



FONDATION ET ASSOCIATION EURASIA
POUR L'INNOVATION SOCIALE ET LA COMPASSION EN ACTION



NEWSLETTER JULY 2020

Dear friends and
members of Eurasia

Community building has always been an important part of Eurasia's work and all of what we have achieved in the past 20 years would not have been possible without our community of members, team members and friends.

In this summer's newsletter, we would like to put our attention on **community building**. **We are all part of different communities, physical and temporal ones, it is built into life that we seek community and we need others in order to survive and to grow beautifully.** For the first time in history, we are experiencing a situation that we share as the human community, but the social, ecological and financial crises we have been facing to different degrees globally have long indicated the importance of a shift in our collective consciousness. The current situation shows us that radical changes are possible in a short space of time when humanity is united in a common cause.

Charles Eisenstein (an author and public speaker, whose focus is on the evolution of civilization's defining stories) talks about the necessity of moving from a story of separation, where we are in competition with one another and the natural world, towards a story of interbeing, where we act from a place of knowing that **"Who I am depends on who you are. The world is part of me and I am part of it". What does this mean? It means that my wellbeing depends on the wellbeing of those around me and also on the health of the planet to which I belong.** We would like to share with you how Eurasia is working on embodying this story in different ways and how this shift is made possible through community.

A deepened sense of community in The Peaceful Bamboo Family (TTG)

TTG is a living and vocational community created in 2009, for people living with disabilities in Hue, Vietnam. Text written by Ngan

"Covid came after a busy time of Christmas celebrations and Tet holiday. This is the first time such a thing happened: we lived like we were on an island, having no contact with the outside world. After the remarkable 10-year birthday celebration last year with many visitors, we celebrated the 11th birthday among ourselves this year, and it took only an evening to prepare everything. On the birthday morning, 40 of us stood in a circle in the garden of the tea house, feeling extremely grateful for being able to hold hands, to look at each other's dear faces, and to realize that we were physically and emotionally safe.

The resilience of a community is indeed proved mostly in a time of crisis. At the end of the first two weeks, both the youngsters and teachers felt continually challenged by sharing the same living



space. Many youngsters couldn't bear the feeling of not seeing their family for such a long period of time. We as teachers, didn't yet know how we could bring a sense of comfort and rest for the youngsters for the weekends to come. **The definition of togetherness was challenged at a deeper level: How can we live together as a family, in which the youngsters learn to accept the situation, and the teachers learn to create a living rhythm that balances solitude and togetherness, working and resting, the role of being a teacher and a family member.** It took time to sense into that new collective space, where we felt safe enough to open ourselves up for a new rhythm of living.

The third week marked a transition, where we were able to see our self-quarantine in a bigger picture, and feel grateful for the fact that we have enough food to eat, have a big garden to breathe fresh air, and have work to do. **Creativity blossomed, with activities such as the tea meditation, a picture book library, clowning, playing Vietnamese traditional games and karaoke.**

Some of the teachers realized that this self-quarantine was not only to protect our health. We could have left the community to stay in our own homes and the youngsters could have returned to their families: We chose community. The community embraced the youngsters like Phuong or Phuoc, who don't have a true home to go back to and gave children like Sunny and Pierre a vast natural space to play and many people to interact with, while many others had to stay inside their house. We also had the chance to live with a wonderful woman like di Ngoc, who showed us how to live with positivity and a 'giving' attitude. **The community held us with compassion while we were seeking a balance between individual and community and made us realise that we truly need each other."**

Happy Schools (HS) in Vietnam

*"There are many benefits from HS program for different skills that the students can learn including better communication with others, and skills to help them reduce stress and perform better in their studies... We wish to apply Happy Schools to other schools in the province. **What makes me so keen on scaling up HS is because I see how it is changing the quality of relationships in our schools"***

- Hai Phan-Van, The head of Primary Department of DOET, Coordinator of Happy Schools Project from DOET

The HS program has been all about supporting schools to become real communities, in which the focus is on the quality of relationships to oneself, to others and to nature and not only on academic performance. In the first year, the ELI team in Vietnam did a huge amount of work creating and supporting communities of practice for the teachers participating in the HS program, this empowered the teachers to implement what they had learnt in their respective school communities. In the second year, a group of core teachers from the first year have been providing support to a new group of teachers, thus creating a ripple effect, from teacher to teacher and from classroom to classroom. **Key to the success of this project are the communities that are created within classrooms and schools and between teachers, making it possible for the project to scale up.**

