

## INTRODUCTION TO THE BETZAVTA METHOD

Concept by
Adam Institute,
Uki Maroshek

Start With Yourself!











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This collection was created with the support of the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.

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You are always a reflection of yourself In everything you do
There's a reflection of you
The way you see yourself
And the way people see you
So whatever you do or say next time use your conscience and mind
'Cause an impression once made
Takes long to fade



UWE BANTON
REGGAE MUSICIAN, GERMANY



## ABOUT IYNF AND THIS COLLECTION



International Young Naturefriends (IYNF) is an international organization, which brings together young Naturefriends and their organizations from across Europe. Established in 1975 and currently has 15 member organizations and 14 partner organizations thus gathering more than 120.000 young members in more than one thousand local groups.

The core role of IYNF is to facilitate the cooperation between its member and partner organizations and individual members by creating links, organizing meetings, providing direct support and promoting nature-friendly activities all over Europe. IYNF focuses on value-driven meetings and capacity building activities for its members, partners, supporters and interested individuals. The working methods are based on non-formal, experiential, outdoor and intercultural education.

IYNF is a value-based organization representing its members at the European level. One of the core IYNF values is that personal responsibility and independence are cornerstones of democracy and positive social change and the ways in which an individual can better understand the connection between his/her own individual thoughts and actions, and its effects on the level of entire society.



### THIS COLLECTION

In a period where democracy is more and more questioned and a rise of extreme right-wing movements across Europe occurs, IYNF decided to focus in 2018 on democracy and civic education. Under the year title "Start With Yourself", the training focused on the "Betzavta" method to tackle democracy related-topics. This method was originally developed by Uki Maroshek at the Adam Institute in Israel for experiential education for civic participation and responsible leadership. Later, it was internationally adopted in 1996, first in Germany at the Centre for Applied Political Research at the University of Munich then in other countries such as Switzerland and Northern Ireland.

The aim of introducing Betzavta was to combine approaches both from individual and system level by connecting personal experience with the socio-political component addressed. Participants should be stimulated to become agents of social change through working towards a more open, democratic and inclusive society by recognizing personal responsibility and critical evaluation of own behaviors. This training was just giving an introduction to the complex Betzavta method.

Through this fruitful exchange, we collected ideas, expertise, and knowledge about the method, which will be provided as examples in this collection

IYNF Secretariat, 2019



### BETZAVTA METHOD



### DEMOCRACY HAS MANY FORMS...



»Betzavta« (Hebrew for "together") was developed in Jerusalem in 1988 by Uki Maroshek-Klarman at the Adam Institute for Democracies and Peace to encourage Israeli and Palestinian youth to change their perspective. In the middle of the 90s it was adapted and introduced to German educational work among thousands of students and participants of seminars in the most diverse topics such as police, administration, the free economy. The focus of the method is to examine different ways of democratic decision-making. The participants should experience and question their own actions more clearly through exercises and reflections than they would otherwise do in everyday life. For this the method uses dilemmas and experiences. Personal behavior is seen as part of a group or society, which makes it possible to learn and to grasp democratic coexistence. The freedom and development of each and every one of them are - often only subliminal - the focus.



Since then »Betzavta« has stood for an innovative and very experiential, democratic style to convey principles. The Conflict Dilemma Method of the Adam Institute is helping many people to understand better the complexity of democratic processes. At the same time this method helped to resolve conflicts democratically in a safe environment by separating the position of the counterparty from the person(s) associated with it. The opinion of someone soon feels equivalent for yourself, when you would be in his/her situation.

A regularly occurring dilemma in this context the desire for flexibility and spontaneity, while at the same time understanding the need for rules and regulations liability. »The Equal Right to Freedom« is a worthwhile goal for a fairer communicating and experiencing society in an interesting and often playful way. Betzavta exercises are now used in many institutions with educational background, as extracurricular activities and the program was shaped to a very high profile.

It's a method that gets under your skin and hits you deep inside. Everyone for themselves, but also the community as such.



