronic waste is properly recycled or disposed.<sup>9</sup> At least one third of global consumers toss their old cellphones, batteries, broken keyboard, TVs, computer monitors, all in the trash alongside with their daily garbage. Improperly disposed of batteries and electronic waste leach toxins that ultimately end up in our ground water and crop land. The electronic components can cause acidification of local waterways, further damaging the ecosystem.<sup>10</sup>



The per person generation of plastic waste is greater in Germany, but what this graph does not show is that the United States still produces more total plastic waste as a country than Germany; chart: “Plastic Pollution” by Hannah Ritchie/Max Roser in: Our World In Data





Regardless of if it's for your career or for the climate, we should focus on SMART goals that help us create achievable, realistic goals, so we can create and manage realistic expectations on what is achievable; chart: U3187248 on Wikimedia Commons

We may think that others would have little use for our broken gadgets, but the value of our electronics lies in their internal components. One study conducted by the U.S. Geological Survey found that we can recover gold, copper, silver, and palladium from every recycled cell phone. Although the newest computer technology can be alluring, we can instead upgrade or install a new hard drive or SSD instead of buying a new computer.<sup>11</sup> You should never dispose of lithium-ion batteries in your trash as these are considered to be household hazardous waste. These batteries in our cell phones and computers can become easily damaged and lead to fires, and therefore, these electronics should be recycled. You can search for local battery or electronic recyclers on the internet,<sup>12</sup> and you may have already seen a battery disposal box at your local grocery retailer.

In cleaning out our junk drawers of old electronics, focus on donating or recycling as many of your electronics as possible. Since the internal components of your cell phone and laptop still have value and can be repurposed, recycling these products will reduce the air, soil, and water impact of these heavy metals and toxins leaching into our environment.<sup>13</sup> Small electronics are everywhere, from vapes, chargers, electronic toothbrushes, and children’s toys. Europe is ahead of the United States in collecting electronic waste at 55% of their e-waste as collected rather than dispose of in landfills.<sup>14</sup> For the rest of us, we can focus on being more mindful of what we are throwing out in our garbage and where we should appropriately dispose of our junk.

1 <https://www.pewresearch.org/science/2021/05/26/gen-z-millennials-stand-out-for-climate-change-activism-social-media-engagement-with-issue/>  
2 [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/nchs\\_press\\_releases/2022/20220831.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/nchs_press_releases/2022/20220831.htm)  
3 <https://data.who.int/countries/276>  
4 Hannah Ritchie and Max Roser (2018) - „Plastic Pollution“. Published online at OurWorldInData.org. Retrieved from: <https://ourworldindata.org/plastic-pollution>  
5 <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazines/1/plastic/index-ps.html>  
6 <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/sustainable-shopping-which-bag-best/>  
7 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-solutions/2021/02/25/climate-curious-food-waste/>  
8 [https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/food-waste-methane-war-against-climate-change-how-compost?utm\\_source=share&utm\\_medium=guest\\_desktop&utm\\_campaign=copy](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/food-waste-methane-war-against-climate-change-how-compost?utm_source=share&utm_medium=guest_desktop&utm_campaign=copy)  
9 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/137224/e-waste-consumer-behavior-worldwide/>  
10 <https://ewaste.ece.uw.edu/students/impacts-of-e-waste-on-the-environment/>  
11 <https://www.epa.gov/recycle/electronics-donation-and-recycling>  
12 <https://www.epa.gov/recycle/used-lithium-ion-batteries>  
13 <https://www.epa.gov/recycle/electronics-donation-and-recycling>  
14 <https://www.theverge.com/2023/10/11/23912751/vapes-chargers-invisible-e-waste-recycling>

Make your goals SMART

As we face inflation and rising living costs, we may be anxious about how we can afford to save the planet when we are focused on just surviving economic challenges. However, in focusing on these macro level issues, we miss what we can change on a micro level. Our small actions make a positive change when we consider the next few decades of disrupting the lifecycle of the products we use.

In focusing on the little things, we are essentially focusing on measurable and achievable goals for sustainability. SMART goals are defined as specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound, and just as we would use SMART goals to create career or health goals, we should also use the SMART framework to meet our individual goals in being more sustainable. Some small things that we can do include reusing our plastic bags, eating the produce and foods that we buy, and recycling and donating our unwanted electronics. It would be near impossible to eliminate all the single-use plastic products, electronics and restaurant food in our lives, but do not be fooled by the impact our small changes can have in disrupting the lifecycle of the products around us.



Janani Ravi is a Fulbright alum and former U.S. grantee. After completing two Bachelor’s programs in English literature and in International Studies, she received a Fulbright Scholarship to assist in English language learning in Germany. She completed her Fulbright grant in Hagen,

Germany as a Teaching Assistant 2015-17. Janani completed her Master’s through the Ethics- Economics, Law, and Politics program at the Ruhr University of Bochum in 2020 with a specialization in climate ethics. She currently resides in Maryland and works in the community solar industry at Neighborhood Sun.

Beyond Small Talk  
The Secret Technique  
to Deeper Conversations

by Connor Widmaier

Dear FRANKly Reader,

Have you ever met a great conversationalist? For years, I wondered what makes those people special. But after 17 books, 247 sales consults, and one fancy certification, I discovered that becoming likable is less about what you say and more about how you make people feel. And as Dale Carnegie taught, **“To be interesting, be interested.”**

Sounds cute, but you may be wondering how to apply this. The simplest way is to ask intelligent questions and genuinely listen. So today, under the umbrella of the FRANKly’s *Building a Brighter Future* theme, I want to teach you a new way to ask questions so that you can foster stronger cross-cultural understanding in the way you communicate with each other going forward. This is a secret technique I learned from an expert salesman. And if you use it correctly, you’re guaranteed to unlock deeper levels of conversation – two to three steps beneath simple small talk.

No framework applies to every situation. And sometimes, it may be downright inappropriate to use what I’ll teach you today. But the first time I tried this in civilian settings, the results were so explosive that I feel compelled to share that story with you. Afterward, I’ll leave you with an actionable plan to implement the technique on your own so you can help to build a brighter, more connected future.

April 2024 – Hamburg, Germany  
Carl Von Ossietzky Gymnasium

Last spring, at the end of my second English Teaching Assistant year, I turned a corner and saw my mentor teacher, Suzy.\*

She’s frazzled, shuffling papers and running her hand through her blonde-dyed hair.  
Me: “Hey, Suzy, What’s up? How was your first lesson?”  
Her: “Difficult.”  
Me: “Difficult? In what way though?”  
She locks eyes with me. What happened next blew my mind.

From that simple question, she broke into a dramatic story of how her politics class filled with students from diverse backgrounds devolved into a sweat and tear filled debate about the gender pay gap. How one faction, led by three young men, came out swinging, with a passionate plea that the gap was a mere manipulation of statistics, which ignored genuine expressions of biological preference. On the other hand, the pro-gap faction, led by two young women, fought hard to affirm the gap’s existence. By the time the bell rang, three students were in tears and the polarization had etched a chasm within the class. It was a once in a career type of story.

But imagine if our conversation had stopped at “difficult.” Or if I had made an assumption “Ah Mondays, totally hear you.” I might’ve missed out on the best story of the year! What I want to tell you here is that “difficult” rarely just means “difficult.” Beneath surface-level answers, there’s often an iceberg of information waiting for you. One way to unlock that information is through probing questions. Here’s how to use probing questions to have more meaningful conversations:

1. Start by actively listening

You can’t passively listen and probe effectively. Because you need to be alert for emotionally charged words and subtle changes in tonality to perceive them. Focus visually, and ignore your desire to formulate responses before the other person stops talking. Your goal is to understand.

2. Pounce on emotionally charged yet surface level answers

When you sense a shift in tonality, or an overly generic answer, it may indicate hidden valuable information.

Prime suspects are single adjective answers:

- Good
- Bad
- Happy
- Sad

Because what does “good” even mean? Absolutely nothing, until you probe one level deeper.

3. Interject with a probing question

Here are five examples I learned from Cole Gordon’s sales training:

- Tell me more
- Did I just hear you say
- (Mirror last three words as a question)
- How do you mean that, exactly?
- In what way, though?

I’ve seen all five work fine. Just don’t become the man with a hammer who thinks everything is a nail. Probing is a powerful tool, but it is not the only tool.

Conclusion

What people say is often not what they mean. But that’s a problem because if we want to collaborate to build a better future, we need to be on the same page as the people around us. Investing in your social skills is one of the best ways to contribute to our shared future. I hope this tool, and the story of Suzy, inspired you to do so.

P.S. Two books I recommend for beginners and experts:  
1. Never Split the Difference by Chris Voss  
2. How to Win Friends and Influence People by Dale Carnegie

Connor Widmaier currently serves on the extended board to support the event planning of the General Assembly. (p.11)

# Shaping the Organizational Culture of the Future with Mindfulness and Emotional Intelligence

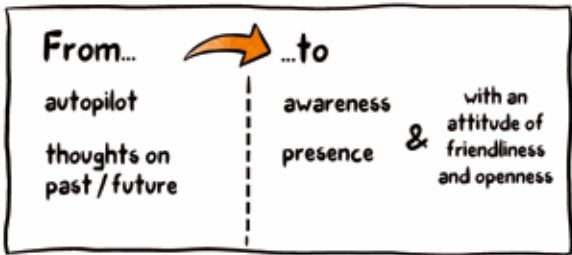
by Johanna Rauls and Dr. Svea von Hehn

## External change requires internal transformation

Hardly a day goes by without discussions about demographics, artificial intelligence, or the transition to a CO<sub>2</sub>-neutral economy. Change is now part of our daily lives and is characterized by the concept of the BANI-World: We operate in a world that can be described as **brittle**, **anxious**, **nonlinear**, and **incomprehensible**.<sup>1</sup> Thus, almost everything is constantly changing. External changes demand an inner transformation – at the individual, team and organizational levels. This way, individuals and organizations can remain adaptable, shape a culture of innovation, and maintain composure and clarity during turbulent times.

## Mindfulness helps maintain calm amidst the storm

The attitude that helps us navigate the changes in the external world can be described as “conscious”. Another word for this is mindfulness, which means being consciously present in the here and now, and thus being able to be with what is, without immediately shaping it into existing concepts and structures. Existing notions are based on past experiences, but to create something new, to effectively adapt to the changes around us, a mindset capable of grasping and



Mindfulness is a state of awareness with non-judgmental attention to the present moment.

embracing the new is needed. Emotional intelligence which is rooted in mindfulness provides access to this mindset and inner change.

With mindfulness comes awareness, and consequently, a perspective as if directing from a higher vantage point, seeing and guiding the direction. Emotional intelligence is the vehicle through which mindfulness becomes effective.

The BANI-World doesn't have to be threatening! It can also be experienced in all facets of vitality: as colorful, shimmering, surprising, and wonderful. It is possible not to resist but rather to “embrace” BANI with a stance of trust, paradoxically enabling clearer vision, deeper understanding, more fitting solutions, and better decisions.

## Beyond optimization: a holistic approach to mindfulness and emotional intelligence

Due to its proven stress-reducing effects, mindfulness is sometimes misunderstood as a form of “optimization tool” within performance-driven society. However, it's more sustainable to consider individuals systemically within the organization and establish mindfulness and emotional intelligence following a holistic approach, both within teams and the culture. This approach has a range of positive effects, as demonstrated by scientific studies.<sup>2</sup>

## The effects of mindfulness and emotional intelligence for individuals, teams, and organizations

- At the individual level, mindfulness and emotional intelligence foster enhanced concentration and problem-solving capabilities, well-being, adeptness in navigating uncertainties, focus and presence, as well as self-compassion and empathy for oneself and others.

Mindfulness and emotional intelligence can be cultivated through connectedness, clarity and the reduction of stress.



- At the team level, mindfulness and emotional intelligence serve as pivotal drivers for psychological safety, a mindful leadership style, and agile collaboration.
- At the organizational level, a mindful organizational culture acts as a fertile ground for nurturing emotional intelligence and a proactive approach to change management.