For a more detailed report on the HS project please visit : <https://elihw.org/march-2020-report-happy-schools-in-vietnam/>



The Empowerment Project:

We are currently in our third phase of fundraising for the Empowerment project. The Empowerment project is an expansion of **TTG's pedagogical garden**. Our youngsters will receive training so that they can become **assistant trainers** and continue to welcome thousands of school children, teaching reconnection to self, others and nature. The project will include a **tree nursery** and we plan to work with NGOs working to reforest Vietnam. We are very excited to be fundraising as an international team, both from Europe and Vietnam for the first time for such a large project. **Working together as one community with the same goal, to see this project manifest helps us to see**

and experience the shift from a past story where the west was fundraising for the east, to a story of co-creating, sharing the same roles and responsibilities and most of all supporting and inspiring each other. The situation in Vietnam is very different than it used to be and the possibility to fundraise directly in Vietnam is an encouraging step in the direction of sustainability for our work. Our dear friend and architect Trung has imagined a participative, inclusive and empowering design-thinking process so that the spaces may be a reflection of the community and its aspirations. The Eurasia-TTG team is working as one to bring this space to life.

Certificate course in Gross National Happiness, University of Osnabrück, Germany

The four modules, which extend over a year, move between the encounter with the self and the others. The interactive learning and the spiritual and artistic moments create the conditions for an open and deep encounter. Already after the first module, the participants started the so-called peer coaching, in which they exchange weekly with another person assigned to them. This allowed the human connection to be cultivated between the modules.

The feeling of trust and community intensified over the course of the modules. This became particularly evident with the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis, for example, course participants took the initiative to invite the group to meditate together at the same time, everyone in their own home. In this way social distancing became physical distancing with strong social connections and a feeling of solidarity. It has become clear that the participants individual choice to learn about "Gross National Happiness" has created community that feels connected far beyond the course, which will accompany them on their further path.

At Geneva Management School (HEG), it is possible to do a Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS) in "Happiness in Organisations" <https://www.hesge.ch/heg/formation-continue/cas/bo/bonheur-les-organisations>



Eben Hezer Foundation, Lausanne

At the end of 2019, Eurasia was mandated by Eben Hezer, an institution for people living with disabilities, to give a training on "Respect for oneself and respect for the other". **The request came not from the educators, but from a group of adults living with disabilities, who felt they needed support in developing skills which would strengthen their capacity for living and working together.** Marie-Fleur Baeriswyl, Arnaud Durand and Jana Castles began a process of accompanying them in very creative ways of getting to know themselves better, dealing with their emotions, expressing their needs and expressing their care for the other. This process will continue in the near future.

Dear members, dear donors, dear friends, we are deeply nourished and touched by the Eurasia community through which so many projects are being realised, allowing us to live very concrete changes, at both an individual and societal level. We are deeply grateful for the generous energy that circulates within our community and the quality of giving and receiving that is being cultivated; thus energy circulates, life is honored and the community is healthy!
THANK YOU for being a part of it!

Upcoming events/ announcements

- August 2020: Deep Ecology weekend, Petit Bochet, Gimel
- 11th-13th September: Reconnection to self workshop, location to be defined
- 6th-11th September: Clown and conflict transformation, UK.
- 21st-26th September Alternatiba: Conference
- 24th-25th September 2020: Communication at work, Morges
- 10th-12th December: Christmas Market at Pole Sud in Lausanne.
- 12th-13th december 2020: Empathy and self-empathy - Morges
- 13th January 2021: Start of 2nd GNH course in Osnabrück University
- 5th February 2021: Start of CAS in GNH, Geneva .

"A healthy social life arises when the whole community finds its reflection in the mirror of person's soul, and when the virtue of each person lives in the whole community".

-Rudolf Steiner

4th October 2020: Eurasia Festival

In the continuity of the theme of our newsletter, this year's **Eurasia festival** will be on the theme of **"regenerative communities"**. We are very much looking forward to sharing this moment with you.

For your donations:

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The examples given above are just some of the ways in which Eurasia is working to embody a new paradigm. To learn about other ongoing projects, such as Eurasia Learning Institute, Happiness in organisations, please visit our websites:

www.eurasia-foundation.org
www.elihw.org

or contact us on: info@elihw.org