

High Tea Debate, 3 May 2018

LEILU: LEARNING TO BE IN THE NEW ENVIRONMENT

Finding your place in a new, experimental environment through a holistic approach to the person

Projet LEILU – Learning to be in the new environment. A holistic approach for youngsters in Luxembourg – financed by the initiative mateneen by the Œuvre Nationale de Secours Grande-Duchesse Charlotte, was launched in August 2016. Targeting youngsters in Luxembourg (age: 15 - 30), including applicants for international protection, refugees, third country nationals, and Europeans, LEILU aims to help them to get to know Luxembourg from the point of view of their and European values, by participating in social, sports and educational activities during their free time (evenings, weekends, and school holidays). During the year 2017, the partners of LEILU offered six modules of activities that are participatory, interactive and immersive in nature, for at least 24 hours each. The six modules allowed approximately 300 participants to learn

- *Non-violence and respect of the equality of men and women;*
- *Religious tolerance;*
- *Self-defence;*
- *Team building and mutual respect;*
- *Finding/building one's talents and professional interests; and*
- *Visual discovery of Luxembourg*

HEADNOTE

After the phases of (1) conceptualisation (August – October 2016), (2) of promotion, organisation of partnerships and recruitment of the first participants (November 2016 – January 2017), (3) implementation of the activities (2017) as well as the phase of (4) evaluation and reflection (Input Days^{*}, November 2017), this round-table meeting forms part of a new and fifth phase of the development of the LEILU project. In line with one of the recommendations given during the previous phase of reflection, the fifth phase of the project has been conceived as a reconfiguration of the initial project.

I. PROJECT LEILU

Project LEILU was set up as a social and educational project, giving people aged from 15 to 30 who live in Luxembourg the opportunity to learn to be in their new environment, that is, how to question their rapport with themselves, with others, and with Luxembourg. In order to do so, six modules of participatory and interactive activities were offered to around 250 people, the majority of whom were applicants for international protection (DPI) and refugees, since January 2017 till present. Lead by experts in the areas of nonviolent communication and mediation, personal development and empowerment, the martial art *Taekwondo*, image

^{*} *Input Days* seminar was held on 24 – 26 November 2017 in Luxembourg city. It brought external experts in the fields of multilingualism, religion, multimedia education, and migration, to meet with the project organisers, project partners and participants.

and sound, tolerance, and professional coaching, the LEILU activities took place both indoors and outdoors, in small and in big groups, as well as in pairs and individually. The organisers of the project chose a holistic approach by considering the person as a whole, in other words, by taking into account a person's physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, cultural, social, and family dimensions. Project LEILU has been beneficial to various people, who are going through a period of (professional, personal, social, educational, etc.) transition, in particular to applicants for international protection, who are waiting for a decision concerning their future. Below, we present a short description of each of the modules.

2. THE SIX MODULES

The module *Team Building* [TB] was centred around the development of cooperation and collaboration within groups, which were set up in a way that required the group members to help each other. Sharing individual competences and resources was necessary in order to fulfil different missions of a playful character, such as finding the way around the city. Outdoor group activities were offered, especially one designed to learn about living with other people in Luxembourg in the context of a camping activity.

Anti-violence [AV] The name of this module was not particularly fortunate according to our participants and experts. The name was initially chosen more by default, as it allowed avoiding the designation of *nonviolence* that is associated with Marshall Rosenberg's approach, without rejecting it altogether. AV was composed of two sub-activities: a) initiation to mediation techniques (which can be used in everyday life to deal with difficulties in the relationship with one's spouse, neighbour or strangers) and b) discovery of nonviolent communication through concrete situations (learning to express one's own emotions, including those that one generally considers as negative, by identifying their underlying reason).

The module *Religious tolerance* [RT] was aimed at exploring how religious, cultural and social diversities – and thus the values of Luxembourg – are physically ingrained in the urban space, architecture and buildings. A range of visits to sites such as churches, cemeteries, radio stations and museums were offered. These visits took place under the responsibility of a representative of the protestant church of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and a member of the Bahá'í community of Luxembourg.