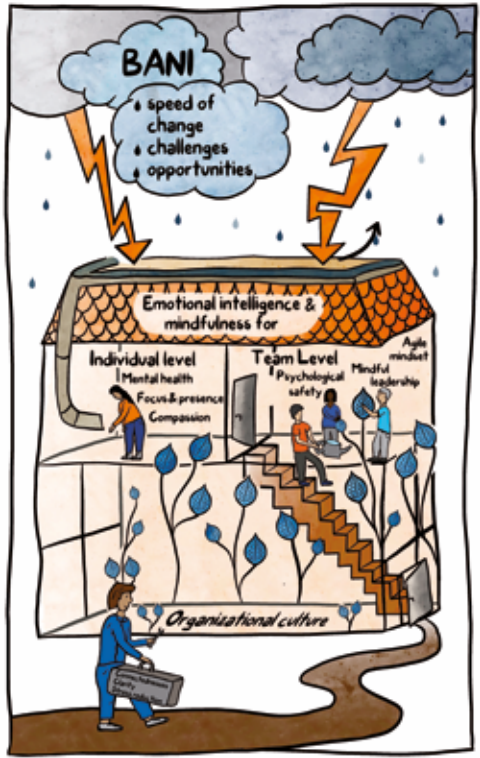
## A progressive culture should not be left to chance – How can mindfulness and emotional intelligence be cultivated?

Mindfulness and emotional intelligence don't occur by happenstance in the realm of work. There are levers of influence that one can engage with:

- Connectedness
- Clarity
- Stress reduction

In some organizations, the sense of connection is so pronounced that a kind of “softened culture” could benefit from an increase in clarity. On the other hand, there are those that excel in delegation and performance feedback, but lack the sense of connection. Those should be adjusted by starting to consider human needs and emotions in the workplace. Even minor adjustments – known as rituals or routines – such as in team meetings, lead to a gradually more emotionally intelligent culture, thereby fostering a human-centered approach to conducting business. These endeavors typically yield results only when stress is reduced; otherwise, new habits can hardly take root. How such an internal transformation can be sustainably achieved across all levels is described by us in our book “**Mindfulness and Emotional Intelligence for Organizations**” featuring pragmatic tips and insights drawn from both scientific research and practical experience. >>

Emotional intelligence and mindfulness in the workplace.



**Johanna Rauls** is a psychologist and a doctoral candidate at the Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health in the field of mental health. She completed her Psychology studies in Heidelberg, Berlin, and in the United States. As a Fulbright scholar during the academic year

2021-22, Johanna spent two semesters at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, where she had the opportunity to further her expertise in mindfulness research. During her studies, she worked as a Senior Consulting Analyst at RETURN ON MEANING, primarily involved in projects related to emotional intelligence and mindfulness. In this book, Johanna combines her enthusiasm for scientific research with her longstanding passion for mindfulness.



**Dr. Svea von Hehn** is an entrepreneur, a PhD psychologist, and a multiple certified mindfulness coach. She has been practicing mindfulness for over 30 years. The founder and partner of RETURN ON MEANING GmbH has been internationally active for over 25 years, including several years at McKinsey. Her areas of expertise lie in cultural transformation, leadership, and emotional intelligence.

All figures by Ylva Schmökel.

Headshots: Ralf Hiemisch.

<sup>1</sup> Cascio, J. (2020, 29. April). Facing the Age of Chaos. Medium. <https://medium.com/@cascio/facing-the-age-of-chaos-00687b1f51d>. Abrufdatum: 09.01.2023.  
<sup>2</sup> See e.g. Eby, L.T. et al (2019). Mindfulness-based training interventions for employees: A qualitative review of the literature. Human Resource Management Review, 29(2), 156-178; Janssen, M. et al (2018). Effects of mindfulness-based stress reduction on employees' mental health: A systematic review. PLoS one, 13(1), e0191332. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0191332>; Lomas, T. et al (2019). A systematic review and meta-analysis of the impact of mindfulness-based interventions on the well-being of healthcare professionals. Mindfulness, 10(7), 1193-1216.



# >> Shaping the Organizational Culture of the Future with Mindfulness and Emotional Intelligence



## About the Book

Navigating life with emotional intelligence and mindfulness adds value to both ourselves and our environment. This book aids you in this journey with practical and easily applicable tips. Whether you're in education or on the cusp of retirement, whether you're a team member or a leader – you stand to benefit from a well-stocked toolbox that empowers you to cultivate or enhance emotional intelligence and mindfulness across the three realms of the individual, the team, and organizational culture. Drawing from years of consulting experience and supported by scientific insights and interviews featuring renowned experts sharing their experiences, this book is a comprehensive guide.

## Overview of Contents

- How to cultivate emotional intelligence: the three levers of connection, clarity, and stress reduction
- Key components of the agile mindset
- Mindful leadership
- Healthy work and managing stress, uncertainty, and complexity
- Emotionally intelligent cultural transformation: the I-SNAP-I framework model
- Interviews with renowned experts from business (including SAP SE, Robert Bosch GmbH, Viessmann Climate Solutions SE) and academia (Dr. Britta Hölzel, Prof. Johannes Michalak)
- Psychological insights and findings from the world's largest mindfulness study in organizations

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## Interested in continuing the conversation?

Feel free to reach out: [johanna.rauls@outlook.com](mailto:johanna.rauls@outlook.com) or contact me on LinkedIn

# Data for a Brighter Future

by Jan Moellmann



leonardo co-founders Samuel Khew, Jasper Klemm and Jan Moellmann (from right to left) try to disrupt the status quo of sustainability data through a software solution that enables social entrepreneurs to measure and report their impact; photo: Katrin Klemm

I believe in the power of technology, entrepreneurship and our agency as humans to build a brighter future. The rise of impact investing and impact entrepreneurship is a great expression of this. More and more people are using their talent, time and resources to work on a sustainable future, acknowledging that there is more at stake than just money. Impact investing and entrepreneurship are both trying to generate intentional and measurable positive social and environmental impact alongside a financial return. However, the difficulty faced by these actors is that there is a lack of data that would help to identify, incentivize and manage impact in a transparent, credible and efficient way.

Most, if not all, things that scaled extraordinarily well over the last decades were based on the availability of data that was then used for data-driven decision-making. Maximizing something requires measuring this something – be it user engagement for Facebook, delivery times for instant delivery services or simply financial returns for an asset manager. Now, what we need to scale fast to avoid collapse and to work towards a future in which the planet and people thrive is positive impact; hence, we need to measure this impact. If we had the right data available, it would be possible to make better consumer decisions, to manage by impact objectives, to incentivize impact through regulation and even to bake impact into financial products to make sure that impact-generating enterprises have access to the funding they need to realize and scale their projects and products.

Unfortunately, measuring impact is not an easy task. I have been there. Working for a social enterprise on rural electrification in West Africa, I knew how valuable it would be to measure and communicate not only how many of our customers gained access to electricity, but also what this access to electricity means in terms of socio-economic development such as productivity increases, women empowerment, safety as well as access to healthcare and education. At the same time, it was difficult to gather this data. A typical social enterprise has neither scientists who understand how to collect such data accurately nor do they have software and data teams who could take care of a streamlined data pipeline for ongoing impact monitoring and reporting. Some digital solutions exist that approximate impact based on secondary data, i.e. forecasting impact based on similar projects. But is it really accurate, helpful, transparent or even morally acceptable to judge impact without measuring it where it actually occurs? I find this approach particularly concerning when it comes to assessing social impact: If we want to understand which products and projects actually change the lives of people for the better, we better collect the data at the source by asking the people whose lives we aim to improve.

After witnessing these challenges first-hand and talking to dozens of other social entrepreneurs who faced similar problems, I decided to start a software company in 2022 that supports impact-driven organizations and their capital providers in measuring, verifying and reporting their true impact. At leonardo, we try our best to measure sustainability where sustainability effects actually occur and then to use this data to empower impact-driven management and investment decisions. You can find more information about leonardo at

<https://www.leonardo-impact.com/>

# leonardo.

Technology plays a key role here: Large language models can be used for verifying, understanding and utilizing large amounts of interview data; the blockchain can be used for storing and transmitting impact data in a transparent and traceable way as well as tokenizing impact to make it invest- and tradeable. At the end of the day, though, it is not about the technology or data itself, but about using it for the right purposes. We need to stop wasting our talent, time and resources working on things that will only benefit one's own bank account. We need to use technology and business to work on the things that matter. A brighter future is possible if we start building it together.



**Jan Moellmann** is co-founder & CEO @ leonardo. impact and a doctoral candidate @ TU Munich. leonardo aims to make deep impact measurement, verification and reporting easy and credible. After four years as Finance Director of the social startup Africa GreenTec and while conducting research

about the topic as a doctoral candidate at TUM, he discovered the great value that trustworthy impact data has for sustainability-focused enterprises, but also how hard it is to get this data – leading him to co-found leonardo. Jan holds Master's degrees in Engineering Management from TU Braunschweig and Industrial Engineering from Georgia Tech where he spent one year in Atlanta on a Fulbright scholarship. He and his wife Lena live in Frankfurt, Germany, and love to hike and bike through mountains whenever they get the chance.

Headshot: Katrin Klemm

Logo by leonardo. impact GmbH

# From Spectator to Architect: Co-Creating a Positive Future

by Joerg Geier

Let's start with a thought experiment: How do you feel when you, over several days, keep reading the daily news which, generally speaking, tend to focus on what's not OK with the world? And how do you feel after a day of play with your loved ones or friends, a museum visit, and having engaged in activities in nature?

"This comparison doesn't make much sense," you may say. Though my response is, yes it does.

*"The defining characteristic of pessimists is that they tend to believe that bad events will last a long time, will undermine everything they do, and are their own fault. The optimists, who are confronted with the same hard knocks of this world, think about misfortune in the opposite way. They tend to believe that defeat is just a temporary setback or a challenge, that its causes are just confined to this one case."*

Martin Seligman, 1991

According to Martin Seligman, who is seen as the founding father of **positive psychology**, this field can be described as "the study of what constitutes the pleasant life, the engaged life, and the meaningful life."<sup>1</sup>

In other words, it can be said that there is great power in shifting one's perspective towards a reality which is more encouraging.

Having worked on different aspects of environmental sustainability, largely as they relate to green innovation ecosystems and impact startups in both California and Germany, I can safely say that it is inspirational to work with purpose-driven entrepreneurs<sup>2</sup> whose vision tends to be greater than themselves. While global challenges can easily be daunting, individuals and groups of people whose desire is to tackle them, tend to be upbeat in contributing positively to the world. In their literature review, Anne de Bruin et al. (2017) observe a strong willingness to collaborate with other social-

ly inclined enterprises or individuals or as part of a broader context for action (e.g. policy-practice, public-private etc).<sup>3</sup> Their research shows an improved access to resources and funding, an interest in the exchange of tacit knowledge, as well as a greater impact when collaborating with complementary organizations. My own practical experience confirms these findings.

*"We are called to be architects of the future, not its victims."*  
R. Buckminster Fuller

Based on different projects and roles exposing me to a mixture of impact entrepreneurs and startups, I started delivering presentations and speeches emphasizing examples of transformational policies, systemic initiatives, and companies, all symbolizing a positive vision of the future. Commonly referred to as positive or desired futures, an accumulation of such good practice examples or use cases depict development paths or **scenarios**<sup>4</sup> striving to improve the **well-being** of people and our planet. Such a perspective on our individual futures is rooted in a general understanding that we have **agency**, i.e. the capacity to influence outcomes of our actions. Put differently, we are not victims or passive observers but co-creators of our own futures. This change of perspective puts us in the driver's seat of our own future narrative and thus allows for the creation of new, more positive images as templates for action.

For example, the image of circular economy<sup>5</sup> evokes feelings of regeneration, recycling or waste reduction (cf. Image 1). This is contrary to linear economy which drives consumption with no care for the end of life of a product. Sticking with such an image of a **closed loop**, product innovation that builds on the concept of circular economy could be a new composite material which replaces plastics or metals, thus enabling the conservation of resources, including fossil fuels. The company LANXESS, for instance, has developed such bio-based and renewable raw materials.<sup>6</sup>



The Circular Economy Model; source: European Parliament <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/economy/20151201ST005603/circular-economy-definition-importance-and-benefits>

Another example symbolic of a better and more positive, sustainable future is a *smart green city*. As opposed to a city which is "just smart," the former also emphasizes sustainability attributes. Smart cities respond to the challenges exhibited by urbanization with innovative technologies. The European Commission labels smart cities as "cities using technological solutions to improve the management and efficiency of the urban environment."<sup>7</sup> Smart green cities on the other hand take a more people-centric approach. As stated by Javidroozi, V. et al. (2023), "to address [social and economic challenges driven by urbanization], it is important for cities to adopt sustainable and inclusive urban development strategies."<sup>8</sup> According to MIT Technology Review, Toronto, Canada, once focused on executing a smart city approach, last year presented plans on how to convert their Quayside waterfront area into a "green utopia" in its place – both metaphorically and literally – in its place.<sup>9</sup> Experts involved in the development project "believe that less tech reliance and more civic engagement could be the new way forward." [ibid.]