JANINKA LUTZE (PARTICIPANT, GERMANY)



## THE BETZAVTA PRINCIPLES



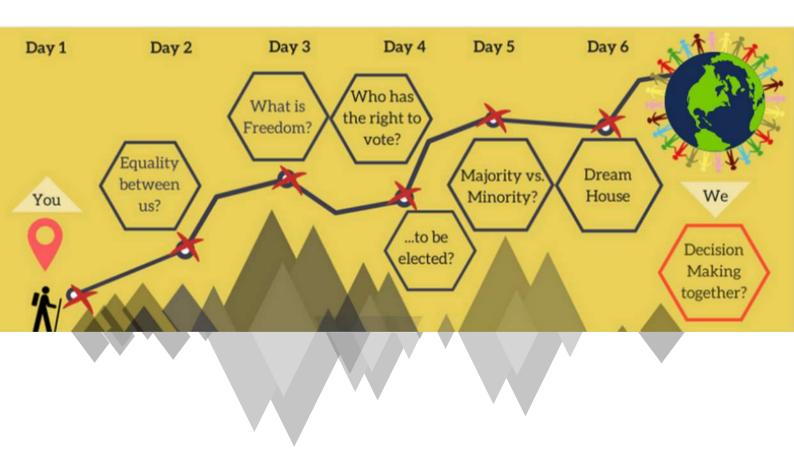


# EXAMPLE OF A BETZAVTA POGRAMME



## It's a beautiful and sometimes lonely journey, but we are alone together!

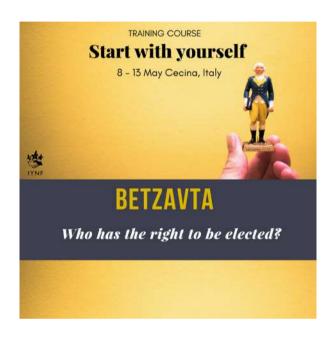






The training started slowly, without long introduction, but simply jumping into the magic of Bezavta. We began with simple tasks to define abstract concepts such as equality and freedom, followed by more concrete questions: Who has the right to vote or be elected. After this first day, the frustration between the participants already started to be real.







It seemed like a couple of middleschool level exercises – and it
turned into soul-tormenting
realizations, very much necessary
for improvement. It made me
question my own beliefs – but for a
good reason. It made me question a
lot of things, but also gave me
some new power to relax while
looking to solve them.

NATALIA (PARTICIPANT, POLAND)



The second day began with a new "simple" task: "Do we need a new rule?" Looking back, it feels quite shocking to see how we were able to spend almost all the morning with only this task. Everyone had a voting card and the person with the most cards had the right to set up a new rule for the group. During the exercise, we experienced the voting system and started to realize how democracy works. Some people were fighting for their right to keep the vote, others gave their right immediately to a person they trusted without knowing his agenda.







Last but not least of this morning, we experienced the limitations of freedom within a coffee break: in groups, people had to tie themselves to other participants and follow their personal needs as a team.

It can seem incredible, but we had a free afternoon already on the second day of training, that we all felt necessary, showing how demanding it is being part of this training. We were already under the "Bezavta magic".

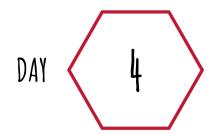




The next day was one of the most frustrating times for most of the participants: we had to decide on the implementation of our previously decided rule. This took us almost half of the morning. Then we discussed when the majority should decide in different situations, such as smoking in public areas or spending our money. During this third day, we also did an activity to deal with inclusion and exclusion, as well as explore the belonging to groups.

Again, the frustration was in the air during the reflection periods. Almost all of us agreed that the discussions in small groups were more productive than the ones in the "big circle" of 30 people, where the debate and interactions were long and leading to multiple directions.





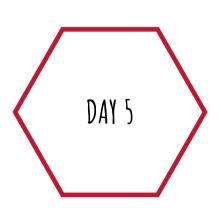
On this day, we designed our dream house in three levels: from the individual to the group perspective. We experienced again the concepts of inclusion, freedom, and equality and started to realize, that the abstract concepts, that we were talking and discussing on the first day, weren't that "abstract", but rather present in every action we do. To end the day, we experienced one of the most striking activities. We were divided into two groups to fulfill different tasks using chairs. Guess what happened next. After a week learning how to be more equal, inclusive and free, most of us fought for the chairs (our so-called resources) to solve the group task. This was a perfect end to this training, showing us that we are not always rational but also driven by our instincts, that may be peaceful for ones, but warrior for others.





