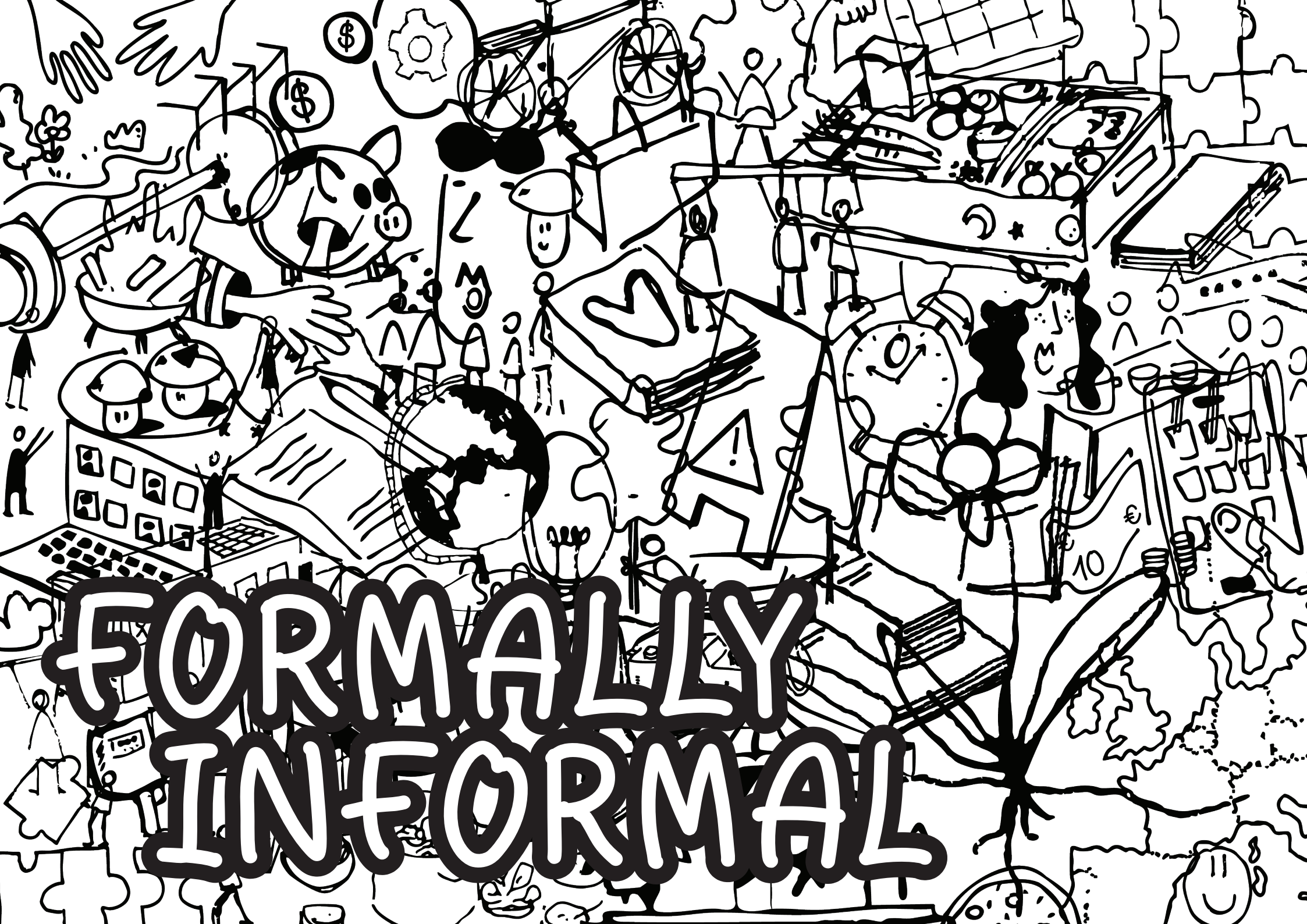
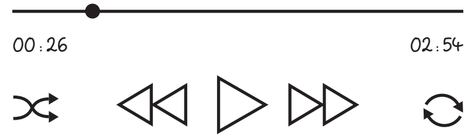

FORMALLY
INFORMAL

FORMALLY INFORMAL

Notes of a learning practice



The Living Summer School
2026

FOREWORD



Developing an **entrepreneurial mindset** in young people goes beyond transferring knowledge: it requires an **environment** where ideas can grow, **mistakes** are allowed, and **initiative** is encouraged. The **Living Summer School** demonstrates how this works in practice: young people **experiment**, set up **multidisciplinary projects**, and develop innovative solutions to **societal challenges**. Living together during the summer school is a **core element** of this experience: it fosters collaboration, shared responsibility, communication, and self-organisation. Through **hands-on experiences**, peer-to-peer learning and co-creation, participants build skills, confidence, and an entrepreneurial mindset.

Bolwerk was able to launch the Living Summer School thanks to Start@K, Kortrijk's ecosystem for entrepreneurial students and young people. Since then, the project has grown into a firmly rooted **local initiative** with a strong European network, bringing together **young people** from different countries and backgrounds to strengthen their **entrepreneurial skills** in an inspiring, informal learning environment.

This **handbook** brings together the **knowledge** and **insights** gained between 2021 and 2025 through the organisation of the Living Summer School. It is written for other organisations, institutions, and educational initiatives that want to **support** young people in developing their entrepreneurial abilities. It provides practical **tips**, examples, and inspiration to help create informal learning environments of their own. The Living Summer School shows that **learning can happen anywhere**: in projects, in challenges, in taking initiative, and in living and organising together. This handbook **invites you to create** such spaces and empower young people to think and act entrepreneurially.

Elena Falomo, Jadd Hallaj, Servaas Benoit, Ruben Benoit
Founders of the Living Summer School



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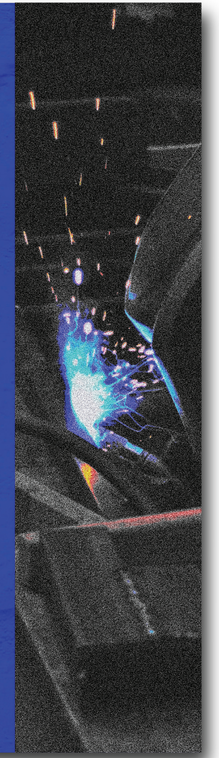
Notes of a learning practice

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What is our music about?

About this manual

We **structured** this publication as a **hands-on tool**, capturing **memories** and **past stories** of the Living Summer School. We hope it will **guide** those of you looking to set up a learning environment for enterprising young minds. Your programme might take a different shape, but we hope that our candid retelling of our **experience** will offer **inspiration**.

Our experience stems from a **strong wish to explore value-based innovation** through a **non-hierarchica**l and **communal environment** where young people can experience something different. It starts from our firm belief that **social** and **cultural innovation** are **fundamental pillars** of a harmonious society, in the future but also in the present. We want to **inspire** changemakers to move with grace and care, keeping at heart societal and environmental models that are **generous** and **regenerative**.

Five years ago, we ran our **first edition** of the summer school, a non-formal education programme proposing challenges around society and the environment in the region of **Kortrijk**. We continued to do this in partnership with **local organisations** that each year work with us to bring meaningful questions to a group of 30 **people** under 30 from **across Europe** and from **all kinds of backgrounds**.

Our programme went through several iterations, and we trialled different **constellations of learning methods** and organisational structures. Today, our approach relies heavily on **hands-on learning**: construction and making as a way to tangibly and positively impact community life. For a week, we also **live together** in shared spaces, which is essential to our ethos. Throughout the year, we try to maintain momentum online through a few meetings.