In the same vein, a company that I have worked with and that I talk about as a role model is the Utrecht, Netherlands-based **Except Integrated Sustainability**. Their **Orchid City** project proposes a concept for a "fully self-sustainable city, using proven practices to build communities for up to 50,000

people."<sup>10</sup> The approach is holistic and climate-adaptive and addresses many infrastructure and systemic challenges.

Needless to say, as individuals we are all very different and our aspirations for a better future may vary significantly. This article does not suggest a "prescribed" approach. History has taught us that this tends to be a bad idea. At the same time, as positive psychology and well-being research teaches us, there are common denominators allowing all of us to experience life as more pleasurable. There is no "one-size-fits-all" approach but a kaleidoscope of opportunities. If we dare to dream, visualize all the positive aspects life has to offer and take advantage of existing templates and prototypes for a healthier, happier and greener tomorrow, while not acting from a place of fear, new pathways are going to emerge offering previously unthought life choices.



**Joerg Geier** was a German Fulbrighter at Golden Gate University, San Francisco, where he completed his MBA (2001-03). He has an international background in the private sector, think tanks and academia. As a partner at **PDIE Group**, he builds green innovation ecosystems

and supports impact startups. Joerg has also focused on leadership development and capacity building [See <http://joerggeier.com> for additional information].

Headshot: Gesine Born

<sup>1</sup> Batthyany, A./Russo-Netzer, P. (2014). *Meaning in Positive and Existential Psychology*. Springer.  
<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this article, the terms purpose-driven, impact or social entrepreneur/entrepreneurship are being used interchangeably.  
<sup>3</sup> De Bruin, A. et al (2017). The collaborative dynamic in social entrepreneurship. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development: An International Journal* 29 : 7-8, pp. 575-585, DOI: 10.1080/08985626.20171328902.  
<sup>4</sup> Definition: "A description of what could possibly happen." The Britannica Dictionary (<https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/scenario>)  
<sup>5</sup> Definition: "A system where materials never become waste and nature is regenerated." Ellen MacArthur Foundation (<https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/topics/circular-economy-introduction/overview>)  
<sup>6</sup> LANXESS. (2021, October 6). Pretty biological [Press release]. <https://lanxess.com/en/Media/Press-Releases/2021/10/Pretty-biological>  
<sup>7</sup> European Commission (2023). Smart cities. Retrieved: October 18, 2023, from [https://commission.europa.eu/eu-regional-and-urban-development/topics/cities-and-urban-development/city-initiatives/smart-cities\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/eu-regional-and-urban-development/topics/cities-and-urban-development/city-initiatives/smart-cities_en)

<sup>8</sup> Javidroozi, V. et al (2023) Smart, Sustainable, Green Cities: A State-of-the-Art Review. *Sustainability* 2023, 15, 5353. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15065353>  
<sup>9</sup> Jacobs, K. (June 29, 2022). Toronto wants to kill the smart city forever. MIT Technology Review. Retrieved: October 18, 2023, from <https://www-technologyreview.com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/www.technologyreview.com/2022/06/29/1054005/toronto-kill-the-smart-city/amp/>  
<sup>10</sup> <https://except.eco/projects/orchid-city/>





thjnk Zeitgeist, the Trend & Gen Z Consultancy from thjnk. Anesa Lokvancic, Isabelle Rogat, Ula Abu Allel & Marie Schabitzky

# Why true Impact needs Hype Culture

by Isabelle Rogat

Let me take you with me on a small dream-like journey through our Marketing World and how it plays a role in, well, building brighter futures. A fever dream, but still – a dream. So close your eyes (metaphorically) and lean back (literally)...

## You are a sneaker.

(Yup, never thought you'd read those words in a FRANKly, but here we are.)

You've descended from the mind of a London Designer, fueled by oat milk latte, traveled to the hands of a Bangladeshi factory worker, were shipped over 2 oceans, 3 railroads and one rather rough-handling UPS driver to a New York Showroom in Manhattan.

You are more internationally traveled than the buying agent AND sales rep combined.

You cost 295\$ and are made up of 40\$ worth of material.

You – are supposed to become the next big thing.

By the second you arrive in the 12<sup>th</sup> floor Manhattan Showroom in full beauty, you are being swarmed by TikTok-swiping, Adidas Samba-wearing Marketeers with the most creative of ideas to not only bring you into the shelves of this world, but into the hearts & feeds as well.

"How about a moving Online Video campaign, in which we position you as the footwear of the brave, showing world changers of 2023 proudly strutting in style?"

"What if we created a TikTok Challenge, using you as the modern version of the Cinderella shoe needing to find its owner?"

"Maybe we could create a digital version of you and place you in games like Fortnite?"

## Cut. New dream.

Now, you are an NGO fighting gendered crime. ... Or a political policy trying to further transatlantic understanding. ... Or the 1.5 degree goal.

You'd been standing on the street with a megaphone and a 20 page, well-researched, factually correct – but sadly, quite boring – speech script. As a matter of fact, you could swear you saw the marketeers from your first dream pass by you on their way to buy the fake Cinderella crown for their TikTok.

They didn't notice you though, you were just going off about

the statistics of some regulation – and also, you were facing in the wrong direction.

One marketing student helped you design some flyers, but their time & stock image royalty only amounted to a poorly lit image of you holding your speech with a comic sans headline. With a spelling mistake.

One person stood in front of your speech and clapped.

It was your working student.

Somewhere in the back, crickets chirping.

## Now you wake up.

What you've just endured wasn't just a very unfortunate use of your dream time (and by that, rather hard to explain to your therapist) – but the central marketing dilemma preventing us from advancing to those futures we're reading about in this FRANKly. The unequal distribution of true, cutting edge creativity.

Because if we think about what moves our public opinion, our hypes, our trends – it's never been what is most important. Most highly produced. Or even most aesthetic.

What creates queues in front of "Live Fast Die Young" stores is the same thing missing in furthering gender equality. What currently sells out Taylor Swift Tour shows in our cinemas is the same thing that is missing when we try to get people to fight against climate change.

## Creative Ideas.

Innovative narratives separating what the core of the issue is and what it is being wrapped in.

Finding ways to bring this state of the art commercial creativity to our socio-economical, political and ecological challenges will be at the center of how Marketing can truly create a brighter future for us.

That's what I've founded "thjnk Zeitgeist" for, a Trend & Innovation Creative Consultancy within the thjnk group.

That's why for all Fulbrighters, we can be easily reached via Whatsapp (+49 40 41 34 99 34) and why I will always aim to use creativity for good.

Because who says, it's always the sneaker being charmed by marketeers.

Why not the sneaker AND the policy?

So: If you are a Fulbrighter or alumni pushing forward change in your organization, your party or your personal projects and you are looking to elevate your novel goals to public hype: Feel free to call, text, voice memo.

Let's build a brighter future, 2023-style.



**Isabelle Rogat** is a true marketing chameleon, having recently founded a Trend & Gen Z Hub in her Agency "thjnk". At 25, she is not only working on building more "new age competence" in the advertising industry, but also a 40 under 40, columnist, podcast host and young-board member. Ever since she has participated in a Fulbright Summer School at Georgia Tech, Atlanta, she has been closely associated with the program.

# UTOPIA ON EARTH A Vision of Planetary Possibilities

by Rózsa Simon

Envision a world filled with limitless planetary possibilities and the radiant glow of hope. In this transformed reality, Earth matures into a realm where bias-free cultures, regenerative systems, and actions yield net positive impacts. Poverty is a relic of the past, replaced by universal creeds of diversity, inclusion, and social justice. Humans coexist harmoniously with nature, resolving conflicts and diseases through global coordination. The looming threat of climate change begins to recede in this utopian preferred future. Businesses thrive with a purpose beyond profits, driven by a commitment to social good and triple bottom-line values of people, planet, and prosperity. Governmental rules, regulatory structures and incentives support this new set of values, ensuring education and healthcare as fundamental rights and not mere privileges. Urban infrastructures collaborate globally, irrespective of their country, forming an interconnected "superorganism." Humanity matures, fostering symbiotic relationships through open communication, profound empathy, and co-creation for mutual understanding. This brighter future is attainable, just waiting for us to bring it into reality.

## Democratizing technologies: unprecedented challenges and preferred futures

Our complex world faces "wicked" problems in a volatile environment, with various interconnected systems – such as society, the economy, politics, technology, and culture – making it challenging to address global issues. We currently find ourselves in a state filled with uncertainty, disruption and ambiguity – everything characterized by constant change and unpredictability. Many of our biggest concerns, such as climate change, nuclear conflict, and unexpected outcomes of AI, are rooted in the field of science. On the flip side, our most promising advancements including breakthroughs in healthcare, space exploration, and green technologies, also have their origins in science. This close link between scientific progress and our vision of the future correlates with culture, influencing art and politics. While technologies democratize to some extent, they bring unprecedented challenges, from disrupted supply chains due to globalization, ongoing digitalization of society amplifying vulnerability to cyberterrorism and cyberattacks, climate change impacting infrastructure, to the spread of polarizing information leading to geopolitical tensions.<sup>1</sup> Clearly, relying on the past to predict the future is untenable. Facing our "Brave New World" requires abandoning outdated tools and conventional thinking, which have led to challenges within broken and unjust systems today. Encouraging everyone to imagine and explore diverse futures is essential, even though not everyone adopts this mindset.

## Challenging the status quo

This is exactly why the future belongs to those who master the art of asking the right questions. Repetition of old questions leaves both businesses and individuals behind. Emerging technologies give rise to novel ideas about human nature, diverse ways of existence, and systems of identity. And it is precisely around these new notions that we must ask new questions that align with the changing concept of what it means to be human in the context of emerging technologies.<sup>2</sup> Entrepreneurs challenging the status quo are shaping the future

<sup>1</sup> Sweatt, K. et al., A Design Driven Guide for Entrepreneurs: Strategies for Starting Up in a Multiverse, p 3, 2023.  
<sup>2</sup> Fraga, D., "Human-Centricity is not Human-Centric Enough: What's Next for AI Powered Service Design?" April 4, 2023.

and prioritize innovation with inclusivity, fairness, trust, justice and a structural transformation. I have witnessed myself the resilience and determination it takes to forge a path toward innovation and progress. Uncertainty of funding, the complexity of market dynamics, and the ambiguity surrounding market fit challenge every entrepreneur. The new generation of entrepreneurs must lead the change in co-creating more just and regeneratively inclined economies, fostering an expansive mindset that seeks possibilities in a complex, innovative world. The focus is shifting from shareholder primacy to stakeholder equity. Some of these businesses build networks that broadly share success and profits across employees, shareholders, and the communities they serve. We stand at the threshold of a new entrepreneurial era, with an evolved sense of empathy, social justice, responsible leadership, and purpose.

### When the past can't predict the future, we need tools to uncover the unforeseen

As an advocate for startups and the entrepreneurial mindset, I embrace the quote, "If you're an entrepreneur, you should lean into your role as a designer," from the book *A Design-Driven Guide for Entrepreneurs*.<sup>3</sup> Design, in my view, is the catalyst for transformative change – imagining a shift from existing to preferred situations and enabling the envisioning of new possibilities and futures.

A systematic approach is needed to translate strategy into action, requiring a structured methodology, framework, roadmap, and a particular mindset. Design extends beyond aesthetics, involving design thinking principles for problem-solving – embodying empathy, defining problems, generating ideas, building prototypes, testing with people, iterative improvements, collaboration, and a user-centric focus to shape the entire business model.

A designer's mindset has an expanding scope of impact. Envisioning the future establishes a guiding mental model, planning to create an impact in a future state. In other words, we're essentially planning to create an impact in a future state that hasn't yet come into existence. In business innovation, designers facilitate consensus among diverse team members and stakeholders, prioritizing planning, facilitation, and research. Incorporating strategic design into business strategy aids risk mitigation through an iterative approach, identifying and mitigating potential risks early. This, in turn, minimizes the impact of unforeseen challenges, ensuring smoother project progression.

### I've distilled 6 recommendations based on my experiences and insights:

#### Lead by Learning – Embracing Feedback

Understanding feedback loops, with their benefits and limitations, is essential for progress. They regulate interconnected

relationships, maintaining balance. Conversely, the absence of feedback can disrupt large-scale systems. The financial market is a great example of systems that rely on feedback loops. Price shifts, triggered by investment reactions, initiate feedback loops that affect subsequent trading decisions. Regulatory and economic changes introduce additional feedback loops, as market participants respond and adapt to evolving conditions, shaping the system's dynamics. In entrepreneurship, integrating feedback loops and fostering a learning mindset deviates from norms, guiding products or processes in new directions for sustained success.