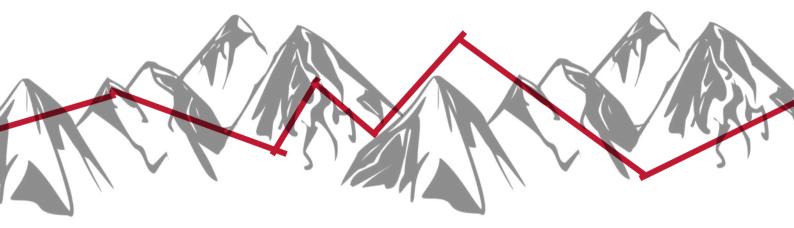


The last activity day, we had an open session to finally ask questions to our lovely trainers about this curious Bezavta method. Initially, we maybe seemed a group with low diversity at the beginning, in terms of being open-minded, critical (political) thinking, aware about sustainability and social problems... but during this training, we realized, that diversity may concern a larger scope of characteristics, more close to the complexity of personalities, as well as internal ethical and moral matters like feeling included or excluded in certain situations.





From the start it was hard to see the connection between a method to reflect on democracy and personal development, but during this week we learnt how difficult it is to implement the words we all care about: inclusion, freedom, equality and how frequent they are present in our daily life, in almost every decision we make, in every action (speaking in groups, solving conflicts, making rules...). Therefore, we were aware of the consequences of what that meant. It was like an awakening and discovery, that all those concepts we were thinking to respect, sometimes seem distant in the way that they are only affecting the behavior of others. Instead, they are also affecting us. Participants were frustrated, when they were realizing, that for example, every action can be inclusive or exclusive or both at the same time



As the trainers said, the Betzavta method is not a process that lasts only a week, where you learn something, come back home and forget about it next week. Betzavta is a starting point, a door opening to a new path for discovering yourself. For some of us, the process started at the beginning of the week, for others at the end, and others will need more time to discover what is changing inside them.





Not in all of the non-formal education trainings or youth exchanges participants end up crying as it happened to many of us. Reflection sessions are usually used during this kind of trainings, where people can share their feelings and impressions about the day/activity. But here, something else happened, something deeper inside of each us, and that was reflected in the last reflection session. It was the perfect image of what we experienced and discovered of ourselves during the week. The connection between each other, the love, the trust was tangible since the beginning, and it was increasing with the days. We created a safe atmosphere and made space for everyone, where we could be ourselves.



NATALIA (PARTICIPANT, POLAND)

It's difficult to build international communities that feel so much like families, without pretense and play, without a sense of competition and show off. In this case it was genuine and generous, and I know I will feel the same warm intensity with these people when we meet again...





### OF PARTICIPANTS



### My background:

Professionally I am working with personal development and from the previous activities of IYNF in 2017 I have heard the great experience and results that they had with the Betzavta method. Therefore, I am kind in participating and getting to know this method.

### My motivation:

I want to take the best out of the training to use it for my own projects, workshops, trainings, activities and use it as much as possible in potential follow-up activities required

### OLGA KARAGEORGIOU



A youth worker and workshop leader interested in human rights, personal development, media expression and environmental education.

### NATALIA SKOCZYLAS



A project manager, journalist and storyteller with interests in activism, environmental education, youth work and human rights.

### My background:

I would like to learn a new method of introspection and self analysis that would allow me to work better and see what are the obstacles that stem from myself that slow down my work or don't allow me to do projects with more courage and creative energy. But also I want to use it in our community as a tool for collective and individual reflection - it is necessary as we work in a big group, but also because we develop new coliving and coworking spaces that create various tensions and conflicts, and require innovative ways of resolving them.

### My motivation:

To apply it to community work in both our coliving projects and our annual gatherings and retreats where we need new approaches to analyse and understand our issues.



### My background:

Over the years I came to learn that it always starts with yourself. Due to my years in social works, youth/voluntary work and non-formal education I came to see how very important it is to mentally, inwardly "represent" the things you want to lay focus on or if you want to achieve some goals. Without your certain "inner voice" you cannot achieve them successfully or even if you do, you and yourself might get lost at the edge of the way. You might have started with you and a fabulous goal, but the way might by tough and tricky. This tension and friction is some real obstacle the more you work in this sector and the deeper you are in its processes.

### My motivation:

I am really looking forward to meet some good friends from IYNF again which happens to happen really rare. I want to apply this method by speaking in front of our local group (youngers and elders), summing up the results with (possible) other participants from young Naturefriends Germany and presenting the results via different channels from Naturefriends Germany.