Structure of the book

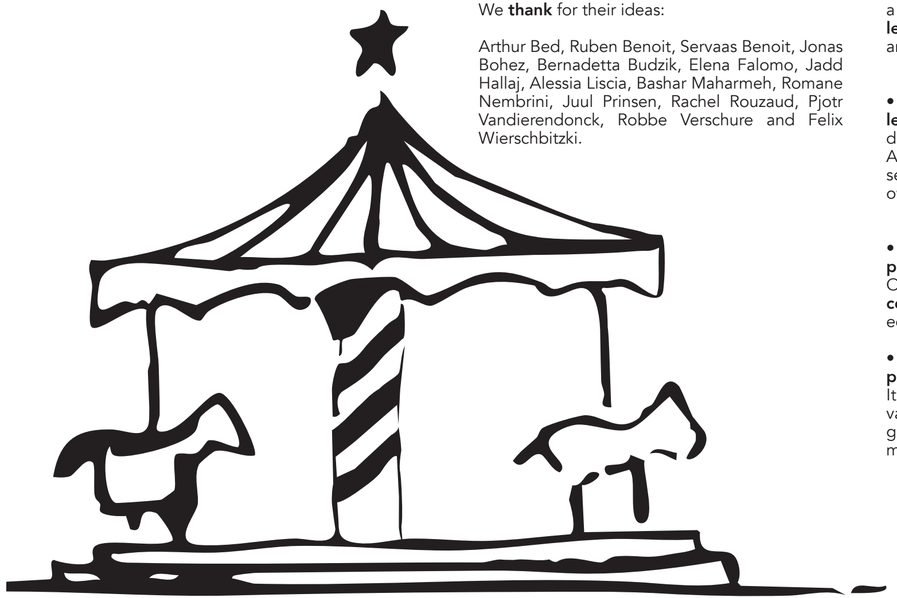
This book opens with the concept of **Knowledge**, the core of our programme, exploring ways to facilitate knowledge creation and sharing. It continues with **Conviviality**, the glue that binds us together, and **Community Work**, the shared practice of implementing care. We also discuss **Space** and its influence on learning, as well as **Mobility** and **Transportation**, a key topic when you bring many people together. **Communication** addresses how to present your project and communicate effectively. We close with **Funding** and **Finance**, the elements that make everything possible.

Each chapter offers **key recommendations** and suggestions on **how to run activities**. It also provides tips and tricks, small actions or ideas that can make your life easier or spark your imagination. Each chapter closes with **stories** from the Living Summer School, sharing things we tried and experienced firsthand.

How to use this book

You can **dive straight** into the topic that interests you most; there is no need to follow it linearly.

The **best** part?
This book also doubles as a **playlist**!



How this book was created

This manual was ideated by a group of 15 people during a two-day creative and **reflective workshop**. The texts were then further elaborated. Through a **collaborative** approach we hope that the most salient and emerging topics will shine through and that our collective memory helped us not forget important things.

We **thank** for their ideas:

Arthur Bed, Ruben Benoit, Servaas Benoit, Jonas Bohez, Bernadetta Budzik, Elena Falomo, Jadd Hallaj, Alessia Liscia, Bashar Maharmeh, Romane Nembrini, Juul Prinsen, Rachel Rouzaud, Pjotr Vandierendonck, Robbe Verschure and Felix Wierschbitzki.

Few words you will bump into

• Non-formal education: any form of **education** that takes place **outside traditional academic** environments. It is usually flexible, learner-driven, and centred on practical experiences rather than formal curricula or accreditation.

• Participants: we prefer not to call anyone a student or a teacher, afterall **everyone is a learner**, each contributing knowledge, skills and perspectives.

• Facilitator: someone who helps **guide the learning process** by **creating the conditions** for dialogue, experimentation, and collaboration. A facilitator **does not "teach"** in a traditional sense but **supports** participants in shaping their own learning journey.

• Alumnae: people who have **completed a previous edition** of the Living Summer School. Our alumnae often stay **connected to the community** and sometimes help co-create future editions, becoming facilitators themselves.

• Peer-to-peer learning: a form of learning where **participants teach** and **learn** from one another. It recognises that everyone has something valuable to **share** and that collective intelligence grows through **exchange**, collaboration, and mutual **support**.

"Knowledge"
(Kamasi Washington, 2017)



KNOWLEDGE

How to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, learning and peer-education

Lectures, ideation workshops, field trips, presentations, construction, pecha-kuchas, fairs, are just a few examples of how we articulated **"educational moments"** at the Living Summer School. In our experience we **privilege project-based**, **non-hierarchical** forms of education and **construction** has become a consistent part of our experiences.

Knowledge exchange is not just uni-directional, in non-formal education it consists in a **network of potential sources** that can shape your non-formal education experience in a unique way. You can start by **mapping** and **listing** which ones you want to prioritise to constitute your own **knowledge ecosystem** of non-formal education. We experimented over the years with different **forms of exchanges** from facilitators to participants, from participants to participants, from participants to facilitators and to the public, from the environment to the Living Summer School.

We also urge you to not forget that you, as a non-formal education organiser, you're also a **learner**. So, take this opportunity to also **be permeable**, learning yourself from the non-formal education opportunity you're organising, taking risks and testing radical unexpected methods. If you're transparent about this you'll create an inviting **learning environment**, where "failing" is welcomed, where participants can take greater risks themselves in directing their own learning. We have all been socialised and cultured by academic contexts, non-formal education can be the space where we **unlearn all together**.



Our Recommendations

• Choose what's right for you

Create your **own constellation of learning methods**, possibly including different voices in the role of "teachers". Remember that some learning modalities are "high energy" and some are "low energy", try to find the **right balance** in a cohesive journey according to your objectives.

- Prepare some back-up impulses to **give energy** to people.

- **Sharing is satisfying**, think of this also for participants not only speakers, collaborators or partners who might want to share their work. We encourage you to give voice to the participants of your **non-formal learning opportunity**.

• Give peer-learning a shot

Peer learning is also a very effective and disruptive mode of learning where participants can **learn from each-other**. We rely heavily in the Living Summer School on peer learning by following a project-based approach.

- Try out **group projects** as the core of your learning opportunity, your role as facilitator will become concerting that in each group all the voices are heard.

- Remember that in peer learning, not everyone has the same knowledge (especially if you are working with **people from different backgrounds and ages**), which is both a challenge and an opportunity.



• Trial hands-on knowledge as a righteous form of knowledge

Not all knowledge needs to be communicated verbally, **hands-on creation** is also an excellent way to **bring people together** to learn a new skill. It also energizes people, activating other senses other than hearing and lets participants move their bodies.

- Hands-on **reinforces self-esteem** and it's also powerful as it allows us to actually change the reality and the environment we're situated in.

- Try combining hands-on education with peer-learning by organising a **skillshare day**, talent show or knowledge market with participants, if you don't want to centre your non-formal education experience around these two aspects.

• Remember to implement some form of evaluation

Evaluation can give you a **framework for learning and sharing**, by setting the learning objectives that you want to prioritise as the "scale" of evaluation. In the Living Summer School we privilege **self-evaluation** with dedicated check-ins throughout the experience for participants to be mindful about their experience as it evolves.

- Implement **peer-evaluation**, it's an interesting method that often leads to generous input that can support **personal growth**.

- Try to create an **atmosphere of openness and dialogue**, give examples of constructive feedback and self-evaluation as a basis for your participants.

- Don't forget that **evaluation should go both ways** for participants and evaluation for facilitators, check in with participants and fellow facilitators regularly to evaluate the efficacy of your work, the quality of the educational experience and adjust your activities accordingly.

- **Match** your evaluation methods with your **schedule**. Evaluation also can take a different temporality, think about both the duration of evaluation and where it's most appropriate to place it in the schedule.



Tips from the Living Summer School

• Keep-it-simple, don't come up with activities that are too articulated and leave some room for flexibility.

• If a learning method does not excite you, it likely won't enthuse others. Let your own **playfulness** guide you in choosing learning methods.

• Not-learning is also learning, give time to your non-formal education participants to have time to explore autonomously and to process information. A timetable that's too full doesn't allow for depth of knowledge to arise.

• Sometimes it's **difficult** to push participants out of their **comfort zones** or to use new skills in non-formal education programmes because of their (usually) short duration, emphasise your programme as an **opportunity to fail**, to take big risks and to have fun with things.

• Reserve more **direct ways to share knowledge** (eg. lectures, presentations...) for the **beginning of the week** to give inspiration for the rest of the experience, or as "breaks" in hands-on activities to leave room during the rest of the time for indirect knowledge.

• Field trips are great activities to gain knowledge in-context, to move to other places to break the routine and make participants more observant.