Visual discovery [VD] which was brought about in partnership with the National Audio-visual of Luxembourg, allowed the participants to better understand the history and recent evolution of the Grand Duchy through a visual approach: several documentary short-films from the course of the past 50 years were viewed and discussed, before the participants then were invited to present their own view of Luxembourg by creating a short documentaries (activity is still on-going)

Taekwondo and self-defence [SD] The aim of this module, which was spurred by the South-Korean coordinator of the project, was to focus on oneself and one's body through weekly practice of the martial art *Taekwondo*, and cultivate and practice the art of self-discipline, respect, and knowledge of oneself and others through a bodily approach.

The module *Finding your talents* [FT] offers internships of the duration from 3 to 5 weeks in various professional fields (personal care, multimedia, catering, etc.), which allow participants to experience concrete situations of work. The aim of these internships is to let participants discover through practice, how to work in Luxembourg and how work is organised in the professional fields that they experience. They are also a way of learning to be in real situations in Luxembourg.

3. LEARNING TO BE IN AN ENVIRONMENT

In what follows, we present our reflections on the project. Please note that the reflections are only concerned with those participants who were applicants of international protection, the largest group of the project participants.

According to the collaborative dictionary Wikipedia (last update 4th February 2018), personal development in psychology “represents a set of methods and ways of thinking that are meant to improve self-awareness, appreciate talents and potential, enhance the quality of life and help realize one's aspirations and dreams. Personal development, however, is not considered as psychotherapy, even if it can be a part of the latter”. Even though several elements in the definition above at first sight correspond to the way in which project LEILU has been designed, LEILU cannot solely be categorised as a project of “personal development”, especially because it focuses strongly on the context and on the environment, that is, on Luxembourg. However, the fact remains that participants who had a certain sensitivity to development (personal or other) sometimes identified themselves more with certain activities of the LEILU project, which could suppose that this aspect of personal (trans)formation was a necessary element, yet insufficient, in order to learn to be in a new environment, regardless of the educational, professional, etc. profile of the individual.

Project LEILU is not, as has also been suggested, a project of social support. It does not take care of individuals with mental or specific social disabilities under the guise of an institution. While there are individuals going through a period of (educational, professional, personal...) transition who signed a registration document to participate in the LEILU activities, this registration document does not constitute a contract that may bind these individuals to an organisation that has to keep record of their adaptation, return to employment, integration, etc. for a third party. In other words, the collaborators that work in the context of LEILU were not appointed to evaluate the ability of the applicants of international protection to live in a new environment and to be granted international protection.

Thirdly, LEILU is not a therapeutic project. The question of a therapeutic aspect especially arose in the context

of the module Anti-Violence. It has been the subject of lively discussions: how should the personal history, often traumatic, of those that participate in the activities be dealt with? Should it simply and entirely be ignored? Where is the boundary between what is therapeutic and what is educational? While these questions are important, the initiators of the project above all wished to offer tools through dynamic activities, which allowed to improve the everyday life of the participants, even if just a little bit. For example, nonviolent communication and mediation were mainly considered as a set of techniques that could allow participants to deal with a situation of conflict in their everyday life at the centre for asylum seekers, where the applicants for international protection are sent to upon arrival, and not as a way of coping with violence suffered as a result of war and forced migration.