### JONAS DUHME



Student of educational science, campaigner and social worker focusing on improving education through antidiscrimination/human rights workshops, environmental protection and refugee support.

### JANNIS PFENDTNER



An environmental campaigner and hiking guide interested in "wilderness education", activism and intercultural youth work.

### My background:

I myself saw many times how difficult it can be to understand and respect the opinion and behavior of others within a group process. I know, that we all have to learn much more how democracy can work good and therefore I am very keen to learn about the methods of Betzavta together with fellow young naturefriends.

### My motivation:

To integrate what I would have learned in all my different activities!

This could be in my youth organization as well as in other political groups or my current job.



## TO BE A BETZAVTATRAINER





### LIKE A FRIEND

The quality and personalities of the trainers are essential for the individual and collective process. They brought us a spiritual feeling and gave us space to develop and learn by ourselves, and most importantly they kept reminding us the importance of all kind of feelings, the ones we call wrong such as frustration or disappointment and the good ones such as happiness. They were patiently guiding us during the sessions, but also friends outside, sharing a lot of moments with us, singing, playing 'mafia' (also known as "werewolf" or "Palermo at night"); or discussing and answering all our questions.

### THE PROFESSIONAL ROLE

The role of trainers in the Betzavta method is unique. They perform a function of facilitating and guiding discussions, challenging participants conceptions of authority and responsibility while trying to distance themselves from the group thus keeping it independent and free. Since the idea is for the participants to solve their own issues and learn through experience the trainers need to have a certain understanding of group dynamics and individual behaviours. The ability to adapt and stay present throughout this process is what sets betzavta and its trainers apart from other methods.







An educator, director of Mellem Education and PHD candidate. She is interested in intercultural education, conflict resolution and personal transformation through self reflection and social responsibility.



When I was a participant five years ago, it opened me up, also to show me my privileges and to not take necessarily everyone's experiences as my own, more like that everything is diversity in an addition. You can learn so much from different perspectives.



A storyteller, filmmaker and trainer of Mellem. She is interested in the strong connection between the personal & the political, social and mental structures, and critical reflection on the contemporary world.







Maybe you are always the strong one, but then you are a weak one or in a minority, when you are used to be in a majority, and you see things from the other side. And we are so attached to see conflicts from the bad side and step back and are in stress how to solve it, instead of oversee the causes...



Betzavta was a process for me, that triggered that self-reflection and self-exploration and who I am and think about what is peace, love, happiness, all things, that we are looking for in the external, what we can gain from internally. I feel sometimes Betzavta is a bit of a spiritual work, for the ones, that are framed in a political methodology.

TALI PADAN



### HOW TO BECOME A TRAINER?

- Have a deeper examination of your understanding of democracy.
- Initiate reflection processes on discrimination and social group, power and majority relations.
- Own ways of thinking and ambivalences are made aware and questioned, empathy and conflict capacity strengthened.
- See opposing positions as an opportunity for learning with each other.
- Be open to the experience that sustainable conflict-free solutions emerge when everyone participates in a decision-making process while preserving the principle of the same right to free development for new creative paths in such processes.





### ELEMENTS OF A BETZAVTA EDUCATION PROGRAMME

During the training the participants conceive and test seminar or teaching units with exercises of the Betzavta program as a participant. These exercises are not applied and reflected in isolation, but are placed in the context of the intended scope in a practice-oriented manner.

Another focus of the training is the understanding and learning of the peculiarities of the **Betzavta moderation**. By moderation of the exercises the participants develop an individual, safe and professional moderation style. In the final part of the training, the reflection of the practice and the consequent questions of the participants are in the foreground. Further topics are the deepening of content-related questions (e.g. democratic theories or concepts of freedom), the Betzavta image of man, groupdynamic aspects, evaluation and the range of possible uses of the program.