• Change places of learning from time to time "Move for the sake of moving", put yourself and participants in a different setting as it helps to refresh the mood.

• Offer **multiple forms of participation** (hands-on, reflective, social), different ways to belong can cater to different people.




@Bashar Maharmeh

Learn with us

The **first two editions** of the summer school were very lecture-heavy or at least heavily facilitated. Not everything was as relevant to the summer school. For example, we organised a workshop on writing a press release, which wasn't the best fit. At the time, a lot of organisations in our network wanted to participate as facilitators in our summer school and we gave them a space. It was a **hard balance** to strike between building institutional alliances and picking the right learning methods.

We realised that **fewer lectures** create more **meaningful engagement** and hands-on methods help cultivate a more open, convivial atmosphere that is harder to access in formal education opportunities. It's more **cohesive**, in this sense, to organise more content-heavy stuff, like big talks in the beginning, and keep field trips towards the middle or end of our programme, to still give **intellectual momentum and inspiration** though more embodied and relational learning. In this sense, the schedule of the Living Makeshifts' edition was very well **balanced**.

Knowledge has to be shared with all the participants, to us it seems obvious, but remember to enforce a **"no-hierarchy" policy** in who can attend lectures. For example in 2024 we organised a conference with fellow non-formal education organisers, "Navigating Informal Education" and participants could join in and out freely, taking a break from construction holding planks of wood and hammers.

Quite simply, we begin from the idea that there are no teachers and no students, **we are all learners**. Participants are encouraged to self-facilitate, especially in group projects, and together we uphold an atmosphere in which **everyone can contribute** and discuss ideas. We do not judge anyone for having different perspectives or proposing out of the box ideas and sometimes we agree to disagree.
For example, in 2024 one of the groups was tasked to "build a wall" in one of the construction sites (Wildernis), this generated a lot of friction but ultimately turned into an **interesting debate** around the concepts of natural restoration and the right to play.

For **evaluation**, we experimented with different methods such as group sharing, open dialogue sessions, facilitated discussions, questionnaires, peer-to-peer interviews, and even writing a letter to oneself.

Daily morning check-ins also proved valuable for setting the **tone of the day**, evaluating one's personal state of being is an important part of the learning process.

@Arthur Bed



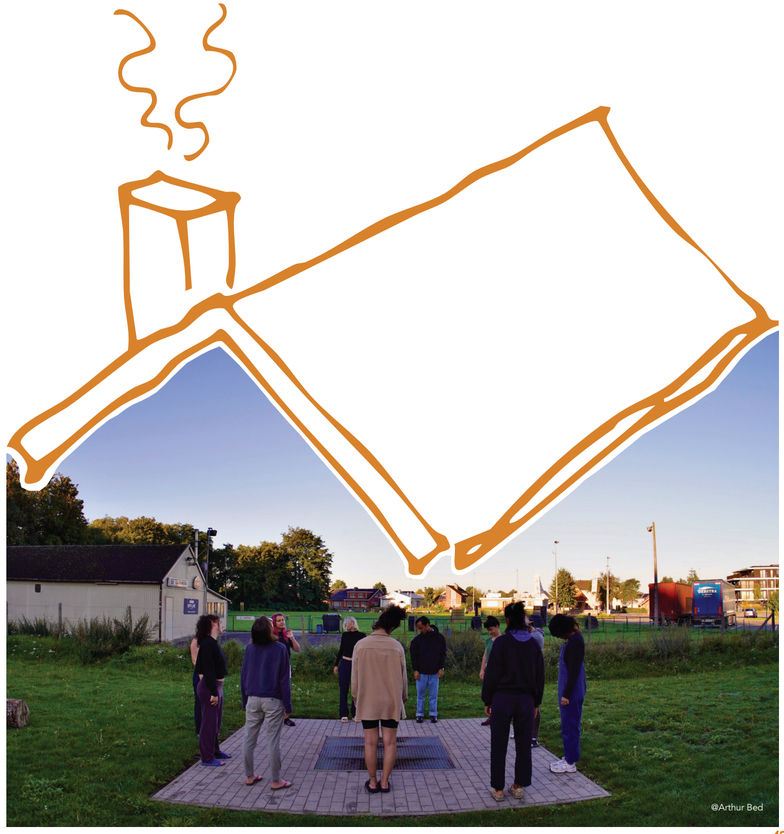
"Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now"
(Starship, 1987)

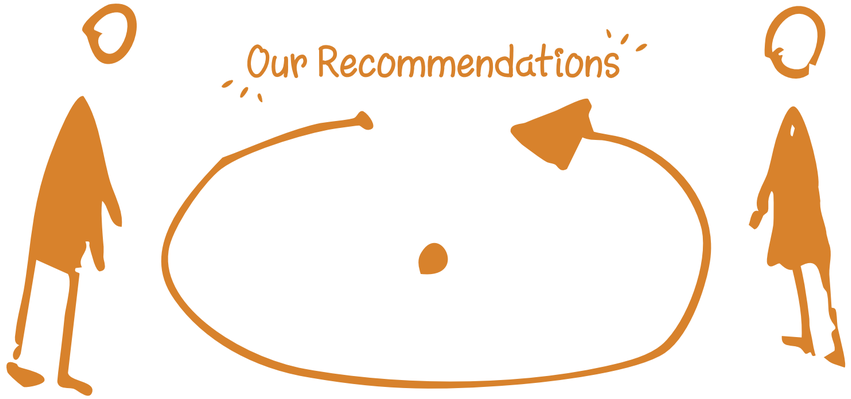
CONVIVIALITY

How to create a welcoming context to share for a diverse group of young participants

Conviviality is a key feature of any non-formal education initiative, it is the **glue that binds everyone together** and it's the secret ingredient to build something strong as a **community**. At the Living Summer School, attention to tending to everyone's wellbeing and **facilitating together comes first**, before any other activity we organise. Conviviality, to us, is about forming a space where everyone feels **safe** to contribute, experiment, and belong.
When people from **different** backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives come together, their potential multiplies, only if we can create an environment that is dedicated to **openness**, **co-creation**, and **trust**.

Non-formal education initiatives might encourage **"living together"** more than formal education initiatives, but conviviality means a lot more than simply sharing a roof or a schedule. It's about **facilitating the existence** of a micro-society and being conscient of the values it's imbued in. We always choose to **maximise diversity** of participants, activities and points of view shared, **prioritise collaboration** over competition, and to try to nurture **mutual care** and shared responsibility in daily interactions. A well-structured yet **flexible environment** helps participants not only to **feel included**, but to actively shape inclusion themselves through their choices, actions, and relations.





• Highlight the value of living together

Whether you choose for participants to **live together** like at the Living Summer School, or for them to simply **share daily** learning space, think about which values **practical arrangements** bring forth and make adjustments accordingly to **facilitate** the atmosphere you'd like to have at your non-formal education experience. Moments of **conviviality** generate a sense of **belonging** and **familiarity**.

- Think of living together as an **educational space** in itself, where participants learn from daily interactions and shared responsibilities.

- **Encourage** more informal moments of conviviality. Taking care of a **shared space** and **daily tasks** encourages **group discussion**, mutual care, negotiation and shared decision making within a group of people: skills which are **essential** in today's society.

• Give agency to participants

Giving participants agency is **crucial** for creating an **engaging** and **engaged** environment. As a facilitator you can focus on providing essential infrastructure and then you can step back, to let participants "fill in the blank", thus **encouraging ownership**, responsibility, and active participation.

- **Leave room** for participants to have their say and **self-organise** in different aspects of your activity (es. time management, learning activities, chores, living arrangements) whilst creating an avenue to **receive feedback** from them so they can let you know if they need more directionality or guidance.

- Stimulate **collective responsibility** and find ways for people to **volunteer** at their **own time** and pace instead of expecting and enforcing participation.

• Factor inclusivity as a key to your experience

Inclusivity should be a **value** reflected in the shared learning environment, both **physical** and **intangible**. Try to create an environment with an "universal design" paradigm, while leaving room for participants to customise the experience and **introduce solutions** that can work for the group as a whole.

- **Run surveys** and questionnaires to gauge whether the solutions you thought of **fit everyone** or whether some individuals need **extra care**.