Finally, LEILU is not conceptualised as an artistic, or as a cultural or even an intercultural project. With regards to this intercultural aspect, the initiators of the project distanced themselves at an early stage from an approach that emphasises cultural differences, and which aims to learn about the culture of the other. In fact, they immediately chose to focus on the values of the host society and on its culture, rather than on the extremely diverse cultures of the participants. This debatable choice was the result of a two-sided reasoning: on the one hand, focusing on cultures often means favouring the predominant cultures that exist amongst those designated as “the others”, without noticing it. On the other hand, it was a way of anticipating the increase of a certain reticence and retraction, among the population of Luxembourg, from the question of hosting refugees, as has been the case elsewhere in Europe. In other words, LEILU and the focus on being close to the local communities, was about cultivating similarities rather than differences in order to maintain a spontaneous sense of solidarity. Finally, the aim of the modules that were offered was to understand one’s personal relationship to Luxembourg and the ways in which it is possible to absorb the values of the Grand Duchy better, in order to break away from a certain marginalisation, which ensues from the status as applicant for international protection.

4. SERIOUS LEISURE

The eclectic impression that might follow at first sight from the hybrid character of project LEILU, which, as indicated above, is not strictly speaking psychological, social, cultural, intercultural or even artistic, but which consists of aspects from each of these categories, can be overcome by falling back on the notions of *Serious Leisure*, *Casual Leisure* and *Project-based Leisure*, founded and developed by Stebbins since 1973.

The “Serious Leisure” perspective [SLP] is defined as “a way of looking at leisure activities and how people experience them”. Leisure, in this view, is an “un-coerced, contextually framed activity engaged in during free time, which people want to do and actually do, using their abilities and resources, in either a satisfying or a fulfilling way (or both)”. There are three types of leisure:

- “*Serious leisure*: systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer core activity sufficiently substantial, interesting, and fulfilling in nature for the participant to find a career there acquiring and

expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience.

- *Casual leisure*: immediately, intrinsically rewarding, relatively short-lived pleasurable core activity, requiring little or no special training to enjoy it.
- *Project-based leisure*: short-term, reasonably complicated, one-shot or occasional, though infrequent, creative undertaking carried out in free time, or time free of disagreeable obligation.” (Stebbins 2017).

With regard to these definitions, it is possible to analyse the “leisure” aspect of the LEILU project, as well as what type of leisure, and for whom, it has turned into over the course of the pragmatic adjustments. In the view of the initiators of the project, LEILU was “serious leisure” from the outset, based on voluntary commitment and intended for young people who wish to fill their free time (weekends, evenings, holidays). Initially, LEILU was both a question of learning about the host society’s, in this case Luxembourg’s, values and way of life (equality between the sexes, religious tolerance, resorting to negotiation rather than violence, cooperation and solidarity, focus on individual competences) as well as reflecting on one’s own ways of dealing with things through actions and interactions (with a focus on respect, self-control and control of one’s feelings).

Initially, the only rule was that the participants engaged themselves to participating in at least four modules out of six modules that were offered for the entire project, by signing the registration form. However, despite the goodwill of some of the partners and experts who were in charge of the activities, this rule quickly turned out to be unsustainable. Likewise, it has not been possible to expect the participants to, throughout the entire duration of the activities, attend one and the same group, which was formed by the project organisers in such a way to promote varieties in terms of culture, language, origin, family situation, distribution of the sexes... All in all, reality (the reactions of the participants to the activities that were offered) constrained the organisers and indirectly also the partners/coaches/experts, as we will see, to revise their plan along the way and to offer more and more activities over the course of the weeks, by emphasising Casual Leisure and Project-based Leisure. In other words, while the “serious leisure” aspect of LEILU was not entirely forgotten, it was gradually pushed into the background.

In the beginning, the predominant attitude amongst the partners and experts in charge of setting up the LEILU modules was, to offer a “project-based leisure” that corresponded to their expertise. However, here again, the passage from conception to practice for most of the six modules made it impossible to meet the requirements and expectations of the partners and experts, who wanted to develop activities based on an educational process (for example, Team Building) with the exception, perhaps, of the module Religious Tolerance. In fact, even if the activity coaches of this module chose to adapt their rule, they still insisted on their initial intention to offer 4 to 5 consecutive days of visits to various sites in Luxembourg to a group of participants that was formed the first day. In other words, the partners of this module did neither accept day-to-day registration nor did they let the participants choose only one or two particular visits that seemed more interesting than others.