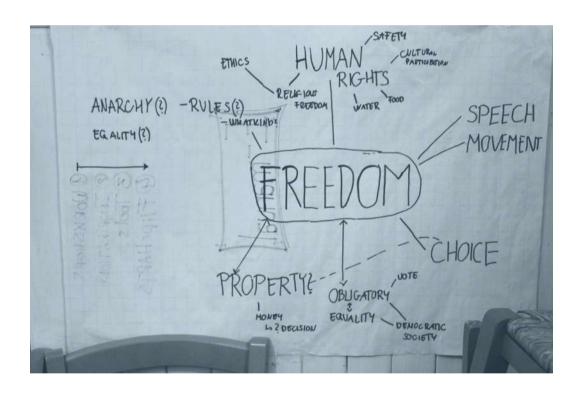
## THE JOURNEY





### EQUALITY AND FREEDOM

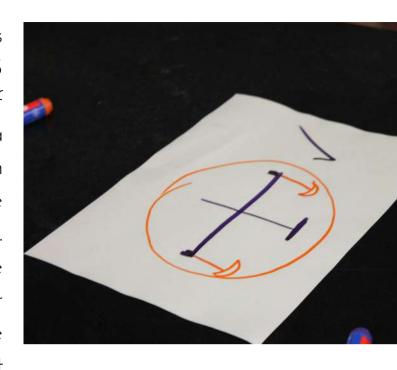
Both activities aiming to explore the two concepts integral to our society and politics are done on the same day. More specifically, with only a short break in between. For both of the activities the participants are divided into groups, the size of which depends on the task, where they and others are encouraged to cooperate in communicating their ideas.



The first activity, tied to an exploration of equality, asks participants to draw equality without speaking. This task is done in pairs so that after the task, during the reflection stage, the two participants can ponder on how equal they were in completing the task and how equality is and can be implemented.



The second activity though, is done in groups of 4 to 5 participants. Each group had half an hour to debate and define a concept of freedom in between the participants, after which the reflection process would be used. During the reflection process the participants were asked whether they were happy with the definition and whether they felt themselves to be free in the process.





Both activities seem to explore an individual's relation to others within a process and try to help one understand how to frame the concepts of freedom and equality depending on the context they are in. Hence the reflection on whether they were equal and free, and the amount of participants in groups during the tasks.



### HOW TO MAKE A RULE?

For this activity every member of the group obtains a voting card, on which is the name. The group gets 15 minutes to decide on a new rule. It's up to everyone whether he/she will keep it or give it to someone he trusts without knowing what his/her agenda is. The person with the most cards has a right to set up a new rule for the whole group. The discussion within the group then continues on how the new rule should be implemented. During the reflection the participants evaluate whether the new rule reflects the needs of the group and what the actual need was.



During this exercise participants experience voting systems and start to realize how democracy works. The exercise teaches the participants the skill of self-reflection, personal responsibility as well as strengthens their self-awareness. As in all of these exercises, they might learn something new about themselves that they didn't expect.



We were a small democracy. We were a small community with the issues on how do we choose, how do we vote, how do we make leaders, how do we follow, how do we lead. We had a simulation on the rule and how do we make a rule, instead of them making the rules.



OLGA (PARTICIPANT, GREECE)



ADRIJANA (PARTICIPANT, SLOVENIA)

I was thinking about why I gave my vote to someone just like that, not to know what they can offer us. Maybe I just wanted to get it done, because by the end of the day I am going to do what it feels good for me.



### WHEN SHOULD THE MAJORITY DECIDE?

This activity consists of discussing and sharing opinions on cases in which the majority should make decisions for the whole society.

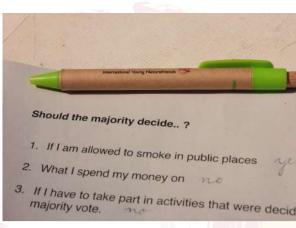
Everyone gets a list of questions and has ten minutes to individually decide "yes" or "no". Should the majority decide if it is allowed to smoke in public spaces or how I should spend my money on? If children have to go to school? If there should be religious symbols in schools? Later smaller groups are created to search for collective answers, it's time for the participants to argue reasons for their answers. At the end of this activity the group members try to formulate criteria for the majority's intervention in the lives of individuals.

This activity questions the boundaries between personal and societal issues and gives an opportunity to the group to discuss when everybody's freedom starts and ends. Attention must be paid to how the decision of a majority affects minorities and if human rights and equality for everyone is guaranteed.



#### Example

Should the Majority decide...



Whether I am allowed to smoke in public spaces?

If there should be religious symbols allowed in schools?

Whether it is my duty to put a seat belt in a car?

If an airport should be built in my neighborhood?

To cut fundings for NGOs?

Whether the last year of the nursery should be obligatory for all kids?

If plastic bags should be banned?

If there should be a meat free day every week in all schools and colleges?

Whether interruption of pregnancy should be legal?

Whether euthanasia should be legal?