- Make sure that **every voice is heard** by using different tools and formats.



Tips from the Living Summer School

• Let participants contribute to and even self-organise in different aspects of your non-formal education activity (accommodation, food, learning time …), in fact **collective investment** builds shared responsibility.

• For a balanced way of living together where everyone feels comfortable, it is important to have **clear divisions** between working time / space and leisure time / space, **set clear boundaries**.

• Cooking together has proven to be a perfect time for **non-formal learning**, experience exchange between participants and moments of getting to know each other personally (eg; background, culture, opinions, interests …), give it a shot.

• The most basic food options should always be the one that are most **inclusive** for the biggest group (eg; vegan, gluten free, no nuts,…) and invite participants to **find solutions together** for their individual needs (eg; extra muesli, special coffee, certain fruits …). This is a simple example of universal design combined with personalised inclusion options.






@Ariane Caillaud

Learn with us

In the **first year** of the Living Summer School, participants stayed in a hostel, each in their own rented room or had to self-organise for accommodation.
This offered **comfort**, but participants **rarely interacted** in the shared spaces and this had implications on their own **budgets**.

In later editions, **accommodation** moved to DOK27, a **Sea Scouts** hosting space with shared bedrooms of 24, 6, and 2 beds. In these editions, we **paid for the rental** of the place, and we reserved the 6 person room for female and femme-identifying people. Participants had to bring their own sleeping bags and linens, bathrooms and other **spaces were shared** and the big industrial kitchen gave us the idea to start cooking collectively.

Tending to the space was integrated in the **schedule** with daily cleaning chores on a **volunteer basis**. These practical **routines** naturally created **interaction**, conversations, and shared responsibility among participants, making daily life a space for connection and **teamwork**.

Another accommodation option that we tried with less participants this year was **camping**. Participants stayed in tents, each responsible for their own sleeping arrangements.
Camping offers more **freedom** to arrange personal space and time, while still offering a sense of **community**, as participants share tasks outside the campsite. It also poses **practical challenges**, including **weather** conditions and it implies access to a venue with accessible bathrooms and a large kitchen. This arrangement encouraged participants to step **out of their comfort zones** while maintaining a **balance** between private and shared living spaces.

@Romane Nembrini

MAINTENANCE & CARE WORK

How to to embed care, coordination, and shared responsibility in collective learning

"With a Little Help from My Friends"
(The Beatles, 1967)



@Arthur Bed

In **non-formal learning** we have the chance to be **radical** about the **choices** we make and the **values** we want to pursue in our activities. At the Living Summer School we try to create an environment of care, inclusion, mutuality and shared responsibility, a space that makes **people feel seen**, heard, and able to contribute. This requires not only will but, practically, a **lot of labour**. **Care work** or **community maintenance** refers precisely to this work, to the **organisational** work for making everyone feel part of our summer school and transforming our values in a **tangible practice**.

Our approach to community-building is as much as possible **non-hierarchical**. This attitude is conducive to a more **inviting environment**, where participants can take initiative and own their agency. This is reflected in the way we try to assure an even and **fair distribution** of maintenance and care work between organizers, facilitators, and participants, with tasks divided in a non-hierarchical and **interest-based way**, acknowledging care work as a fundamental practice of **caring for the community** itself.

Care work requires a **great deal of energy** and can feel demanding, yet it is the **foundation** for creating an environment where **personal growth** can truly flourish. It's an investment we highly recommend, as it yields **long-term benefits**. For us, it meant being able to welcome alumnae into our organisational and facilitation team, gradually delegate more tasks, and **expand our team** over the years, whilst maintaining a **tight-knit community**.


@Arthur Bed



Our Recommendations

• Tending to coordination and communication

Making sure that everyone, **independently from their role**, is able to carve their own **space** within the **group dynamic** and feels part of the process. Be redundant in your **communication** if necessary and try to use different channels / formats to really keep everyone in the know with **essential information**.

- Encourage open channels of communication and **collective decision-making**. Hold yourself accountable and show an attitude **open to feedback**. Try different communication formats and provide **anonymity** when needed.

- **Rotate coordination roles** so that leadership and responsibility are shared. Propose **clear process guidelines** or organisation frameworks that can suggest a standard and let people take over.

- Use a **transparent system** (eg; a task board) to distribute responsibilities fairly. We trialled this not only for chores, but also in project-based learning activities and it resulted in a way of working that was a lot **more supportive** of everyone's **energy levels**.

• Tending to community agreements

A group agreement is a **collectively defined framework** that allows a temporary **community** to live and work **together** with **care** and **awareness**. It is not a set of fixed rules, but a shared understanding that emerges from **dialogue** and negotiation among participants. It is a **shared framework** that defines how the group communicates, manages time, practices awareness and mutual care, and approaches resources responsibly.

- **Co-write the agreement** on the first day, defining principles around communication, time, mutual care, and resource sharing. Revisit it regularly to **adjust** expectations and responsibilities and to be responsive to changes and emerging needs or challenges.

- **Appoint some people** (both participants and facilitators) to be a **safe** point of contact in case someone feels a breach of the community agreement. The appointees can react according to the gravity of the breach.

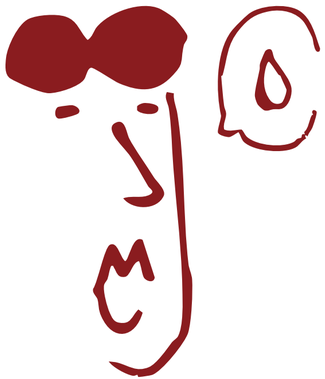
- **Be mindful** of the differences between a **breach** and a **mistake**. Mistakes will happen, what matters is the **willingness to acknowledge them** and take corrective actions in the moment.

• Tending to spaces

Spaces require **daily care** and maintenance. When hands-on activities are organized, materials and tools need to be re-organized regularly, and convivial spaces require attention to ensure **everyone's comfort**. Our bodies also too need to be nourished, care work is not separate from creative or learning work. Non-formal education can be a space to **experiment** with the collectivisation of care work to make it l**ess burdensome**.

- **Encourage collective responsibility** for shared spaces: kitchen, working areas, and leisure zones alike.

- Integrate **space care** into the **daily rhythm** rather than as an afterthought.



Tips from the Living Summer School

• Give the option to **alternate responsibilities daily** so that everyone can experience different forms of care work or enjoy free time.

• Dedicate time for **short group reflections** on how care work feels, what's working, what's missing, how to improve together.

• Keep a small l**iving document** listing recurring tasks, **feedback** received and lessons learned, to pass on to **future editions**.

• If possible, **co-design** as much as possible from your **initiative**, including budget and logistics to ensure **transparency** and **fairness**, but also to get perspective from enthusiastic alumnae.

• **Do the best that you can** with grace, care and intention. **Inclusion** is an ac**t of radical honesty and** acknowledging limits is also part of the game.

• In the application process, **ask about specific comfort** or access needs so you can be ready to adapt the environment to specific needs **beforehand**.





Learn with us

In past editions of the Summer School, care work and maintenance were organized in a **mixed** and **participatory manner**. Daily tasks were managed through a collective **task board**, where each participant was invited to write their name next to at least two tasks of their **choice** (cleaning or meal preparation). This transparent system fostered a **visible** and **collective sense** of responsibility and allowed participants to see tasks transparently without rigid assignments.

For the past three years one alumnus was appointed the role of **"DOK manager"** overseeing the **organisation** of the living areas, but most importantly the **wellbeing** of all participants. They were in charge of **logistics** and their communications, time keeping, organising care work and catching any **sign of discomfort** or tension so they could be addressed. Previously these tasks were covered only partially by organisers and facilitators who couldn't attend as well to community care, so we decided to introduce a **role** for it.

Alumnae have always contributed to the **codesign** of the program through their **feedback** across the years. They also always had an essential role in **welcoming newcomers** to the experience by breaking the ice and organising leisure activities, knowing the area better. Online meetings were organised in preparation for every edition to gather their ideas.

For the Living Summer School, as part of our **care ethos**, whenever there is a paid opportunity or role within the team we **reach** out to our **alumnae network** first to see if anyone is enthusiastic to cover the position. As a matter of fact, facilitators are mostly alumnae who embraced the ethos of the experience and **come back** in a different capacity. It's a simple way to offer more opportunities to young people, extend the care network and **strengthen community bonds**.