Finally, it is possible to distinguish between participants who mainly approach project LEILU as “Casual

Leisure”, and those who occasionally approach it “Project-based Leisure”, as well as those who very rarely approach it as “Serious Leisure”. In the category of participants who approach LEILU as “Casual Leisure”, there are two types of cases:

- The occasional participant or the “targeter”: s/he is interested in a module or a particular activity within a module. Two types can be described: the “opportunist” or the “consumer” considers whether there is any immediate benefit to be gained from a particular activity – e.g., having a good meal, participating in an interesting outing, or getting a certificate. The “specialist” on the other hand, targets one or two modules in particular, or even one or two activities that form part of a module (the “psychological” module for one of the participants, for example). In this case, the key motivation seems to be doing something useful (for myself, my children, or my family). In this view, LEILU becomes a set of services. Groups are formed from case to case.
- The regular participant: his main motivation is to enjoy participating in activities that do not require particular competences or that require just a minimum of learning. The regular participant can also be a simple “follower” who comes along with his friends or a family member to have a good time. In this case, LEILU is made up of membership groups that are gathered based on certain characteristics such as age, status, nationality and community.

In the category of participants who see LEILU as “Project-based Leisure”, it is possible to distinguish:

- The active participant: in this case, the key motivation is no longer solely pleasure and sporadic leisure, but the desire to invest long-term in the context of an activity that is characterised by a certain (personal) development. Two variants can be described: the “enthusiast” sees an opportunity in a specific activity (such as *Taekwondo* in the context of the module Self-Defense for one participant) to satisfy an enduring interest. The “explorer”, on the other hand, participates in most of the modules because he “finds the project interesting”, according to the comment of one of the LEILU participants. He absorbs and invests himself in a project that – to him – constitutes a particular environment. For the active participant, whether it is the “enthusiast” or the “explorer”, LEILU is experienced as a reference group: it is about adopting shared behaviours, values and norms (such as respect, discipline and punctuality in the context of *Taekwondo*, for example).

The militant or activist participant is driven by a desire, not only to participate in the LEILU activities, but also to make the project known to others. He actively contributes to invigorating the project by inviting friends, acquaintances or members of his family to participate in the LEILU activities. This is the case for the “activist” or the “multiplier”, who recruits participants, and who mobilises them and raises their awareness about the underlying philosophy of the project. In this view, LEILU is seen as a group of influence (that can change and transform others and society once they become participants)

With regard to these last categories, a project might occasionally, yet very rarely, turn into “Serious Leisure” entirely. One of the LEILU multipliers explained to us that LEILU has become a field of experimentation for him, as he wants to create his own organisation.

To give a sense of scope; the vast majority of those that participated in the LEILU activities can be seen as occasional participants (about 80%) or regular participants (about 15%). The latter consider the LEILU project as casual leisure, which can be enjoyed sporadically. The active (about 3,5%) and militant (about 1,5%) participants who approach LEILU as a leisurely project that allows them to throw themselves into a new environment are in the minority.

5. THE CHALLENGES AND ISSUES ENCOUNTERED

The gap between the conception of “Serious Leisure” (learning to be in a new environment and rediscovering one’s future in Luxembourg) and the reality of the project, which a majority of the participants experienced as “Casual Leisure”, has been the subject of important internal discussions. Consequently, it constituted one of the major points of reflections at the evaluation seminar “Input Days”, which was organised during the fourth phase of the project in November 2017. Further below, we present a general view of the persistent issues that were encountered in all of the modules throughout the project and of the experiments that were made and/or suggested in order to compensate for the difficulties in the field.