#### Embracing Systems Thinking and Ecosystems

Adopting systems thinking and mapping as practical tools shifts us from singular perspectives. We must transcend our current limitations by learning from the past and embracing a broader understanding of dynamic, interconnected, and complex environments. By understanding elements of a system, recognizing feedback loops, anticipating unintended consequences, and seeking out leverage points, we enhance our ability to address complex issues. Just like strengthening a muscle, the more we practice understanding elements within the system and that changes in one part can lead to far-reaching consequences, the more proficient we become at navigating these intricacies. It helps to see how actions can create a chain, where action may circle back to impact subsequent actions, with the loops being either reinforcing (positive feedback) or balancing (negative feedback). Applying system thinking and creating comprehensive maps identifies stakeholders and their relationships, offering a deeper perspective beyond current ones. This process identifies growth and change opportunities within the ecosystem, enhancing decision-making through focused allocation of efforts for maximum impact.

#### Foster Global Collaboration

Actively pursuing partnerships across borders and industry supports tackling collectively addressing global challenges. These partnerships involve startups, established companies, academic institutions, governments, and non-profits. Especially breaking barriers between the public and private sectors, such as university-industry collaborations, optimizes resource utilization.<sup>3</sup> These public-private partnerships through mentorship programs, funding initiatives, and networks bridge the gap and facilitate the transition of innovations from the research phase to practical implementation. Moreover, connecting local industries globally expedites technology assimilation and enhances technological integration, optimizing financial, human, and intellectual capital allocation for a positive impact on local and global economies.

#### Cultivate Adaptability and Resilience

Drawing from personal experiences as a female founder, this recommendation highlights the vital role of adaptability and resilience in entrepreneurial journeys, especially for women



Created by Rozsa Simon. (2023). *A Transformed Future*. Magic Media Canva, Nov. 22, 2023 powered by Stable Diffusion.

and underrepresented individuals. Entrepreneurial paths are filled with ambiguity, and embracing this ambiguity is a necessity: there is no predefined path – only an ocean of ambiguity surrounded by high- and low lights. To support founders, the startup ecosystem should prioritize resilience education through training programs, fostering the ability to bounce back, adapt to change, and maintain resilient mindfulness. This learning process requires dedication to personal growth practices, shaped by self-reflection and open, action-oriented mindsets. The entrepreneur mindset, rooted in abundance rather than scarcity – a must-have mentality,<sup>4</sup> emphasizes responsible leadership and a shift toward equitable practices as essential elements.

#### Integrate Sustainability

Sustainability must be at the core of every startup's mission. Incorporating eco-friendly practices, social responsibility, and ethical values from day one not only aligns businesses with global needs but also enhances their resilience and competitiveness. In the coming years, sustainability will become the norm and a standard practice for businesses. Neglecting it in an age in which eco-consciousness has become a necessity for survival not only risks obsolescence but also overlooks the chance to enhance business resilience and market relevance.

#### Embrace Design-Driven Strategies

Startup culture driven by design is marked by its receptiveness to new ideas, diverse perspectives, effective problem framing, and a commitment to continuous learning. This culture requires continuous training to keep teams informed about emerging trends, tools, and methodologies, enabling a systematic and proactive exploration of future possibilities to anticipate trends, challenges, and opportunities, thereby informing present-day decision-making and long-term planning.

A design-oriented approach fosters a human-centric mindset, ensuring that products, services, and entire businesses align with the genuine needs and preferences of the target audience, thereby increasing the probability of market acceptance and success. However, it's essential to recognize that human-centricity is evolving, and it must transcend its current state to adapt to changing technologies. With the emergence of AI as an example, a significant transformation in design is on the horizon, progressing towards inclusivity, accountability, robustness, transparency, privacy, and security.

In today's tech-driven landscape, establishing genuine user experiences necessitates collaboration with people rather than merely working for them. Interdisciplinary collaboration is especially critical in startup environments where resources are limited. A designerly mindset encourages diverse teams to work together, fostering a creative, holistic approach to problem-solving. Moreover, design-driven decision-making enhances adaptability and agility for startups. The iterative processes and quick prototyping emphasized in a design-oriented approach allow startups to test and refine ideas rapidly, minimizing the risk of investing in unsuccessful ventures.

Lastly, in the face of uncertainty, design-driven decision-making offers a structured framework for navigating ambiguity. By incorporating methodologies like strategic foresight, speculative design, and scenario planning, startups can anticipate potential challenges, devise contingency plans, and position themselves to thrive in unpredictable environments. This comprehensive approach ensures that entrepreneurs build companies as living and breathing organizations that endure with resilience.

In a fragmented world filled with conflict and discord, the potential of design and systems thinking stands as a beacon of hope, leading the way to a more optimistic perspective, leaving behind pessimism, and enabling to forge connections and mutual understanding. As we collectively venture forward, let us all take these lessons to heart, embracing the challenges, the setbacks, and the growth they bring. Together, with a mindset of radical optimism and justice, we can not just envision but create a brighter, more inclusive, and equitable future that reflects our collective dedication to positive change and resilience in the face of adversity. In that world where wicked problems become opportunities, and failures of the past are but a stepping stone to our collective success and wellbeing.

**Rózsa Simon** is our new Extended Board member for Sponsoring.

<sup>3</sup> "Global Cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation for Development: Unedited Draft." Prepared by the UNCTAD Secretariat. United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development, Inter-sessional Panel 2023-2024, p. 12, 6-7 November 2023, Lisbon, Portugal.  
<sup>4</sup> The abundance mentality is a mindset emphasizing that there are ample resources, opportunities, and successes for everyone, in contrast to the scarcity mentality. It promotes collaboration, cooperation, and the belief that collective success is achievable. Those with an abundance mentality are typically optimistic, open to sharing, and strive for win-win situations, fostering a positive and inclusive approach, commonly discussed in personal development, leadership, and business contexts.



History and Purpose

The German Fulbright Alumni e.V. was founded in Frankfurt in 1986 by former Fulbrighters and now has over 1,200 members. The Association is guided by the ideas of the program’s founder, Senator J. William Fulbright, to bring together people of different nations to contribute to world peace through better international understanding.

The Association gathers globally minded students, scholars, and practitioners of a wide range of academic fields and professional expertise. Most of our members have spent a Fulbright year in the United States, and the Fulbright Alumni e.V. serves as the platform for which former grantees can continue to promote and work toward global understanding. We are committed to diversity, acceptance, and true internationality and perpetually strive to encourage further education regarding others’ customs, histories, and challenges.

Based on personal and academic experiences and insights gained through participation in an international exchange program, the fundamental tenets of the mission of German Fulbright Alumni e.V. members are the following:

- to strengthen and support cross-cultural contacts and exchange between Fulbrighters from all over the world
- to encourage dialogue and interaction between international scholars, experts, and activists on topics important to the political, social, and cultural life of our societies

In promoting its political support for the Fulbright program, our Association maintains close but independent contact with the Fulbright Commission in Berlin to support the German-American Fulbright program.

The Fulbright Alumni e.V. is supported solely by its members. Grants and contributions from foundations, corporations, and individuals are welcomed.

Advisory Board

Dr. Georg Schütte  
Hans-Burkhardt Steck  
Prof. Dr. Jürgen Kocka  
Ingo Zamperoni

National Events

The Fulbright Alumni e.V. organizes a series of national events every year in order to realize the goals mentioned above. Equally important are the exchanges fostered among our members and interdisciplinary discussions on current issues.

General Assembly & Annual Ball

Every year, all members are invited to the General Assembly. At the Assembly, each board member reports on his or her activities during the year, followed by the election of a new board. After the General Assembly, the annual Ball takes place to mark another year in celebration.

Welcome Meeting

Each Fall, the Welcome Meeting offers an exciting opportunity for contacts and networking. Our main goal is to welcome back German returnees as well as get to know American Fulbrighters just embarking on their Fulbright experience in Germany. The meetings foster discussion forums to address issues relevant to those newly returned from a year abroad and jointly serve as an introduction to the Fulbright family beyond the exchange year.

Strategy Meeting

At the Strategy Meeting, the most devoted core of our members gather to discuss the present and future of the Association we all hold so dear.

Sailing Trip

“Bright People under Full Sail:” International sailing trips on the Baltic Sea have been organized every two years since 1991.

Community Weekend

Our yearly summer event, which has been held in Saxony since 2000, is primarily geared towards families with children – however, anyone is welcome to join as a member of the Fulbright family!

Our Services

The Association annually publishes the national journal, the FRANKly as well as the Fulbright PULSE Podcast together with the Fulbright Commission. As a service to the general public, the national office provides information and assistance to any private person, university, or institution on questions of cultural and academic exchange with the United States. Each regional chapter contacts and assists American Fulbright visiting scholars in its local area. For further information, please contact our national office in Frankfurt or one of our officers listed here.

Activities

Based on a young, lively, and broad-based membership, our Association organizes a diverse range of regional and nation-wide events. Admission is reduced for members of the Association, but all events are open to guests and members of partner organizations.

Regional Chapter Activities

Regional chapters organize more informal cultural and social events on a monthly basis, including lectures, discussions, and Stammtische. To find out about the next Stammtisch in your area, contact the regional coordinators listed to the right. Other typical events open to everyone include movies, outdoor activities, and cultural events. Of course, we also celebrate American holidays, such as Independence Day and Thanksgiving.

International Activities

Our Association places emphasis on strengthening personal contacts among Fulbright alumni from around the world. Some core activities are listed here:

- 2023 Fulbright Association 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Denver
- 2023 ENAM Conference “Our Energy Future in a World of Disinformation” in Dublin, Ireland
- 2022 Fulbright Association 45<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Washington, D.C., USA
- 2022 ENAM Conference in Cagliari, Italy
- 2019 Fulbright Association 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference in Washington, D.C., USA
- 2019 ENAM Conference “Disinformation: Fake News of New Trolls” in Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria
- 2018 ENAM Conference “One Europe – One Transatlantic Partnership” in Cologne, Germany
- 2018 Fulbright Association 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference in Puebla, Mexico
- 2018 “Alumni-Focused Strategy Seminar: Best Practices, Success Stories and Alumni Associations” in Yerevan, Armenia
- 2017 Fulbright Association 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Washington, D.C.
- 2016 ENAM Conference “Energy, Renewables & Sustainability” in Baku, Azerbaijan
- 2016 Water Act! Heritage and Innovation Symposium, Ifrane/Morocco
- 2016 Fulbright Association 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Washington, D.C.
- 2015 International Fulbright Conference “Water Act”, Paris
- 2015 Fulbright Association 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Atlanta

Focus Conferences

Different regional chapters of our Association organize several national conferences and seminars every year, usually covering a specific topic.

A selection of past events:

- 2023 Transatlantic Alumni Conference “Reimagining Transatlantic Bridges for a Brighter Future,” Erfurt
- 2014 International Fulbright Conference “Entrepreneurs in a Borderless World,” Berlin
- 2011 The German Fulbright Alumni Association at 25: Shaping a Changing World, Berlin
- 2009 change(a)crisis, Munich
- 2007 Climate Change, Erlangen
- 2005 J. William Fulbright Centennial, Frankfurt
- 2004 EU Enlargement, Berlin
- 2002 Quo vadis USA, Berlin
- 2001 Nutrition, Calw
- 1999 Biotechnology, Frauenchiemsee
- 1998 Intercultural Communications, Frankfurt
- 1997 Managing Public Organizations, Frankfurt
- 1996 A Chance for Global Understanding, Berlin
- 1995 Environmental Strategy, Heidenheim
- 1994 Where is our New Frontier? Stuttgart
- 1993 Market Leadership and Brand Names, Böblingen
- 1992 Health, Cologne
- 1991 German Reunification and the Future of German-American Relations, Berlin
- 1990 Signs for Tomorrow’s Architecture, Landscape, and Urban Development, Darmstadt
- 1989 The French Revolution in American and German Perspectives, Regensburg
- 1988 The United States and Germany: Corporate Cultures in Comparison, Mannheim

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# Amerigo Award

by David Patrician



Receiving the Amerigo Award in Florence, Italy; photo: Stefano Casati

Last December, I was honored to travel to Florence, Italy to receive the Amerigo ENAM (European Network of American Alumni Associations) Media Award, nominated by the German Fulbright Alumni Association.

I began my career as a journalist reporting in both the English and Korean languages for the Voice of America in Washington, D.C. My Fulbright journalism award brought me to Germany, where I have lived and worked in Hamburg for the past 10 years. It has been a pleasure reporting in both the English and German languages for a variety of news outlets, including the Deutsche Welle, ARD, RTL Nord, N-tv and the Hamburger Abendblatt daily newspaper. Whether reporting on transatlantic issues, or local themes such as Hamburg's annual harbor celebration, it is important to thoroughly research the issues and provide accurate reporting. In this day and age of fake news and ever-increasing misinformation, this has become even more important for reliable journalism. A free and independent press helps ensure that people have access to a variety of perspectives, enabling them to form their own opinions and participate in democratic processes. Looking towards the future, I strongly believe this is something we should never take for granted.