Basic community agreements were always set at the start to ensure **respect** and **responsibility**, with facilitators keeping an eye on breaches and mediating when conflicts arose. However, these agreements were never formalized in visible writing (aka posters) or co-signed by participants. During feedback sessions it emerged the need for future editions to **focus** on the drafting of the group agreement on the first day collectively, to ensure that e**veryone's needs and expectations are acknowledged** from the start and make the document more "public".





@Ariane Caillaud

SPACE

"Space Is the Place" (Sun Ra, 1974)

How to learn spatially and from our context

A space for **non-formal learning** should **never be neutral**; it is a **conversation** between people and their environment. In informal education, this **relationship becomes central**: if we learn from a space, how does a space also learn from us? Every **place carries traces** of those who use it, the marks of movement, creation, and rest. Spaces host our activities and we respond to them in turn. The way a place looks and feels often reflects the **health of its community**, revealing how people inhabit, share, or neglect it. **Choosing a space**, therefore, is both a **practical and ethical act**: do we seek out a place for a specific idea, or let the space itself inspire new ideas?

Good spaces for learning are **adaptable and alive**. They are easy to understand yet open to change. They **meet basic needs** of shelter, safety, and comfort, while also offering room for experimentation. The **boundary** between inside and outside, formal and informal, should be **porous**; learners shoulda be able to eat, work, rest, and play within or across **connected spaces**. A space that can be actively modified allows participants to take **ownership** of their environment, turning it into a platform for learning in itself. Sometimes this means **gathering together**; other times, it means **stepping away**, because a truly good space also gives you the freedom to be alone.

Above all, space should be **fun**. Good places invite **curiosity**: they are playful, generous, and rich with character. The best example of this is, of course, **nature**, the perfect learning environment. Our obsession with space may come from how inspiring Bolwerk is, or perhaps we have simply gathered as a place-making-obsessed group. Either way, **space** has become a **central theme** in the Living Summer School and has shaped many of our decisions over the years.



@Arthur Bed

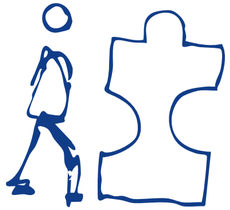
Our Recommendations

• Find the space, or let the space find you

Sometimes the **right space will spark ideas** you didn't know you had. Other times, your **ambitions** will demand a **specific kind of place**. **Be open** to both. Learn in a place and from a place, and remember, the **space learns** from you too.

- **Create** your program **spatially** by creating dedicated spaces to your program activities and arranging them in a way that **boosts your creativity**. Rather than planning activities first and assigning a room later, begin by **observing** what your environment invites you to do, which formats and methods can it spark.

- **Get inspired** by existing spaces, and design a program that fits their unique setup. For instance, we introduced **collective cooking** as part of our activities after the place where we were staying sparked this idea as a **learning tool**.



• Place-makers, not space-takers

Listen to what the space and its people are asking for. The best learning environments **balance** shelter and openness, structure and spontaneity.

- Diversify the fun by **creating different spaces for different functions** that can plug into each other in stimulating ways.

- Make it **dynamic** and **explore** different spaces, get a change of scenery and **refresh your mind** for new learning. (Yes, touch grass!)

- The space should be **informal and flexible**, allowing participants to interact with the spatial configurations of the learning spaces.

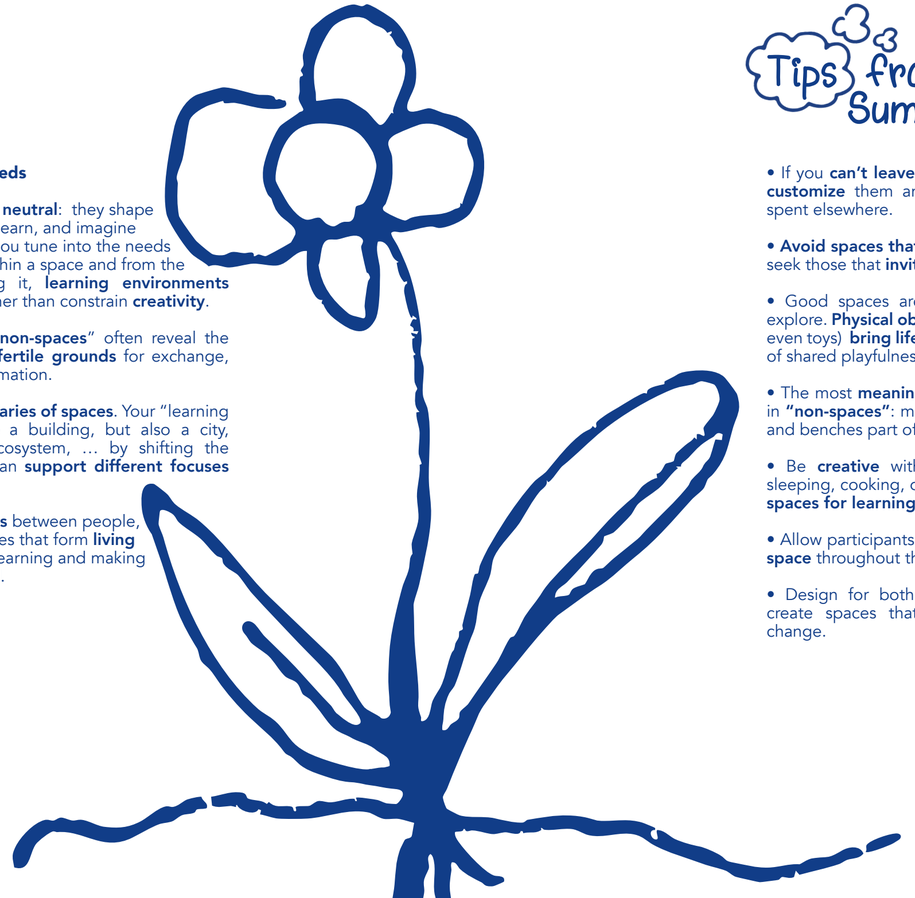
• Space feeds needs

Spaces are not neutral: they shape how we connect, learn, and imagine **together**. When you tune into the needs that arise from within a space and from the people inhabiting it, **learning environments** begin to **feed** rather than constrain **creativity**.

- The so-called "**non-spaces**" often reveal the most, becoming **fertile grounds** for exchange, care, and transformation.

- Play with **boundaries of spaces**. Your "learning space" could be a building, but also a city, a territory, an ecosystem, … by shifting the boundaries you can **support different focuses of learning**.

- Think about **links** between people, projects, and places that form **living networks** where learning and making continually **unfold**.



Tips from the Living Summer School

• If you **can't leave traditional** learning spaces, **customize** them and **balance** them with time spent elsewhere.

• **Avoid spaces that limit** or isolate, and instead seek those that **invite participation** and care.

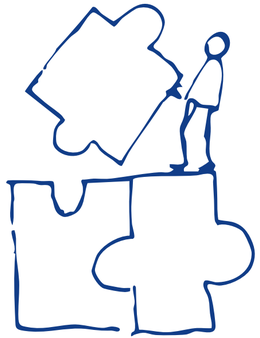
• Good spaces are **fun** to make and fun to explore. **Physical objects** (chairs, tools, materials, even toys) **bring life to a space**, creating a sense of shared playfulness and ownership.

• The most **meaningful learning** often happens in **"non-spaces"**: make hallways, coffee corners, and benches part of the **experience**.

• Be **creative** with **space functions** and let sleeping, cooking, or playing areas also become **spaces for learning**.

• Allow participants to **adapt** and **transform** the **space** throughout the program.

• Design for both **comfort** and **exploration**: create spaces that invite rest, curiosity and change.





Learn with us

At the Living Summer School, **space is not just a backdrop**, it is the very fabric of the **learning experience**. Participants are invited to **live together** for a week, sharing not hotel rooms but improvised habitats that sit somewhere between camping and rural housing. We **collect** and **cherish interesting places** year after year that turn into field trips, collaborations or fun spots for leisure time.