5.1. The question of incentive and commitment

Significant experiments/adjustments throughout the project:

- Inviting participants to cook for themselves during some of the “Anti-Violence” activities
- Giving out vouchers (the “Finding your talents” module)
- Giving out certificates of participation

5.2. The question of a continuous participation: gaining the trust of the participants

Significant experiments/adjustments throughout the project:

- No age limit, accepting families and children (even toddlers)
- Suggesting to the participants to bring their friends

5.3. The question of respecting a minimum of operational rules (punctuality...)

Significant experiments/adjustments throughout the project:

- More and more personalised contact with the participants. Contacting the participants individually by phone. Involving the interpreters.

- Free participation in the modules and activities (supply according to demand)

5.4. The question of collaboration (beyond the linguistic groups) between the different communities in Luxembourg (Luxembourgish, Portuguese-speaking, applicants of international protection, etc.)

Significant experiments/adjustments throughout the project:

- Collaboration with the Youth Club in Clausen in Luxembourg city
- Collaboration with COPAS and communities experiencing difficulties

5.5. The question of how to allocate roles, power and authority (coordinators, partners/experts, interpreters, multipliers, etc.) On the subject of proselytism and overzealousness

Significant experiments/adjustments throughout the project

- Delegating certain tasks to the multipliers
- Organising debriefing sessions with the partners and with the participants
- Organising partner lunch meetings for the coordination between modules

6. LEILU 2.0: RECOMMENDATIONS

The issues listed above have been subject to numerous discussions in numerous contexts. During “Input Days” seminar, these discussions led to a range of suggestions and recommendations aiming to transform an exploratory project into a more formal project, entitled LEILU 2.0 below. The following outline of LEILU 2.0 is not only applicable to Luxembourg, but also to other countries, in the first instance European, which are confronted with the question of hosting migrants.

6.1. A project centred around development and learning to be in a real world environment

LEILU 2.0 is not a project that solely offers activities. It is also an open experimental ground, allowing people to experience their environment and consequently, to develop on a personal level. Learning to be in one’s environment means that focus is placed on the host society and its multiple facets (especially its values, which present themselves in particular behaviours, such as in a public space, for example).

6.2. The principles: participation, immersion, interaction

LEILU 2.0 is based on three fundamental principles: **immersion** (to be put in a concrete situation), **active participation** in concrete (and non-theoretical) activities, which are very similar to the reality of everyday life, **interaction** (to react and understand while in interaction), especially with the local population and communities. Learning to be in one’s environment means to be confronted with real world situations that require mobilising all of one’s personal resources (social, interpersonal, emotional, etc.) and not solely one’s

linguistic capabilities, as is often the case. In other words, learning to be in an environment does not only amount to learning the language or the languages of the host country, but to interact as a whole person.

6.3. A holistic approach of the person

LEILU 2.0 again tries hard to take into account the person as a whole, in other words, the physical, mental, emotional, family, social, cultural and spiritual dimensions of individuals. The spiritual dimension, often neglected and yet an integral part of the person, is important to consider as migrant populations experience a particular vulnerability, including an inner and an exterior vulnerability, which makes them question the sense of existence.

6.4. A plan of action based on three interdependent activities (a main, a support and a reflective activity)

In order to provide a coherent offer and to avoid too much dissipation, LEILU 2.0 offers a small number of interdependent and complementary activities: one main inclusive activity, which allows learning in concrete situations by being immersed in an environment, a complementary activity, which offers activities that enrich the main activity, and, finally, a reflective documentary activity.

Main activity

The limited offer of LEILU 2.0 is composed of a main activity, **camping**, which takes place continuously over several days (between 3 and 5) with the possibility to participate as a family. This activity provides elements of time, setting and action that are favourable to group learning (living in a community – doing things together – distribution of roles – relationships between men, women, children – intergenerational relations – respect for nature – contact with the local communities).

Support Activity

The main activity is complemented by a certain number of visits (to religious, cultural and social sites), which are intended to make the values of the host society (tolerance, equality, freedom of opinion) visible and palpable.