When I received my Amerigo Award, I also learned more about ENAM, a forum designed to connect alumni from various U.S. exchange programs who are currently based in Europe. I was told ENAM's primary objective is to foster stronger relationships among member associations and encourage active participation within the larger U.S. Exchange Alumni Community. The European Network of American Alumni Associations currently serves as a platform that links 36 countries in Europe and Eurasia, encompassing a network

of more than 300,000 alumni, and recently held its annual meeting in Dublin, Ireland.

The Amerigo-ENAM Media Award honors European journalists who contribute significantly to a better knowledge of American society in their own countries. The ceremony, hosted in the U.S. Consulate in Florence, saw seven Italian journalists receive this distinguished journalism award. Most of the ceremony was in Italian, but near the end they switched to English. Here I learned that each year, ENAM awards the Europe Award to one European based journalist covering transatlantic issues, and that is when they proceeded to call my name and gave me the award.

It was a great honor to receive this prize. In addition, I was proud to represent the German Fulbright Alumni Association, one of the largest Fulbright alumni groups in the world. Senator Fulbright once said, "Education is the best means, probably the only means, by which nations can cultivate a degree of objectivity about each other's behavior and intentions." In these challenging times, I can only agree with him.



**David Patrician** is the former regional coordinator for the Hamburg Fulbright Alumni Chapter. He is a journalist and conference moderator.

Interview with local tribes elder in Kabul Afghanistan; photo: David Patrician



Interview with German Astronaut, Alexander Gerst; photo: David Patrician

## Spring Ball, unsere Perle

by Sara Verma and Caroline Gunderson

The Alumni Association was thrilled to celebrate the return of its annual ball last March. Traditionally a mid-winter occasion that served to bring a bit of festivity to a—ahem—dreary German winter, this year's 2023 Spring Ball took place at the end of March in the beautiful Hansestadt, Hamburg. Our weekend, Caroline and Sara's, i.e., roommates for the Spring Ball weekend and your co-authors of this brief retelling, started with our reunion at Altona Bahnhof, with Sara having traveled to Hamburg from Heidelberg.

We enjoyed a catch-up that afternoon before heading to the official opening get-together at Restaurant Blaue Blume. Among the most precious parts of the weekend was the chance to see, catch-up with, and just enjoy the company of so many familiar faces—many of whom have become good friends throughout our Fulbright experiences. In the warmth of this atmosphere, and against a picturesque sunset, dinner went until quite late. Nonetheless, the next day's events urged us to enjoy a solid night's rest for the festivities to come.

First on the agenda for Saturday was grabbing a Franzbrötchen on the way to the Member's General Assembly at the Bucerius Law School. Situated in Hamburg's beloved garden, Planten und Blomen, our walk to the law school through the morning's gray sky and sporadic rain very quickly taught us the accuracy of the expression, *nirgendwo scheint die Sonne so schön grau wie in Hamburg*.

Schön war der Tag. Schön regnerisch aber auch.

The General Assembly itself gave members the opportunity to hear about the initiatives pursued within the Association throughout the year—always an impressive slate—and culminated in the election of the 2023-24 executive and extended boards. After casting our votes for the new board, we were very excited to tromp through the rain (*schön grau*) to prepare for the ball.

Sunday morning Speicherstadt Walking Tour Group; photo: Caroline Gunderson



Sara and Caroline; photo: Caroline Gunderson



The historic MARKK am Rothenbaum was our venue for the evening. More than a little reminiscent of the film, *Night at the Museum*; the atmosphere was lively well into the night. We started with words from our honored guest, Hamburg's General Consul Jason Chue, and the awarding of the 2023 Mülert Award to Mersedeh Ghazaei. We were, and continue to be, grateful to both guests for joining us for the evening and for their openness to our Fulbright community.

The much anticipated opening of the dance floor followed, with President of the Alumni Association, Andreas Dewald, and Alexandra Drexler taking our breath away on the dance-floor. From then on, the music spanned the spectrum, with everything from Viennese Walzer to "Barbie Girl." Though perhaps surprising for many to see the U.S. Fulbrighters put on their best 90s moves to "99 Luftballons", we'd argue that even more so was the Germans' line dance to "Cotton-Eyed Joe." We suppose, in our expert opinions, this is what cultural exchange looks like.

Well rested from the night of dancing, and the many rounds of Kicker at the nearby Pony Bar that followed, we reconvened Sunday morning for brunch at Markt König, before splitting into groups visiting the Hamburger Kunsthalle and touring the Speicherstadt. After our walking tour, we enjoyed the cherry blossomed HafenCity – soaking up the surprise rays of sun before ending the weekend with a somewhat expedient jog to the train station.

**Caroline Gunderson** is our current VP for events.

**Sara Verma** joined the Extended Board as our Contact for U.S. Grantees. (p. 6, 9)



# Beginning of a New Era ENAM Conference Dublin, January 2023

by Daniel Hofmann

At the beginning of the year, another ENAM conference took place. This time around, the conference was co-hosted by the IUSA (Ireland United States Alumni Association) and aligned with their annual IUSA conference taking place in Dublin.



Andreas Dewald, Caroline Gunderson, Allie Drexler and Daniel Hofmann at the IUSA dinner

Together with other members of our GAA-Network, four of our board members (Andreas Dewald (President), Caroline Gunderson (VP Events), Allie Drexler (Extended Board Member Mentoring) and Daniel Hofmann (Extended Board Outreach)), participated in the two-day event.

The first day was kicked-off by opening remarks by the ENAM secretary general, Tonia Arahova, and the president of the IUSA, Chris Gordon. Afterwards, the IUSA organized an interesting panel on the topic of “Energy security in times of disinformation”. The key takeaways of which were that we will have to diversify our energy sourcing strategies and that we need instrumental infrastructural change for the shift to cleaner energies.

Following the lunch break, which included many great discussions on ENAM and its potential, the general assembly was started by the board of directors. To kick off the assembly, they gave a recap on their activities and initiatives, mainly the conferences in Cagliari and Budapest. As there were several questions unanswered after the latest general assembly, the members present had the opportunity to give feedback and raise their concerns and wishes. As debates on the structure and the way forward were quite intense, the general assembly was extended to the next day.

After the many discussions, the eventful day was concluded with a lovely three course seated dinner to celebrate the IUSA and some of their most dedicated members. The ceremony also included remarks by the U.S. ambassador to Ireland and was filled with laughter and many great conversations. It is rumored that once the formal part was concluded, there was also a more informal gathering in the pubs of Dublin, most notably the famous Temple Bar (where the term “bar” apparently has nothing to do with the place where you can get drinks).



The attendees of the ENAM general assembly, photo: Julia C. Michael

For the second day, the attendees met up in the prestigious Trinity College in the heart of Dublin. The day started with the continuation of the discussions on the structure and the way forward. Furthermore, as communicated beforehand, the general assembly also included elections. The newly elected board of directors consists of some re-elected and some newly elected members, including one GAA (German American Alumni) Network representative, Jörg Hafer (PPP). The newly elected board promised more open communication, a more transparent structure of the board of directors, and an answer to the discussion on the structure and funding for ENAM.

After the conclusion of the general assembly, the focus for the afternoon of the second day shifted to networking and exploring the picturesque Trinity College Library and campus. First, the participants got to tour the famous library, which is home to 200,000 books, including an original version of the Book of Kells. Afterwards, the group had the honor to spend some time in the Professors’ Club for some mix and mingling. The hallowed halls were a memorable experience.

So what has happened since? The board of directors has convened multiple times and some communication was made leading up to the conference in Georgia, which took place in October (right after the submission deadline for this year’s FRANKly). The outcomes of the conference will showcase the progress of ENAM and should be a good indicator of the opportunities for our association moving forward. Stay tuned!

**Daniel Hofmann** is the FAeV’s extended board member for Outreach (p. 9)



The long room of the Trinity College Library



Trinity College campus in the heart of Dublin

All Photos by Daniel Hofmann





Time for a group picture!  
photo: Johannes Elwardt

## COMMUNITY WEEKEND

# Königstein – A Different Way

by Petra Göbel, Dr. Andreas Plöger und Falk Handschug

Seventeen instead of over thirty hikers in the 22<sup>nd</sup> year of the Family, or Community Weekend. The kids were mostly not there because most of them are now old enough to already be on their year abroad, on their “Abreise”, doing internships and studying for exams. Also the “hard core” was thinned out: two weddings and a confirmation prevented some regulars from coming, but still: we had two wonderful days of hiking as a community and many good conversations including sore muscles and evenings full of “Wizard”.

We visited Fortress Königstein for the umpteenth time but it was exciting as always – and we learned new things, this time during a guided tour through the cellars and casemates. We learned that a fussy commander’s daughter was walled in alive and still haunts the walls during fog and full moons. However, due to good weather, we were not able to verify this – unlike the Eierschecke tasting, which again showed excellent results.

The second hike included a ferry, the S-Bahn, another ferry and the Kirnitzschtalbahn. Falk slightly downplayed our undertaking as usual: he announced a small hike – flat and only 8.2 km. Well, the slopes were not challenging, but at the end we hit the 16 km mark. Our Fulbright offspring even made it to 25 km when they set off for the hitherto unexplored Schmilka and of course also tested the ice cream parlor there – as well as the great opportunities for play back at the family oasis (now Aktiv-Hotel Stock&Stein).

And: after 22 years, a WhatsApp group was finally set up with the clear resolution: we’ll be back!

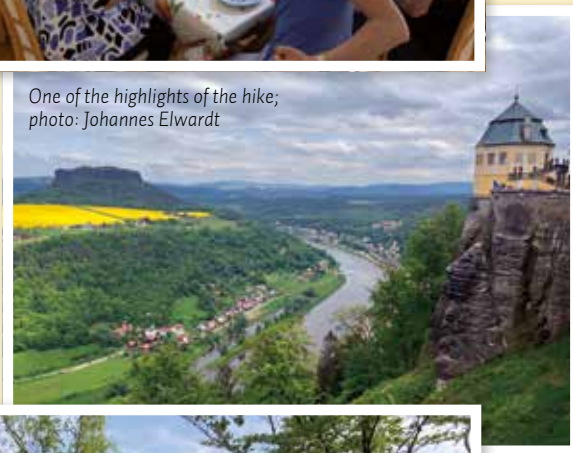
Hiking through the  
Sächsische Schweiz;  
photo: Dr. Andreas  
Plöger



Goodbye-“Kaffee und  
Kuchen” in Radebeul;  
photo: Elke Handschug-Brosin



One of the highlights of the hike;  
photo: Johannes Elwardt



Enjoying the view; photo: Johannes Elwardt

# Sailing Trip

by Anna Angelika Meißner

From 25 - 27 August, 18 Fullis from Germany and Switzerland were able to – finally – spend a very special event together after a two year pause due to the pandemic: the Fulbright Sailing trip on Lake Constance.

Three yachts, Tonga, Sundowner and Time Out, chartered by Franz (thank you Franz!), were lying ready Friday evening in the harbor of Kressbronn, waiting for their respective crews. The journey was off to an adventurous start for some as the evening prior, heavy rains and storms led to the camping ground in Lindau to be evacuated – trees were toppled, leading to many detours.

Our sail-happy crews spent their first evening by themselves: while the Tonga’s crew created a home cooked meal, the Fulbrighters on the Sundowner brought some delicacies back from the Streetfood Festival in the harbor and the Time Out-ers went out to eat. Because new storms were forecast starting 2pm on Saturday, all three yachts put out to sea early in the morning, that is at about 10-11am. The experienced skippers Axel and Franz proved to be very patient teachers for the up-and-coming sailors Martina and Anna. Despite their best efforts, it was better for Franz to take over parking in the heavy winds. The Sundowner made knots as soon as Satur-

day and practiced the “Man Over Board”-maneuver using a live object (Matthias), while the Time Out with their visible Fulbright pineapple mascot was busy preparing seven liters of Planters Punch for all three crews upon their return (thank you Robert!). Before the big party started, all Fulbrighters got back their strength during a meal at the ‘Kressbronner Fischerhütte’.

On Sunday, it was only the adventurous and determined Sundowner crew of eight who dared to go out onto the windy and rainy Lake. The others gratefully took up Robert’s offer to serve crêpes flambéed in leftover rum for lunch. He spent three hours in the yacht’s cabin and his guests were able to enjoy the deliciousness of 40 pancakes. Even the returned shellbacks of the Sundowner got their share in the end.