#### DREAM HOUSE



During this activity participants experience the concepts of inclusion, democracy, freedom or equality and start to realize what role these concepts play in their actions. The skill of conflict resolution and dealing with a conflict is developed.

The aim of this exercise is for the group to design its dream house. Everybody draws a house of his/her dreams. Then trainers create smaller groups and ask the participants to make a new group's dream house within 15 minutes. Everyone in the small groups must agree on what elements from their personal dream houses should be in the new one and which parts can be left out. When the time is up, each group must pick a representative. The representatives then obtain the same instruction as the small groups, the time limit is again 15 minutes. The dream house they come up with is supposed to ideally be the dream house of everyone.



#### MAKING DECISIONS TOGETHER

It takes a long time to make a decision in a group while adhering to the principles that Betzavta encourages. During this activity the participants are asked to rate on a scale from 1 to 10 how much democratic they believe their group is. They show each other their answers and reflect on what is needed for a democratic process and how to improve it. Because everyone's needs and wishes are different and nobody intends to hurt or exclude somebody else, reaching a final decision so everyone is happy can therefore be a very frustrating and exhausting experience for the group. Participants learn more about conflict resolution methods, self-awareness and dealing with differences through an internal analysis of needs and values, thereby transforming their perception of a conflict. This activity also allows the group more time for reflection.

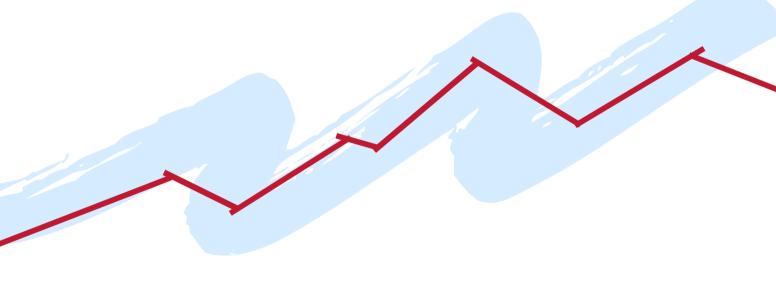




Everyone was tired and frustrated, but we were faced with the dilemma: a dilemma that everyone was in (they wanted to fulfill their needs without excluding or hurting others) and that the group had in common.

JANINKA (PARTICIPANT, GERMANY)







I think that some of them are trying to make a problem out of solution. They really talk too much. Instead of finding a solution they are making a problem out of solution. And just talking too much and not doing enough. So this is really what bothers me. You can say something in a few sentences, not in ten minutes.

ADRIJANA (PARTICIPANT, SLOVENIA)



#### CHAIRS

The participants are divided into two groups and are given different tasks to do with the chairs present in the room. For example one group is supposed to build the highest possible tower, while the other group should create the biggest possible circle. The reflection contains an analysis of the outcome to see whether it was reached in an equally beneficial way. This activity provides an opportunity to explore how two groups with conflicting tasks manage to work together or choose the group identity over teamwork.

Again, it develops the skill of conflict resolution while adhering to the Betzavta principles such as democracy, equality or inclusiveness. This exercise may also show how instincts can irationally take control of our behaviour.



The game with the chairs...Jesus Christ! We want peace, respect and equality for everybody and we fight over some chairs!

ADRIJANA (PARTICIPANT, SLOVENIA)



# REFLECTION

PROCESS VS. RESULTS



From the first sight, the activities seem to be easy to perform, but the (long) reflection periods following the tasks show up with the diversity of opinions and feelings. Supported with color cards, participants express the degree of satisfaction with the process and result during these reflection sessions. Participants were using two main approaches to fulfill these tasks: one of it was to keep close to reality, to the current society and system and try to find the answers in this frame. The second one was more abstract and rebel trying to imagine a new society or even a new world, e.g. Monkey Beach Island, where glitter clouds know the answers of decision making or Tenalp (alien have the superpower), therefore trying to escape the conditions society has.



REFLECTION CARDS: RED, GREEN, YELLOW





The group is divided in pairs, who are asked to draw what equality is without speaking. A plenum follows in order to reflect the process (the "action-reflection scheme" is used throughout the activities). The facilitator first asks about the result of the activity and satisfaction with the result. The next step is inspecting the process and satisfaction with it. The shift to the process is also where the transition from external to internal perception happens, the equality becomes a matter of question of how the participants worked with their partner, not an abstract concept.