Documentary Activity

Finally, in order to take a step back from the learning experiences (reflective activity), an activity based on a visual approach is offered in order to circumvent the language issue, so that the reflections of the participants can be visualised and shared within the group.

Optional Activity/Activities

These three activities, which constitute the core of LEILU 2.0, can benefit from the contribution of other

activities, which could take place during gatherings in the evening in the context of a Camping activity (such as initiation to nonviolent communication and mediation or initiation to a martial art, for example).

6.5. A leisure-based project for a volatile audience

Elements of time, location and action

By offering a project for development and learning purposes that is based on an element of time (three to five consecutive days), location (a camping), and action (learning to be in an environment), LEILU 2.0 takes into account the reality of people who are in a transitional phase (especially applicants of international protection), who are very volatile and whose behaviour cannot be anticipated, even on a short-term basis.

A recreational leisure

On the other hand, by emphasising leisure, LEILU 2.0 is adapted to people who are mainly looking for recreational and explorative activities, which are situated within the zone of development, in other words, within a certain zone of cognitive comfort.

A project certified by competent institutions

Finally, in order to get competent institutions to recognise the serious dimension of the leisure activities that are offered in the context of the development project, LEILU 2.0 is placed within the category of social and educational activities as well as informal learning - the fruits of which will benefit the host society in the long run.

6.6. A workshop of coordination and consultation

For purposes of coordination, a one-day workshop of preparation and consultation is organised to bring together all the partners that are involved in the project LEILU 2.0. For the organisers, it is about presenting the intention, the approach and the principles that this development and learning project is based on. This workshop brings together not just the initiators of the project but also the experts in charge of leading the activities as well as the interpreters, who are only occasionally involved in activities, such as on visits to specific sites (support activity).

7. CONCLUSION

The issues (see pt. 5) encountered throughout the activities of the project are persistent as they resurface in one way or the other, regardless of any adjustments. With regards hereto, we can say that they go beyond the setting of LEILU, and that they form part of a more global societal issue related to hosting refugees, i.e., an issue whose core can be understood as a constant renegotiation between a need to fit in and a need for integrity.

The LEILU project is a project that, admittedly, encourages the cultivation of differences and singularities, but also that of similarities in the context of playful, interactive and participatory activities. Throughout the project, which was initially designed as “Serious Leisure”, participants are placed in a paradoxical situation: when I arrive in a new environment, how can I negotiate, renegotiate and reconcile two fundamental aspirations/needs? On the one hand, they have the need to belong to a neighbourhood, to a school, to a professional environment, to a new society that is based on certain norms and values. On the other hand, they feel the need for integrity: to remain faithful to themselves, their values, their beliefs, their family’s and region’s culture, etc. These two needs are fundamental, given that they are shared by every human being. If they are not met in one way or another, they become a source of suffering and violence. The feeling of exclusion, for example, reminds us of the need to belong somewhere. The rejection of another person and any other form of ostracism is an indirect and tragic reminder of our need for integrity. However, these two fundamental needs are constantly interacting. Thus, tackling them as paradoxically interdependent (the logic of complexity characterised by ‘and’) rather than as two separate needs (the logic of ‘either / or’) becomes a continuous challenge: in trying to satisfy the need for integrity, we sometimes risk questioning where we belong. Inversely, in satisfying our need for belonging somewhere, we sometimes risk losing ourselves.

Considering the discussions concerning integration and assimilation, inclusion and exclusion, identity and alterity, unity and diversity, tolerance and intolerance in the context of this paradoxical tension between the need to belong somewhere and the need for integrity, makes it possible to look beyond prejudicial excesses, which can otherwise lead to a radicalisation of attitudes, i.e., to an obsession with one of the two poles, with no room for manoeuvre.