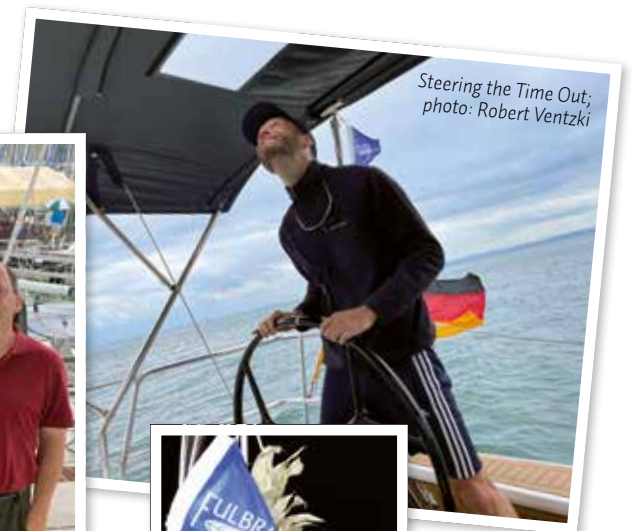
While the weather did thwart the sailing ambitions somewhat, it was no bother at all. The sailing weekend offered exciting (re-)unions, interesting exchanges and a happy time together. And so everyone who joined the trip on Lake Constance agrees: See you next year!



The Sundowner is ready to go;  
photo: Rene Kusch



The whole Crew! photo: Franz Berger



Steering the Time Out;  
photo: Robert Ventzki



A fitting mascot: The  
Fulbright Pineapple;  
photo: Anna Angelika  
Meißner



The workshop participants during the reception in the U.S. embassy; photo: Rafał Pieprzyk.



## Avengers Assemble

# The First Ever Fulbrighter and Community Engagement Workshop

by Daniel Hofmann

In July, two members of the FAeV, our president, Andreas Dewald, and our extended board member in charge of outreach, Daniel Hofmann, had the opportunity to participate in the first ever international “Fulbrighter and Community Engagement Workshop” in London.

Together with 26 other community leaders from different countries like Australia, Poland and Nigeria, just to name a few, we spent two days in London to come together to share successes and challenges, to learn from others’ best practices and to discuss how we as a whole can collectively better support our Fulbright alumni and grantees. The group also included our fellow German friend Daniel Wagner of the Fulbright Commission, who gave great insights on how a commission can support an alumni organization.

The two-day workshop included different formats ranging from presentations to world-café discussions. Each of the community leaders had the opportunity to present one initiative they are particularly passionate about, which can also serve as an inspiration for the rest of the group. Out of the many noteworthy activities of the Fulbright Alumni e.V., the focuses of our presentation were on the GAA (German American Alumni) Network, including the Transatlantic Alumni Conference (TAC) and our mentoring program. Both initiatives were very well received by the other participants.

An additional focal point of the workshop was the presentation of the Fulbrighter App. The inventor of the app, Rob Ellis,

who was also the organizer of the workshop, and Hivebrite, the company behind the app, presented the app’s great opportunities in various sessions, ranging from an event to a newsletter function. Overall, it is clear that the app has a lot of potential that seems to not yet be used at this point. If you have not signed up for it, you definitely should. The Fulbright Alumni e.V. is also on there!

Another highlight was participating in the reception for the new cohort of UK Fulbright grantees who started their journey to the U.S. in September. In the beautiful U.S. Embassy in Nine Elms (yes, the building in the Netflix show “The Diplomat” is the real U.S. Embassy), the workshop participants had the chance to chat with the grantees and embassy employees alike. It was great to see and feel the excitement of the new Fulbrighters waiting for their journey to begin.

So what was the outcome of the two days in London? While the presentations included many great ideas for potential initiatives, and the workshop was a great opportunity to further strengthen the network and the visibility of the Fulbright Alumni e.V., the discussions on concrete action items are currently still underway. In the next FRANKly, we might already have a follow-up story. Stay tuned!

**Daniel Hofmann** is the FAeV’s extended board member for Outreach (p. 9)



Daniel Hofmann presenting the mentoring initiative during the workshop; photo: Daniel Hofman.



Andreas Dewald, Daniel Wagner and Daniel Hofmann at the reception of UK U.S. Fulbright grantees in the U.S. embassy; photo: Daniel Hofmann



Andreas Dewald presenting the concept for the TAC - Transatlantic Alumni conference – during the workshop; photo: Daniel Hofmann

Our Berlin Fulbrighters getting ready to clean up! photo: Alexandra Schaller



## World Cleanup Day 2023

by Alexandra Schaller

World Cleanup Day took place on 16 September and the Fulbright alumni were part of the event. World Cleanup Day is a bottom-up citizen movement around the world to clean up pollution, a great opportunity for the FAeV to make use of its Sustainability position within the extended board. Thus, a group of ten volunteers came together in Berlin to clean up Treptower Park. They collected almost 15 full bags of garbage. No walk was too inconvenient, and trash was even fished out of the River Spree. Actions like this are now being carried out more frequently in the area of sustainability and are being planned across the country. Through their engagement, the Fulbright alumni not only want to contribute to international exchange, but also to a sustainable future. Therefore, future projects will be designed to be more sustainable. Another Cleanup is already planned for the spring and will be similar to World Cleanup Day in September. The cleaning materials will be provided and together, the Fulbright alumni will choose a place to clean up. Fulbright is not only a great place to exchange ideas, but also a great opportunity to do something good for the environment.

**Alexandra Schaller** is our current extended board member for Sustainability. (p. 10)



After a successful Cleanup; photo: Alexandra Schaller





# A Welcoming Weekend in Nuremberg

by Lorelei Nichols

This year's FAEV Welcome Meeting took place in Nuremberg, Bavaria's second largest city. The meeting took place October 6-8 and was a wonderful weekend of cross-cultural connections, networking, and vibrant conversations.

For those able to get to Nuremberg on Friday, the weekend started with a tour of the Nuremberg Trials Memorial: Fulbrighters were able to visit Courtroom 600 where the Trials against Nazi war criminals from 1945-1946 took place. Following the guided tour of this historical site, Fulbrighters were then able to attend a welcome dinner at the Trödelstuben, a restaurant featuring typical Franconian cuisine such as "Nürnberger Bratwurst" and "Brotzeit", a traditional snack often containing various kinds of cheese, meat, bread, and fruit.

On Saturday morning, the conference portion of the weekend kicked into gear. The Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg) graciously welcomed around seventy excited Fulbright alumni, current U.S. Fulbrighters, and returning German Fulbrighters through its doors. The day started off with coffee and tea during check-in and Fulbrighters of diverse backgrounds were able to mingle amongst themselves before being greeted by the German Fulbright Alumni Association. During the greeting, VP of Events, Caroline Gunderson, gave an incredible overview of the German Fulbright Alumni Association for the fresh faces in the room, and then Professor Andreas Falke, head of the DAI (Deutsch-Amerikanisches Institut Nürnberg), gave a

speech on his own Fulbright experiences in the same room that he had lectured in years before as a professor. Following this, Public Affairs Officer Julius Tsai detailed how he came to work in international affairs. After opening the floor to questions, Bernd Riedel and Sara Verma introduced the group to the Unconference, an opportunity for Fulbrighters to lead and participate in conversations of their choosing.

For the "UnConference" Fulbrighters were invited to come up with topics that they would like to discuss with other members of the Fulbright Family. Then, the topics were voted on and organized into a schedule with rooms for each topic. Except, unlike traditional conferences, the Unconference con-

sisted of group discussions as opposed to lectures from a few individuals. Consequently, no preparation was required and every Fulbrighter was invited to share their experiences and thoughts. In other words: there were no rules!

When Bernd asked the group to raise their hands if they had ever participated in an Unconference before, the majority of the group remained still. However, despite the abundance of first-time Unconference attendees, excitement and participation was through the roof. There ended up being around fourteen different topics spanning a wide variety of ideas:

- The Idea of Being Noticed
- The Chance to Travel
- Memory Culture and Historical Importance
- The Spirit of the Fahrräder (All things bikes)
- Drinking Culture in the U.S. vs. Germany
- German vs. American Humor
- Sex Sells and Dating
- How does the internet prepare you for Germany and the U.S.
- Non-Violence Strategies and Drama in the Classroom/ Theater Games
- Gendered Language in English and German
- Research Differences between the U.S. and Germany
- Dialect Struggles
- Santa/Christmas Traditions in the U.S. and Germany

There were undoubtedly too many sessions for one person to attend all of them, but luckily each session leader was invited to recap their session(s) with the group. The Non-Violence Strategies/Theater Games Group even did an avant-garde performance for all of the Fulbrighters. Needless to say, the Unconference was a huge success and led to some enlightening conversations about ourselves and our relations to the world around us.

Following the Unconference, we were invited to attend a reception with refreshments at the DAI Nuremberg. There, Fulbrighters were able to learn about how to get involved with the DAI and give back to their communities while meet-

ing other members of the Fulbright Family. Fulbrighters were encouraged to get involved through the library or through volunteering their time through events promoting literacy, cultural exchange, and curiosity. Soon after, our dinner at the Spießgesellen, which also served traditional Bavarian cuisine, started.

On Sunday morning, sleepy-eyed scholars were able to attend brunch at "Restaurant im Literaturhaus". Afterwards, some headed home while others stayed for the city walking tour and "Das Zukunftsmuseum" (The Future Museum), fitting for this edition's focus on "Building a Brighter Future".

All in all, I believe the 2023 Fulbright Germany Alumni Association Welcome Meeting was a huge success. Fulbrighters' dedication to learning, cross-cultural connections, and giving back was consistently present throughout the entire weekend. As a first-year English Teaching Assistant, I feel excited and proud to belong to such an amazing community.



**Lorelei Nichols** is a current U.S. ETA in Bad Reichenhall and Piding, Germany. She earned her Bachelor's degree in English with a minor in German and a teaching certificate from the University of North Texas. Before Fulbright, she was an English and SAT/ACT tutor for K-12 students, a student teacher, and a "SPARK for German" volunteer in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Lorelei is passionate about encouraging lifelong learning, critical thinking, and empathy through literacy and cross-cultural experiences. She loves to read, write, explore the outdoors, and spend time with her two cats Cheese and Xander, who unfortunately are about 5,300 miles away!!



Public Affairs Officer Julius Tsai sharing his experiences working in international affairs



An intense game of rock, paper, scissors in the "planning phase" of the Unconference



The brave volunteers proposing their Unconference sessions

All photos by the German Fulbright Alumni Association.





The German alumni are ready for the Fulbright Conference 2023! photo: Fulbright Association

# “Our Responsibility for a Better World”

## 46<sup>th</sup> Annual conference of the U.S. Fulbright Association in Denver, Colorado, Oct 19 - 22

by Andreas Dewald, Wiltrud Hammelstein, Marius Brinkmann, Enes Karacaoglan

For some of us four German FAeV representatives, it was the first time to the Mile High city. Enes joined as a current Fulbrighter. On his way to Denver, he was unsure whether he would be able to meaningfully contribute to the conference due to his being relatively inexperienced compared to some of the other attendees. For Wiltrud it was a bit of a trip down memory lane. During her Fulbright year in 1987, she had passed through Denver on the California Zephyr from Chicago to San Francisco. Passengers were allowed to step off the train to explore Union Station and its vicinity while the engine of the train was changed for the Rocky Mountains passage. Wiltrud remembered the city streets as “clean with crisp air.”

36 years later the Mile High city welcomed about 300 Fulbrighters from the U.S. and around the world with summer temperatures and splendid blue skies once more. Denver is

said to have about 300 sunshine days per year. While some had time to explore the Colorado capital with its downtown area for shopping, business and the arts, our President Andi participated in the Youth Summit.

The conference started Thursday evening with greetings from the Executive Director of the Fulbright Association, John Bader, and the Chair of the Board, Cynthia Ackron Baldwin. The keynote speech was given by Juileanna L. Richardson, the founder of the “History Makers”, who are committed to preserving, developing and providing easy access to archival collections of thousands of African American video oral histories. The following reception gave us the opportunity to see old friends again and to meet new ones. We representatives of the German FAeV assembled at our exhibitor’s table where we provided information about our association. Quite a number of participants had spent their Fulbright in Germany and we loved to hear their stories. Marius used this time to present our new mentoring program aimed at automatically matching mentors and mentees, which was met with success: The Fulbright Association is planning on using the model for their local chapters!