Our activities unfold in a **constellation of places** within the urban fabric of Kortrijk, that **welcome nature**, encouraging a slower rhythm, a closer connection to the environment, and a sense of **collective care**. Living and learning unfold half indoors and half outdoors, in spaces that are unordinary, expandable, and alive, places that can be **reshaped** by the people who inhabit them.

Learning always happens distributed across many sites. Rather than being confined to a single campus or classroom, activities spill into cafés, parks, fritures, and **community venues** throughout the city.
A conversation over fries can be as **meaningful** as a lecture in a hall; a walk to a workshop can be as instructive as the session itself. This distributed geography of learning **transforms the city into an open campus**, a network of encounters where **curiosity** leads the way.



TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

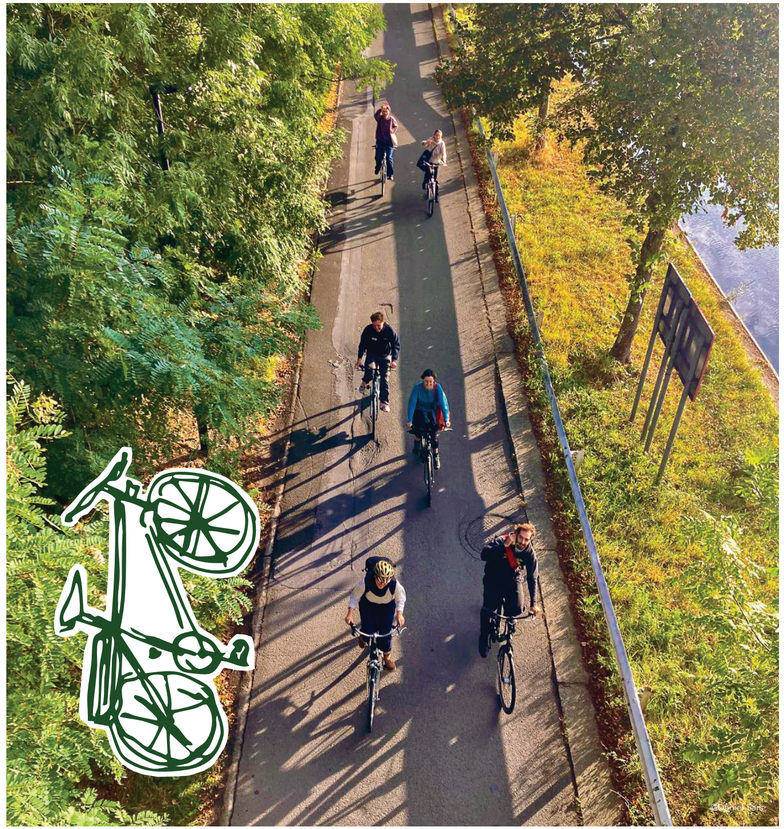
"On the road again"
(Wily Nelson, 1988)

How to arrive to destination and how to move around from there



Mobility and transportation might seem a trivial aspect of **non-formal learning** experiences, however, we learnt over the years that this aspect, if done right, can bring a lot of **flair** and **inspiration** to your experience. At the Living Summer School we are bringing together more than 30 **people from all over Europe**. It's important to explore this topic thoroughly, so that participants can reach us with as **little stress and effort as possible**. Clear communication, practical travel options, and good coordination are all essential to make this **process seamless**. Beyond simply getting participants to the destination, transportation also plays a **crucial role** during the summer school itself, as it allows everyone to **move easily** between different venues, activities, and excursions throughout the program.

At the same time, we view transportation not only as a logistical necessity but also as an **integral part** of the overall **experience**. Cycling through the region has always served as a source of **inspiration**, helping participants connect with the **local environment** and **culture** in a meaningful way. We view transportation as a way to engage with our **surroundings**, discover new perspectives, and draw creative energy from the **journey** itself.



Our Recommendations

• Make it easy to physically get there

Getting people from all over Europe to your site is one of the **main challenges** to overcome to truly welcome a diverse group of individuals. The duration of the experience but also the cost of the travel expenses are key variables to consider, because ultimately travelling **time** and **cost** must be **worth the experience**.

- **Compensate financially** travel expenses to make participation more **accessible** for everyone, ensuring that financial limitations do not prevent people from joining and **contributing** to the experience.

- If you're based in a place that's rural, **remote** or not-so-well connected, consider **organising** the last part of the trip **together** to lower the last-mile costs for everyone. Meet in a **big city** or an **in-between location** and travel the last part of the trip together.

- Offer **drop-in consultations** for participants or organise an **online meeting** dedicated to **logistics** before your activities so that people can ask you questions about travel itineraries. In our experience, it helps younger people who might be missing some **information** or need extra assistance.

• Find the best way to get around in your area

It is important to be able to **get around freely** and **discover** the area during activities, but most importantly during leisure time. Suggest an **adequate** means of **transport** based on the city or place you are based in. Our experiences made us favour the use of **bicycles** as the main way of transportation, because of our location that is not easily reachable by foot or public transport outside of working hours. They are quick, cheap and you keep some kind of **independence**. Walking could be a great alternative for shorter distances to get around and discover the area.

- **Provide alternatives** for unforeseen or **emergency** situations. For example a tandem or a 'taxi driver' who can drive people around with a car. In other urban areas consider public transport or other means of transport.

- Organise a **shuttle** or a **bus** for **daytrips**. Or avoid the need of travelling by making sure you can stay on or around the site.

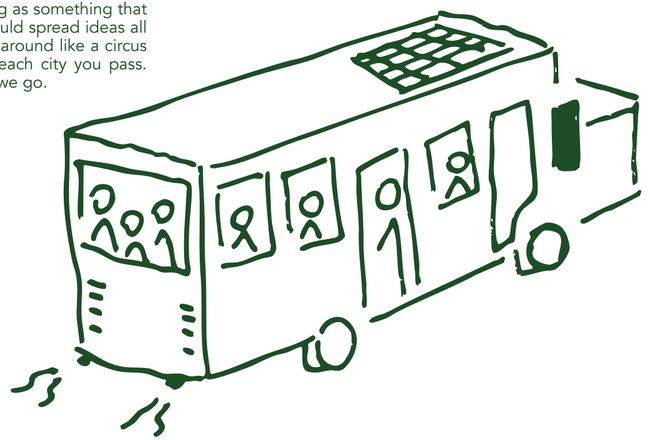
- Make sure you have a **fixer**. Not only people but also stuff has to be moved. A fixer is someone who has dedicated time during the day to fix things, go to shops, drive around people etc.

• Go to the people, do not wait for them to come to you

Instead of getting the people to you, go to the people. Think about **other means** instead of physical gatherings at your 'base camp' to ease people in your non-formal learning experience, **prolong interactions**, and foster a sense of **community**.

- **Gather remotely**. Online meetings combined with tools like **digital whiteboards** proved useful and efficient to get together in preparation and evaluating the summer school.

- Think of what you are doing as something that is **movable**, not local. We could spread ideas all over the place by **travelling** around like a circus and find different actors in each city you pass. **People can join or leave** as we go.



Tips from the Living Summer School

• Local transportation, such as bikes, is what enabled us to implement **field trips** to meet local innovators in their own environment. Do not stay inside, **go out**, explore and connect.

• Apart from the price of travel do not forget about other things you as an **organisation** might find important such as **sustainability**.

• Encourage participants to **travel together** whenever possible, as shared journeys can reduce **costs**, minimize **environmental impact**, and create a sense of **connection** and community even before the event begins.

• Make use of **bicycles** as a primary means of transportation, since they are **fast**, **affordable**, and offer a great way to **explore** the surroundings while promoting a **sustainable** and **healthy** way of moving around.





@Romane Nembrini

Learn with us

Thanks to Erasmus+ funds, at the Living Summer School, we have always been **compensating** participants and facilitators for their **trips** to the summer school and back home. This way we ensured the summer school was **accessible** for people all around Europe. People travelling from afar or from less well-connected areas had larger budgets, a **"green budget top-up"** was dedicated to people travelling **sustainably**.