An example of the activity "What is Equality?" can show the thought process behind the design of the activities:



Further question by the facilitator deepens this investigation: "Was the process equal?". This question can bring to the surface a chance that not every partner had the same resources as the others. The focus is expected to change from theoretical disputes towards a first-hand experience with how equality works and is challenged even in minor situations of everyday life. In general, by looking at the process there will be a way to deepen the conversation and make it relevant to the current group dynamics in every activity. Participants will continuously undergo the process of self-analysis, reflection, expression, communication, conflict and resolution.







### SOLIDARITY WORKSHOP, BELGIUM (MAY 2018)



The exercise with the chairs was resolved after 3 min. The reflection afterwards took them almost an hour.

THOMAS (PARTICIPANT AND BETZAVTA MULTIPLIER)



#### FIRST CAMP OF JEUNES AMIS DE LA NATURE, FRANCE (AUGUST 2018)

After we held a presentation on IYNF and mentioned the "Start with yourself" seminar, the participants asked us to show them more about Betzavta. So we very spontaneously squeezed it into the programm. For the colored cards we used UNO cards. We would have liked to do the game with the three volunteers and the exchange of words in the group discussion, but we had this as an example in the presentation. So we did the chair game, but this time the participants surprisingly didn't fight over the chairs. It was only meant to show them a little more how it works because it is so difficult to explain in a presentation, but it hit them well anyway. They kept discussing and reflecting the whole evening.







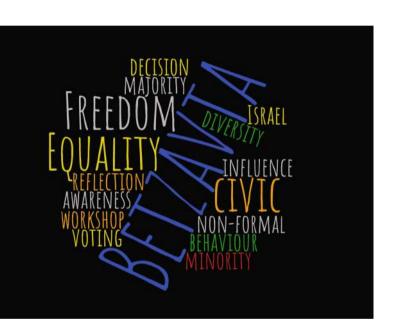


#### FESTIVAL OF DEMOCRACY, PRAGUE (OCTOBER 2018)

As a part of the Festival of Democracy, an associated program of the 2000 Forum conference, IYNF organized a workshop called "Start with yourself".







The workshop focused on an empirical approach to civic education and interpersonal communication using the Betzavta method. The participants had a chance to engage in two activities followed by time space to self-reflect. During the workshop concepts of freedom, current state of society and decision mechanisms were discussed.

The first activity of the workshop carried a name "What is freedom for you?". The task of participants divided into two groups was to find such answer everyone agrees on. Each group's attitude towards the task was different as well as everyone's idea of freedom. Finally the groups presented their results and evaluated their experience. In line with the Betzavta method's principles, the process and communication were much more important parts of this exercise than the result itself.





The other exercise "Should the majority decide?" was the same as one of those the participants did in Italy. Firstly, everyone individually thought about ten questions and whether the majority should or should not decide. Afterwards, the participants tried, again in the two groups, to find a joint answer on three selected questions. During the evaluation the participants also got an opportunity to discuss their influence on the group as a whole.

In the end of the workshop, the documentary about the Betzavta training course in Cecina was screened. The visitors of the workshop had therefore a great opportunity to compare their experience based on two activities with the experience from one week long training course. Most of the attendants of the workshop expressed a desire to learn more about Betzavta.



#### BETZAVTA IN THE MEDIA...

#### Blogs

Ultra Janin Svet, Adrijana Kolar: "Training Course in Bella Italia"

Migam s Srcem, Nastja Fekonja: "Pustolovscina v Italiji"

#### Websites

International Young Naturefriends, Miriam Candelas: "The Magic of Togetherness" Gruppo Amici Della Natura, Mitsutake Ono: "Report Start with yourself"

#### Magazine

Naturfreundejugend Deutschland, magazine "ke:onda", Janinka Lutze: "Betzavta, eine Methode der Demokratieförderung"

#### Video

International Young Naturefriends, Lisa Hofmann: "Betzavta - The Magic of Togetherness"







# HUMOR Á LA BETZAVTA



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### HUMOR Á LA BETZAVTA





### HUMOR Á LA BETZAVTA







### THANKYOU!

IYNF wants to acknowledge our gratitude to all the authors, participants and trainers of projects of the year "Start With Yourself!", as well Mellem Education, Adam Institute (Uki Maroshek), Gruppo Italiano Amici della Natura for organizing the projects, and especially to the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union for the support!

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union