The next two days were packed with presentations, plenaries, panels, poster presentations and round tables around the conference’s key focus topics: climate change and the environment, food and water insecurity, social justice and prejudice, health and education. Contrary to Enes’ expectations, the conference also involved lively activities by the party group which included a Salsa club on Saturday.



Going Salsa Dancing with new Fulbright Friends; photo: Andreas Dewald

One of the highlights of the U.S. Fulbright annual conference since 2000 has been the Selma Jeanne Cohen Dance Lecture. This year’s awardee, Tria Blu Wakpa, spoke about the “Decolonial possibilities of Native American Dance” including a North American hand talk workshop and an indigenous land acknowledgement. The very first Selma Jeanne Cohen Dance Lecture awardee, Leslie Friedman from the Lively Foundation, conducted a workshop on “Dance – the universal language”. A big hello for Wiltrud, as she had participated in the annual conference when Leslie gave her first lecture in 2000.

A first this year was the Quiet Room, to which anyone could retire to find some calm and quiet moments. This was sponsored by the Autism Society of Colorado. The U.S. Fulbright Association has a Fulbrighters with Disabilities group, which was recognized for their outstanding work at the Leadership Awards Luncheon.

Inspired by the Spanish Interest group, we discussed the founding of a German equivalent and already motivated a U.S. Fulbrighter who spent his year in Germany to get started.

The conference reaffirmed that, regardless of where we are in our Fulbright journey, we are all part of the same Fulbright family. We all left Denver with fond memories and projects to look forward to. See you at next years’ conference!



Find out more about the Fulbright Conference here



Our exhibition table with Fulbrighters who went to Germany; photo: Wiltrud Hammelstein

# New Members

Welcome to the Fulbright Alumni e.V.! As a member, you become part of a unique network of change-makers. Participate in our national and regional activities, meet inspiring people, and contribute new ideas!

Atraa	Al-Hashimi	Christian	Neuner
Elif	Bayat	Charlotte	Hanby
Christiane	Schneider	Christoph	Timm
Silas	Pohl	Julius	Hoffmann
Georg	Ulrich	Reinhard	Lipperheide
Ann-Sophia	Müller	Annika	Agrawal
Adrian	Berger	Valerie	Doze
Lisa	Stybor	Delicia	Kamins
Lukas	Kirchdorfer	Johanna	Hoppe
Kristina	Wennemar	Alvin	De Guzman
Florian	Schütte	Julika	Enslin
Sara Patricia	Monteiro	Pierre	Moeckel
Anna Louis	Hohmann	Michaela	Medic-
Finn	Andresen		Wannenwetsch
Muhamet	Idrizi	Kayleen	Hannigan
Debby	Peplies	Sara	Daub
Katharina	Meierjohann	Ermin	Batilovic
Johanna	Bayon	Said	Ghneim
Jasmin	Sachtleben	Lukas	Dausend
Marie	Windeck	Recep Nuri	Arbursu
Alexandra	Shrago-Spechler	Stephanie	Schofield
Iwo	Hasenkamp	Philip	Velie
Andreas	Schönleben	Konstantin	Pelz
Johannes	Wiedemann	Katie	Hileman
Felix	Gephart	Sascha	Sackniess
Marie	Beinert	Vera	Grusnick
Lothar	Hofmann	Katja	Manthei
Farid	Infed	Lia	Bomheuer

# Remembered

## Celebrating the Lives of Alumni and Friends

Jürgen Koenemann	March 2023
Bruno Preilowski	June 2023
Andrew Johnson	August 2023



# New Online Series: Fulbright Brown Bag Lunch Series Started in August

by Lisa Schmitz

In August, we held the first session of the new Fulbright Brown Bag Lunch Series: "The War in Ukraine. A Talk about Life in a Country under Siege" was held by Fulbright alumna Dr. Hanna Shvindina who is from Sumy in northeastern Ukraine and who is currently working as an associate professor at American University Kyiv. She shared with us her experience of life in a war-torn country.

Hanna described how she had to make many quick decisions in the first days after the unlawful Russian invasion of Ukraine, trying to prepare herself for the worst. The Sumy region borders Russia on two sides, to the north and to the east. When Russian forces first invaded Ukraine, they took parts of the region and attacked the city. Not knowing how long Sumy would be under attack, Hanna needed to make sure she had enough food, water and cash, knew where she could hide from shelling, and how to get out of the city if needed. In a Russian airstrike in early March 2022 that hit a residential area, 22 civilians and four soldiers were killed.

The Russians never captured the city, though. The residents

of Sumy successfully kept the invader's forces out. The newly formed self-defense forces and ordinary residents like Hanna helped disrupt the Russian supply lines from the Russian border to Kyiv and this way contributed to preventing Russian forces from successfully surrounding the capital and capturing it. In the face of the war, the Ukrainian people have been showing incredible resilience and pragmatism.

Hanna is also a teacher and together with colleagues, she has initiated a project that aims to enhance the current mental health care infrastructure in the Sumy region by offering comprehensive training and support to health care staff, community leaders and others that are affected by the war.

Hanna was joined by Ian Campbell, the new Minister-Counselor for Political Affairs at the U.S. Embassy Berlin, who talked about how the war in Ukraine has affected the transatlantic alliance. If Vladimir Putin's plan was to drive a wedge between the United States and its allies, and to potentially even destroy NATO, this plan has failed. The transatlantic alliance is stronger than it has been in a long time.

The Fulbright Brown Bag Lunch Series provides an informal setting to interact with Fulbright guest speakers from all around the world. We intend to address a wide range of issues including current topics, which directly or indirectly affect transatlantic relations.

Thanks to all the participants who made our first Brown Bag Lunch Series session such a huge success. Stay tuned for more.

If you would like to support Hanna in her effort to support her fellow Sumy residents, you can find out more here: <http://educationforlife.com.ua/>

**Lisa Schmitz** is responsible for international activities within the FAeV's extended board. (p. 7)

All pictures by FAeV

## REGIONAL CHAPTERS



4<sup>th</sup> of July party with U.S. Consul General Norman Thatcher Scharpf; photo: Knut Mittwollen

## My Frankfurt

by Martin Kohler

The year 2023 was marked by an anniversary for the Frankfurt Regional Group. Since 1997, our annual Independence Day celebration has been held in Knut and Christa's garden in Offenbach – thank you for your warm hospitality! To celebrate this anniversary and the 4<sup>th</sup> of July in the spirit of German-American friendship, U.S. Consul General Norman Thatcher Scharpf, accompanied by his wife and daughter, was our guest of honor.

Another typical American feast that the Frankfurt Regional Group celebrates every year is Thanksgiving. Last November, the regional group was invited by Isabelle and Oliver to celebrate Thanksgiving in style with turkey from the grill.

In addition to these annual celebrations and events, the regional group meets every month (usually the first Thursday of the month) for a get-together at different restaurants with different cuisines and culinary focuses, from Ethiopia to Bavaria.

However, the Fulbright Alumni Frankfurt Regional Group not only regularly goes out to eat and drink, but also engages in cultural and sporting activities, whether it is a hike in the Taunus Mountains, a photo exhibition on Ukrainian refugees at the U.S. Consulate General, or a planetarium show.

If you are new (or old) to Frankfurt and would like to join us, visit <https://fulbright-alumni.de/regional-chapters/frankfurt-am-main/> and don't hesitate to contact me. We are always looking forward to welcoming new members!



Taunus hiking group in front of the Kaiserstempel near Eppstein; photo: Knut Mittwollen



Turkey from the grill; photo: Isabelle Boeddinghaus



German-American friendship; photo: Knut Mittwollen



Location of Sumy City in Ukraine



Sumy City. The famous bell tower of the Transfiguration Cathedral at top right



# Munich



Bavarian Curling is the new Sport-in-Style; photo: Florian Kühnel

## A Year Full of Alumni Activities

By Simon Diederich and Andreas Schoberth

The Fulbright Alumni Regional Chapter in Munich had a productive year, marked by a series of engaging activities aimed at fostering connections among its members. These events brought together both Fulbright alumni and current grantees in a relaxed atmosphere.

Towards the end of the year 2022, the group came together at the Hard Rock Café in Munich to observe Thanksgiving, this time in collaboration with the PPP and APPP Alumni. The evening was a pleasant mix of American culinary classics and engaging conversations. The atmosphere was festive, reflecting the spirit of this significant American holiday.



Waiting eagerly on the Turkey to come; photo: Andreas Schoberth

In January 2023, the chapter embraced a quintessentially Bavarian pastime by trying their hand at Eisstockschießen, a traditional form of Bavarian curling. Laughter filled the air as members competed in teams, honing their skills and enjoying the brisk winter evening at the Nockherberg. Afterwards, a nice dinner inside completed the occasion.



A look at the Bavarian Alumni Summit in the AmerikaHaus; photo: Florian Kühnel

A standout event was the Bavarian Alumni Summit at the AmerikaHaus. It left a notable impression on attendees, highlighting the universal language of interchange, be it formal during the sessions, or informal during the various breaks. U.S. Consul General Timothy Liston led the opening remarks, followed by a panel discussion on “Building Bridges through Exchanges”. A former NASA astronaut and a co-founder of an NGO were more highlights of the program, which dealt with topics that ranged from “Mobilizing Alumni Communities” and “Launching your Big Dreams” to “Empowering the Next Generation”.

The chapter continued the tradition of celebrating the 4<sup>th</sup> of July with a potluck BBQ hosted by one of our Fulbright alumni. As a first, the event mixed a couple of close-knit groups together, meeting new acquaintances and old comrades alike, creating an atmosphere of warmth and community, at the same time giving opportunity to broaden the horizon with different views on life and the world.



Stammtisch inside, no matter what the menu says ...; photo: Andreas Schoberth

A notable feature of the local chapter were the traditional monthly meetups held in various restaurants and bars across Munich. These gatherings provided a platform for participants to exchange experiences and insights. The diverse selection of venues ensured each meeting had its own unique ambiance.

In the summer months, the group opted for Munich’s renowned beer gardens, creating a relaxed setting for networking and socializing. From Max Emanuel Brewery and Chinesischer Turm to “SAM – sushi and meat”, numerous places old and new were revisited or discovered. In contrast to the urban events – and taking advantage of the sunny weather – we also biked to the Kugleralm, which is located south of Munich.

In reflection, the chapter’s activities showcased the strength of community and shared experiences. Through an array of events, from cultural explorations to festive celebrations, the group succeeded in creating a sense of belonging and connection among its members. These activities not only enriched the Fulbright experience but also highlighted the enduring connections formed through the Fulbright program.

Find out more here:

<https://fulbright-alumni.de/regional-chapters/munich/>

# Dresden



All photos by Elke Handschug-Brosin.



# Berlin

by Alexander Rohlf



Book release party "Söhne der Freiheit" at ESMT Berlin; photo: German Fulbright Commission



Visit of the "Bundestag" after TAC; photo: Alexander Rohlf



Workshop at "Haus der Deutschen Wirtschaft" (BDI); photo: Alexandra Swanson & Amanda Gläser-Bligh



Museum für Naturkunde during the "Lange Nacht der Museen"; photo: Alexander Rohlf

Dear Friends and Fellow Alumni,

Berlin is a truly cosmopolitan city and attracts Fulbrighters from across the globe. Therefore, it is no wonder that the "One Fulbright Community" is strongly represented in the capital. The Fulbright Commission, the German Fulbright Alumni Association and the "Verein der Freunde und Förderer des deutsch-amerikanischen Fulbright-Programms e.V." (VFF) collaborate closely with their many transatlantic and international partners in town to celebrate the Fulbright spirit, foster international understanding and build friendships through our brand of very personal diplomacy.

During times in which anachronistic violence, terrorism and resurging conflicts dominate the news, our community is a beacon of hope for many of our members. We are truly



"Bürgerfest" at Schloss Bellevue; photo: Alexander Rohlf



"Bürgerfest" at Schloss Bellevue; photo: Genevieve Brechel

fortunate to live in a city that offers countless opportunities for expressing our creativity, gathering with friends and discussing the pressing societal and global challenges ahead. With hundreds of active members in our Chapter, special events are as lively and diverse as our regular "Stammtisch" meetings.