Bolwerk is a bit outside the city centre and the walk to the train station is around 40' making it not an ideal commute. Kortrijk is a **bike-friendly** city so using bicycles as a means of transportation was an easy choice, it gave us and participants the opportunity to **create itinerant** and **moving activities** as part of our programme.
Over the years we made different **adjustments** taking into account not everyone is used to riding around on a bike or they do not have the bodily capability to do so. We worked around this by **always having a car available** that could be used in case of need.

For the past 5 years, we **rented bikes** from one friendly bike company, Mobiel. This cost us around 3000€ for 50 bikes per year. With the power of **hindsight** we suggest **investing in bikes** to avoid this cost. We suggest using your network to do this. **Find old bikes** at the police department, second hand shops and your network or do an open call for old/unused bikes to borrow or to buy. An initial **team building activity** could be fixing and getting to know your bike. Part of the cost we invested so far in renting bikes each year, could have been used to hire a professional bike mechanic.

Another suggestion is **finding a partner** to get you the bikes you need for a small price. In **exchange** you can give some **visibility** on social media, logo on graphic design and **communication** on the website.

We have also had great experiences by **having a designated fixer**; someone who has dedicated time during the day, go to shops, drive around people, fix things etc.

In 2024 we organised a **conference** with more than 30 guests in addition to the summer school participants. For this event, which was shorter in duration (2 days of activities and 2 nights), we decided to **rent a bus** to move around the group. This logistical consideration made us turn the bus journey into an **experience** in itself with a **hired actor** entertaining guests on the bus as the captain of a make-belief boat (the bus itself).

@Bashar Maharmeh

How to make yourself known to a target audience that shares the same values as you

"Fame"
(Irene CARA, 1980)

COMMUNICATION



Fame isn't always a good thing. But knowing how to **make yourself known** to people who share the same **values** and **ambitions** for improving the world of tomorrow, that's important. Nowadays, there are many ways to communicate. **Social media** plays a major role in the lives of most people, across **all generations**.

It is important to know how to use the **means** at your disposal to **interact** with a **target audience** and create a **sense of community**, something that is sorely lacking in today's individualistic society. It's not enough to create an Instagram account and hope that everyone will know about the project. As with any relationship, it **takes time**, energy, care, and respect to **earn people's trust**.

We still haven't figured out the perfect recipe, but we are set on r**aising awareness** of our project and **strengthening** the community among a target audience that shares our **values**, so our concrete ideas and examples for raising awareness and strength stem from this **conviction**.





Our Recommendations

• Share your commitments to reach you crowd

Each **non-formal education** project will have its **edge** and specificity and it's through the **right communication** that you can share what you stand for. You need to show **what is happening** within the project so that people know what to **expect** if they participate, and be earnest and genuine about who your experience is for and you'll attract the right crowd.

- Create one or more accounts on the appropriate **social networks** to show, through posts, vlogs or stories, **what** is happening, what you are doing, and **where** you are doing it.

- **Share** what has been done in **previous editions**, this also helps to **build trust** and add a tangible, **real dimension** to the project. Use past participants **testimonies**, tell **stories** and share **fun facts** about the project.

- Shape different channels with **different purposes**, whilst staying consistent across them. Our **website**, for example, is our **"more institutional image"**, with a lot of text that is informative for both **funders** and prospective **participants**, whereas on **Instagram** we can be a bit more **playful**.

- **Be clear** about what to **expect** when participating in a project such as the Living Summer School, you might want to get **feedback** from people who have participated in your programme before and learn about what worked well in your **communication**.

• Make yourself known

Gaining **recognition** takes time. Sharing on social media is not the only way, and can even quickly become limited. Try to **test** and trial out different methods that work for you.

- Have a **recognizable visual identity** that persists over time across different editions. If it is not possible to always have the same people working on the visual identity, then a **graphic charter** must be **established** in advance. This saves time while remaining clear, **consistent** and recognizable, so as not to confuse people who are inquiring about the project.

- Using **tangible media** is also a big plus for reaching a wider audience. You want to reach groups of **all ages** because everyone has something to contribute. If possible, writing articles about the project in **local newspapers**, printing **posters** and **flyers**, sticking **stickers** in the streets …



Tips from the Living Summer School

• Have a **newsletter** or regular updates for people who have already participated and those who might want to participate or know what's going on. Keep **communication** to a **maximum of 1 update per month**.

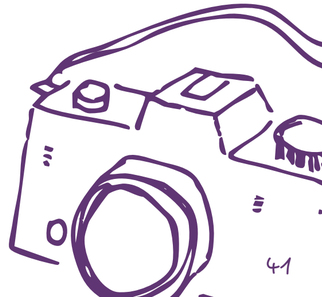
• Have an **active Instagram account**, you can of course concentrate the posts during the roll out of your programme, to enjoy being together and **sharing** photos or live **moments**. It's also a good time to make everyone participate by reposting participants' stories directly to have a **broader reach**.

• Have a **collaborative approach**. We share our login details with facilitators, so that everyone can be **involved** during our summer school in posting.

• Share **insights** that allow your audience to **get to know the people** behind the project, to build a closer relationship with the people who would like to participate beforehand. It also **builds trust** to know who are the faces behind a project that could look scary and ambitious for people who know nothing about it.

• Have a **recognizable graphic identity** and make **merchandise** to foster a sense of belonging and integration; like screen printing on t-shirts, tote bags, or making stickers. This also contributes to **spreading the word**.

• **Don't stress too much** about creating content itself, but strive to **remain authentic** and share moments from real life to give a sense of closeness. There is no need for posting 24/7, on the contrary, it needs to be **fun** to share each other's **projects** and **experiences**; if it isn't, it will show within the content itself.





Learn with us

Since the first edition, an Instagram account for the Living Summer School has been created, but its main purpose was to **promote** following editions so that **as many people** as possible could find out about them and **register**. As a small organisation, the focus has been on "doing things", rather than **documenting** them, so normally we struggle to keep posting regularly outside our yearly activities.
Since the first edition we **shared posting credentials** with all facilitators, so that everyone could document our programme live. This was maybe **not the most cyber-secure** option but it has been **effective**.

For outreach purposes we **collected** a list of instagram accounts, websites and newsletters that repost our activities every year, so we can **reliably disseminate further** our open calls and announcements. We also **print posters** with QR codes linking to our events and stick them in **places** in Kortrijk and in partner's cities where we know we might **intercept our audience**.

We wanted to **try something different** with our **graphic identity** and every year we ask an alumnae to create the yearly **open call posters** and yearly identity of our summer school. This is very important for our mission of **platforming young creatives** in our network and giving them **paid opportunities**.

Our website is the **"most verbose"** presentation of our project, it has been created to **provide information** about previous editions and **showcase** what has been achieved with **photos**, **explanations**, and **testimonials**. It is an important **tool** that ensures the **organization** is correctly referenced when searching for it online and it is our most formal display which is useful for funders and partners.

In the past we worked with **local press** and media agencies to spread the word. Some of our partners, such as ConstructLab, have also published articles on their own websites about past editions. That's why it's so important to **build a network of reliable partners** who can also relay information and expand the reach, which is useful both for **outreach** and **dissemination**.

For every edition of our summer school we **produce a publication** containing texts, with photos and testimonials collected throughout each programme. The aim was to have a **tangible object** that could be purchased as a **souvenir** for those who participated, but also as a written record of each project for future partners or participants. It's not always possible to have them printed. But we make a **digital version** available every year.



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FUNDING, MONEY & FINANCES

How to make sure finances and funding are in order

"Money, Money, Money"
(ABBA, 1976)



@Bashar Maharmeh

As with most things in life, **money plays a crucial role** in bringing ideas to life and ensuring that plans can actually take shape. The Living Summer School organization is no exception. Organizing such an experience **requires careful financial planning** and **transparency** about the resources needed.

We invite you to take a closer look with us at the **different types of costs** involved in setting up and running a **non-formal education** programme: from accommodation and materials to transportation, food, and program activities. We also explore practical ways to **cover these expenses**, whether through participation fees, partnerships, sponsorships, or creative resource-sharing.

At the same time, our f**ocus goes beyond** simply balancing the budget. We reflect on how financial decisions can support the **broader goals** of the experience and **strengthen** its l**ong-term sustainability**. The aim is not to generate profit but to create a model that is **financially stable**, fair, and resilient. By sharing some of our lessons learned and suggestions, we hope to help fellow non-formal education organisers avoid unexpected challenges and build a more **self-sufficient approach** that's capable of reflecting an organisation's **values**.



@Ariane Caillaud

Our Recommendations

• Make sure you know what and how much your expenses are

Our **biggest cost categories** are: food and living supplies, accommodation, transport, facilitators, workshops/lectures, materials and printwork. It can help **to go through the entire planning** to identify **hidden extra costs**.

- Make sure to make a **financial report** with estimates before and a final report at the end of your non-formal education programme. This gives you a **great overview** to see what the **expenses** are and the **income** you will generate.

- In general, try to be conscious of the expenses on all levels. In our case, we try to be **critical** on our biggest costs and try to **find alternatives** like borrowing, renting or looking for community economies.

- Cheap is good but do not forget about the **quality**.



• Try to find funding to cover most expenses

As a **non-profit** youth organisation it is possible to receive **funding** from organisations or governments. We have been funded (€) by Erasmus+, LINA and VLAIO. Make sure to look out for **opportunities**.

- When **applying** for funds, think not only about what you need from these organisations but think about **what you can give or contribute**.

- **Consider sponsorships/collaborations** for usables apart from cash fundings. The financial report might give you some ideas on what stuff you will use, the **report** could help you identify possible sponsorships.

- **Voluntary work** is a source of 'income' too.

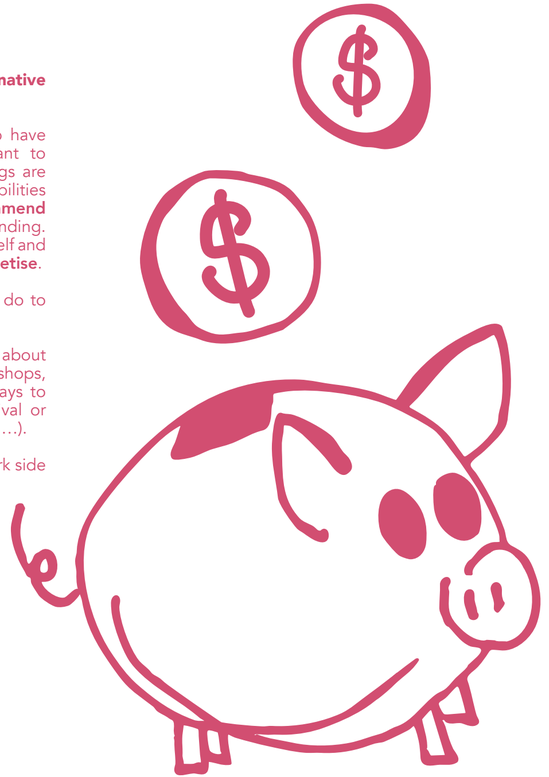
• Think about self-sufficiency and alternative ways of generating income

What if the funding stops? In order to have a sustainable organisation it is important to think about being **self-sufficient**. Fundings are amazing but they also come with responsibilities and uncertainties. Therefore we **recommend finding other incomes** apart from funding. Fundings are a great way to establish yourself and build a **"brand"** that you can later on **monetise**.

- **Focus** on your **strengths** and what you do to look for **opportunities**.

- **Activities** could be **profitable**. Think about organizing seminaries, paid workshops, introducing a company or partner that pays to work on a brief, organise an event, festival or exposition and sell merch (t-shirts, stickers …).

- As a **last resort** you could turn to the dark side and rob a bank or something.



Tips from the Living Summer School

• Go through the planning carefully to identify any hidden or unexpected costs that might arise along the way, ensuring you have a **realistic overview** of the financial needs before starting.

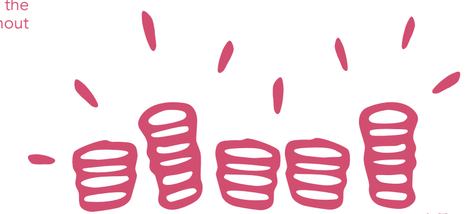
• Be thorough in your **financial reporting** to gain valuable insights for **future planning**.

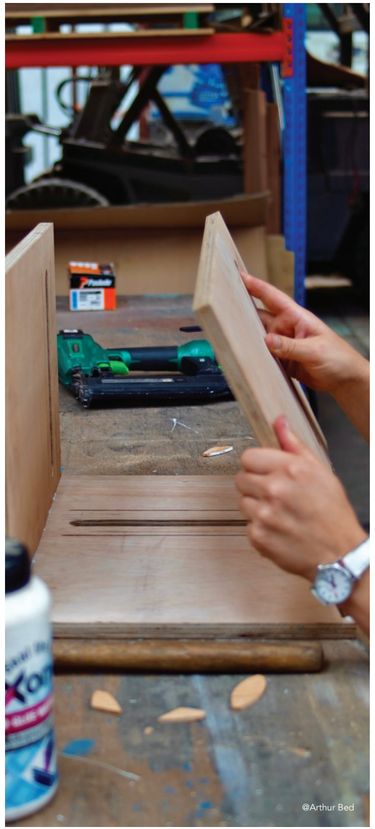
• Keep in mind that **affordability** is important, but **never at the expense of quality**: investing in well-made materials, reliable services, or meaningful experiences often **pays off in the long run**.

• Be **creative** and **resourceful** when seeking funding, exploring a mix of financial support, like partnerships, sponsorships, and in-kind contributions such as materials, spaces, or expertise.

• Think about your **network** and your **communities** and see if you can source things differently.

• Always **think about the future** and aim for **self-sufficiency**, developing financial and organizational structures that allow the experience to continue **sustainably** without relying too heavily on external funding.





Learn with us

When thinking about the summerschool's program the **first challenge** is to get the participants to the summer school. This can be expensive so not only do we try to **estimate travel costs** beforehand, but we also define appropriate travel bands to subsidise and we encourage (and here we mean pester) participants to **book their travels early**.

From this cost, we share some of the creative ways you could handle the expenditure:

• **Partial funding**: fund a certain percentage of travel expense for all participants (eg; 50%).

• **Everyone pays the same**: add up all travel costs and divide it **equally**.

• Subsidise a variable amount: **cover all expenses above a certain amount** (eg; plane and train tickets cost 184€. 50€ of this is **paid by a participant and you cover the rest**).

• Subsidise a fixed amount: **according to travelled distance** pay participants back a maximum fixed amount (eg; 10€ internal travel in Belgium, 130€ travel from France and Germany, and so on), which is **what we favoured so far**.

If we need something that is not consumable for a short period of time, we try to **borrow it** and if that's not possible we **rent it before buying it**. For example, we always asked the university to share with us some of their **hand tools** for the week. In summer, not many students need access to tools so they are happy to share them with us. In the past we also established **partnerships with makerspaces** within the university and outside, and they were happy to be paid just for the usage of materials and not machines.

At the very beginning of the Living Summer School, we tried to look for a **private sponsorship** that would want to collaborate with us with a brief and a small cash fee. In 2024, we integrated a **paid project from a municipality city** to upgrade a caravan into a community space for young adults.

However, in general, **paid sponsorships haven't worked out well for us** and we pivoted to collaborate with other NGOs who have been sharing with us their **challenges**, as well as their knowledge, space and tools. We, in return, **pay** for construction materials and we **offer** the labour of our participants. This is a **"community economy"**, a way to **mutually enrich** each other, that strengthens our ties with fellow organisations.

Three years ago we started a **collaboration** with Food Act 13, the **food distribution** platform in South West Flanders. It focuses on **combating poverty**, redistributing food surpluses to people from fragile backgrounds. We are not beneficiaries of the first-pick food, but they share with us the **surplus of the surplus**, food that will go bad within hours or days and hasn't found a belly to fill. Because of this partnership with Food Act 13 the Living Summer School is able to receive **cheap and responsible food**, especially meat that can supplement the needs of those who are not vegetarian or vegan.





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This manual is in your hands thanks to the contribution of

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Now you have all the keys to make your own music!

Thank you for reading this manual, we hope it was a pleasant and informative read.
Please do reach out to us in case you have any doubts, questions or curiosity, we're always happy to chat!



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