We can count on the Fulbright Commission and the U.S. Embassy to add additional coveted events to the calendar but also on our own alumni, who step up to invite the entire mailing list to their art performances, to organize panel discussions connected to their work or to come up with "Stammtisch" ideas that take the Chapter to yet unexplored parts of Berlin. In 2023 alone, these activities included a visit to the "Bürgerfest" at Schloss Bellevue, a book release party for Johannes Ehrmann's "Söhne der Freiheit", panel discus-



Book release party "Söhne der Freiheit" at ESMT Berlin; photo: Genevieve Brechel



Pergamon-Museum during the "Lange Nacht der Museen"; photo: Genevieve Brechel

sions at both BDI and Fraunhofer ENIQ as well as a search for dinosaurs (or rather the beat) during the "Lange Nacht der Museen". We went on a bike trip to Köpenick, participated in the "World Cleanup Day", visited the U.S. Embassy for movie nights & fireside chats and climbed up to the rooftop lounge of the Fulbright Commission for art workshops. Last but not least, we were able to welcome participants of the TAC to Berlin and to meet U.S. ambassador Amy Gutmann in person, who told us about her views on public diplomacy as well as her favorite bike routes in Berlin.

We are excited to fill the Fulbright spirit with life in the coming years and encourage all alumni and U.S. grantees in Berlin to participate in our regular meetings and special events. If you are interested in joining our mailing list, please contact [rc.berlin@fulbright-alumni.de](mailto:rc.berlin@fulbright-alumni.de)



Stammtisch at "Zyankali Bar"; photo: Alexander Rohlf





# “WIR SIND HANAU”

by Mersedeh Ghazaei

*We are excited and honored to award this year’s Mulert Award to Mersedeh Ghazaei, 2022 Fulbright Diversity Program Alumna from Stuttgart, for her exceptional “WIR SIND HANAU” exhibition and for her tireless work as a voluntary human rights activist. In the following, Mersedeh describes the shocking right-wing attack in Hanau in 2020 and her efforts in arranging the “WIR SIND HANAU” exhibition and panel discussions to remember the third anniversary of the attack.*

February 19<sup>th</sup> 2020 – a truly horrible, deeply saddening and life-changing day for many people in Germany. A right-wing, racist extremist shoots 9 immigrants in the city of Hanau, proceeds to kill his own mother and then shoots himself. The country was in shock, it was hard to believe what had taken place that cold Wednesday night. But not only did this heartbreaking event cause a wave of empathy, solidarity and new power in activist work, it also brought a deep divide and much controversy. While most political promises of more preventive work and efforts to effectively fight racism and fascism in Germany proved to be empty words years later, we activists still stand and demand justice for what happened.

Did you know the offender’s father is still harassing the loved ones and families of the ones killed, as well as the

survivors? There are so many more things that make the Hanau shooting almost a storybook example for the many things that are not right in Germany. Before the events took place, during the night of the attack as well as after – many things that should never have happened, happened. The emergency exit was ordered to be locked months earlier, without any logical explanation. The perp had mailed the Hanau Police Department multiple times, speaking of his hateful plans to rid Germany of immigrants, he even had a YouTube channel where he published his manifesto – how was this not taken seriously? During the night of the attack, almost all of the distress calls to the police station were not answered, an issue that to this day has not been taken care of. Officers were overwhelmed, they even accused help-seeking survivors of being part of the crime and took their sweet time helping the wounded who died later on.

A couple of months later it was revealed that 13 of the officers on duty that night were part of an extreme right-wing network in Germany, in which talking about white suprem-



Outside of the Württembergischer Kunstverein. The candles and flowers were kicked away and demolished two days after the opening of the exhibition.



Faisal of the Black Community Foundation Stuttgart giving a speech



Migrantifa Stuttgart Team with Serpil Temiz Unvar, mother of the murdered Ferhat Unvar and Eren Okcu of Bildungsinitiative Ferhat Unvar.

acy and annihilating “the others” was part of the daily order. In this cold, devastating night of the attack, families and loved ones of the murdered did not know for hours that their children were dead and where their dead bodies were. Autopsies were performed on many of them without the permission or knowledge of their families, which begs the question: why do you need to perform an autopsy after a shooting, isn’t the cause of death clear? Even after this gruesome night, it does not stop: the *Initiative 19. Februar Hanau* has put together these facts and much more relevant information on their website. I can urge anyone to take their time and to really read through these findings.

After this gruesome attack, many immigrants have had it – we need to act, we need to demand change and to work towards a future in which something like this could never happen again. I myself remember it being a big turning point in my life, I have not felt safe anymore since then and I do not think I will ever again. A nationwide movement named “Migrantifa” was born, a wordplay composed of the German word “Migranten” meaning immigrants and “antifa”, an abbreviation for anti-fascism. This movement, consisting of immigrants that fight actively against fascism, racism and generally against any form of discrimination, has risen from the ashes of the damage done by the Hanau shooting. Back in June 2020, the Migrantifa Stuttgart was founded and I have been a part of it since the very beginning. By reminding ourselves and others of the gruesome events in Germany’s history, which did not just disappear after the Shoah, we aim to show people that fighting against racism is a constant process and an absolute necessity. Even if Germany does seem like a safe country for immigrants with mild issues of societal racism, the factual truth is that racism is deeply rooted in Germany’s past, present – and future if we continue like this. It is especially severe in institutions and establishments but also in the educational as well as healthcare systems and also very prevalent in rural communities. Current voting trends show the racist, right-wing AfD (Alternative for Germany party) in

All pictures by Migrantifa Stuttgart



Panel discussion with Dr. Onur Suzan Nobrega from Goethe University Frankfurt, Politician Ferhat Koçak and comedian Idil Baydar about the criminalization of immigrants on March 11<sup>th</sup> 2023.

second place, which is a scary remnant reviving our fascist background. The number of attacks against Muslim and Jewish communities, ethnic communities and minorities as well as violence against queer\* individuals is breathtakingly sad.

For the third anniversary of the Hanau shooting in Stuttgart, many individuals wanted a light-projection with the faces of the 9 murdered individuals in public. Stuttgart’s mayor declined, saying something along the lines of *Hanau has nothing to do with Stuttgart, it’s in another federal state*. We as activists in Stuttgart were enraged to say the least because Hanau is everywhere – a slogan that has been spreading in Germany since the attacks, to show solidarity. To our mayor, this might not be the case, but to us immigrants, children of immigrants, refugees, to those of us who feel racism on a regular basis, to those of us who are afraid to walk around freely, it doesn’t matter if it happened in Stuttgart, Hanau, Berlin or anywhere else. The fact is: this could have happened anywhere. So what we did was to arrange an exhibition called *WIR SIND HANAU / WE ARE HANAU* to show once and for all that what happened in Hanau matters, everywhere in Germany. On the third anniversary of the attack we opened our exhibition, followed by a couple of events and panel discussions in February and March. The exhibition was housed in the *Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart* – one of the oldest and most renowned art associations in the world – from February 19<sup>th</sup> until April 9<sup>th</sup>. Amongst the many panels, our highlight was definitely

**In loving memory of**

Gökhan Gültekin, Sedat Gürbüz, Said Nesar Hashemi,  
Mercedes Kierpacz, Hamza Kurtović, Vili Viorel Păun,  
Fatih Saraçoğlu, Ferhat Unvar, Kaloyan Velkov

† February 19<sup>th</sup> 2020, Hanau, Germany





People looking at the exhibition during an interactive tour on February 26<sup>th</sup> 2023.

our panel on April 2<sup>nd</sup> in cooperation with the *Bildungsinitiative Ferhat Unvar*, founded by Serpil Temiz Unvar, mother of the murdered Ferhat Unvar. We came together to discuss ways to stand and fight together instead of letting division stand in the way of our goals.

All in all, we feel that the message really arrived in Stuttgart and we plan to continue our work. We are also very glad that the light projection was financed and conducted by other organizations in Stuttgart after all, although we are still very enraged by our mayor turning it down. The fact that all of this gets space in this very magazine, that you, dear reader, are reading this right now, shows that our work is not for nothing – we can only hope that we reach as many people as possible. It does not matter if you experience racism yourself or if you don't. What really matters is fighting against discrimination, racism, fascism and oppression. Let's fight for a better world, together!



**Mersedeh Ghazaei** was born in Southern Germany in 1997 as a child of Iranian immigrants and is a 2022 Fulbright Diversity Program Alumna. Mersedeh is currently finishing her Bachelor's degree in English and Philosophy to become a teacher and will continue with English and American Studies for her Master's degree. Mersedeh is a voluntary human rights activist with a strong focus on anti-racist and intersectional feminism,

a member of the Migrantifa Stuttgart, co-founder of the Initiative Iranian Women\* of Stuttgart and social media manager for the Local Diversity Stuttgart association. This year, Mersedeh has published her first book "verwurzelter körper, entwurzelter kopf", which deals with the experience of growing up between two different cultures as a child of immigrants in Germany. In the future, Mersedeh aims to further pursue her fight for human rights, gender equality as well as educational equality and to also focus on countries outside the western, Eurocentric world. Instagram: @sucukmama

## Mulert Award 2024 – Call for Nominations

Since 2010, the German Fulbright Alumni Association has granted the "Jürgen Mulert Award for Mutual Understanding," in memory of the association's initiator and founder, Dr. Jürgen Mulert (1938-2008). The Mulert Award is awarded annually to a distinct researcher, artist, professional, and volunteer across disciplines whose work reflects and advances discourse and peace through mutual understanding.

It is our pleasure to invite friends and members of the Fulbright family worldwide to submit online nominations for candidates for the 2024 Mulert Award. Candidates must be former participants of one of the many Fulbright programs. Nominated candidates and their projects may be professional or volunteer, and may have an artistic, social, economic or similar character.

### The prize package for the Mulert Award winner includes:

- Recognition and award reception during a festive ceremony at one of the Association's annual events in Germany, as a stage for the winner to personally present their project
- Project summary and biography in the 2024 issue of the FRANKly magazine as well as on the Association's website
- 1,000 EUR monetary support for the awarded project
- Networking opportunities within the Fulbright Alumni community
- Full travel support to the award ceremony (within Europe)

**The Call for Nominations** and all additional information is accessible online until **January 31, 2024** on **[www.fulbright-alumni.de/about/mulert-award](http://www.fulbright-alumni.de/about/mulert-award)**.

### Contact for any further questions:

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# When silence is all we have left

Over the past decade, I have built numerous institutions and networks around Muslim-Jewish collaboration in Germany and across Europe. Projects and institutions supported by the European Commission, the German Federal Office for Refugees & Migration, and numerous religious, charitable, and governmental institutions. We have built bridges and strengthened community locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. These networks require regular maintenance, consistent contact, and so many words.

But when October 7<sup>th</sup> happened, everything in Jewish-Muslim engagement changed drastically, and the only words that were said were the wrong words. Each new word was fuel poured onto the fires that were raging across our collective community consciousnesses, and within half a week, all the bridges I'd built over the past decade were burned. Everyone had an opinion, and the communities least affected tried so hard to find the right words to bring their Jewish and Muslim partners back together. But every word they said about the conflict itself made one side, or the other, or just as often both, feel alienated and further isolated.

This is not just true of Jews and Muslims. A flashpoint will occur in many other conflicts, and time and again, the bridges we've built will be tested by crisis. At a time like this, good people want to heal the hurt in the hearts of their allies, but it just can't be done. This is a moment of silent maintenance, a time not to propose solutions but to put up a sign that says "we love you all and we'll wait for you until you're ready to come back and join us". On my best days, I too try to be responsibly silent, but it is a struggle and I do not always manage it. As I watch the flaming wreckage of all I've built over the last years, all I ask of my allies is a loving, patient silence. Keep the light on for us. I hope one day we'll return.



**Zachary Gallant** has served as Project Director of the "Values are One" project at the Global Ethic Foundation and as the project lead of the Integrationswerkstatt, funded by the European Commission as part of the Muslim Jewish Coalition for Combatting Hatred. He is the author of *Nazis All the Way Down: The Myth of the Moral Modern Germany* **<https://www.westendverlag.de/buch/nazis-all-the-way-down/>**



## An Alumni Engagement Fund Success Story

# EQT- The Gender Equality Toolkit for Working Women and Friends



Find your voice, and speak up against gender bias and inequality in the workplace



EQT: The Gender Equality Toolkit was supported by the AEIF 2019 Grant under the theme 'Empowering Women and Girls', and cultivates conversation around gender equality in the workplace. This transdisciplinary toolkit brings together proven practices from the fields of design, social sciences, and innovation in an interactive card game, infographic handbook, and illustrated poster, designed to deepen understanding on the impact of gender bias and inequality in the workplace, empower users to find their allies, and take collective action!

Thanks to the AEIF funding, the Ellery and IKEM team could dive deeper into the research, interview, and design process that produced this ground-breaking toolkit, which is available on our website now!

How can the AEIF help you bring your project idea to life?



Find out more about EQT at  
[www.ellerystudio.com/eqt](http://www.ellerystudio.com/eqt)

AEIF  
[www.alumni.state.gov/aeif](http://www.alumni.state.gov/aeif)

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