Der Schuss [The shot] & Dschihad Calling [Jihad Calling]

Christian LINKER

Dschihad Calling, dtv, 2015

Jacob decides to intervene when he sees a veiled girl being harassed by hools, and falls in love with the blue eyes of the unknown girl. Later, he recognises her on a press photo: Samira is a member of a Salafi association. Nevertheless, Jacob tries to get in touch with her, which is how he meets Samira's brother Adil, who sympathises with the holy warriors of the so-called Islamic State. While the ideas and the community life of the Salafis at first seem unimaginable to Jacob, he still finds something appealing about them. In contrast, he feels increasingly put off by the coldness and the consumerism of his own environment. Jacob radicalises, breaks off all his former contacts and converts to Islam. But does he really want to go to Syria with Adil?

Der Schuss, dtv, 2017

Former dealer, school dropout, on a six-months probation: Robin does not want to get into any more trouble. But then, he suddenly finds himself holding this USB-stick. The explosive video on that stick could send that smart right-wing populist Fred Kuschinski straight to the slammer – instead of to the Parliament. That is exactly what the young blogger Henry is trying to do. But in that case, Robin will have to fear for his life...

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“Why do you want to become a journalist? What will you get out of confronting Fred and these people anyway?”

Her smile vanishes.

“I could make my life easy and just say that it's because I'm personally affected by racism all the time. Every single day. I don't quite have the same skin colour as average Germans do, in case you haven't noticed.”

“Now that you're saying it.”

She laughs, but only briefly. She turns serious again and looks past me, out of the window, onto the street.

“It's not just because I'm personally affected”, she says. “That wouldn't be a good enough reason for me. I think – and I know this is probably going to sound really corny –to me, it's all about Germany. About Europe. I'm kind of like a patriot, you know?”

“No”, I say.

She looks at me again.

“Several of my friends are really left-wing”, she says, “they would puke if they heard the word patriotism. But my ancestors are not from Europe. They are from Africa, so maybe I actually do have a different view. To me, this is a place of freedom, of diversity. If I want to be a lesbian, Muslim vegan, I can, and nobody can forbid it or discriminate against me on those grounds. At least, that is how it is in theory, but even just the fact that that is how it is in theory and that people in certain areas actually live according to this theory is wonderful. But now these people from the Alternative for Germany suddenly want to destroy all of that. Don't you see? They want to destroy *our country!* They always say that they love Germany. But in truth, they hate it. They hate the country that we have all built up.”

I'm not sure whether I understand what she is trying to say. I just ask myself whether she is really a vegan. Or a Muslim. Or a lesbian. Why the hell am I even asking myself these questions?

“They are always talking about the people”, she goes on. “Allegedly, too much is being done for the refugees and too little for their own people. And it is indeed true that politics doesn't focus enough on the simple people. But the refugees were not the

ones to introduce the Hartz plan four and to get rid of the wealth tax. The refugees are not the ones that evade billions of taxes while they let schools and hospitals fall apart. Many people are afraid of globalisation, but the Alternative for Germany would be the last party to introduce a financial transaction tax.”

Whatever that means, I wonder. She speaks rapidly. Her words seem like flashes from a strobe light to me. I can picture her being on television or on a big stage in front of thousands of people. Unfortunately, I only understand half of what she’s saying.

“Have you ever read their manifesto?” she rants. “That is absolutely directed *against* the people. But nobody notices that because they make refugees and Islam and even gender mainstreaming responsible for everything that’s wrong in this country.”

“All this talk about the people and such”, I say, “I don’t get that anyway. Sure, it’s a nice idea that we’re all somehow the same and that we stand together. But I can’t imagine something like that. I think everyone has to deal with their own business and try to cope with life on their own.”

(from *Der Schuss*, page 69f)

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“That has nothing to do with me. And I don’t see what it has to do with *you*.”

She gets up and walks towards me, bends over the laptop and opens a PDF-file. It looks like a series of screenshots of her Facebook account.

“I’ll show you what it’s to do with me”, she says and scrolls down.

She has linked to a newspaper article about Fred and commented:

Kuschinski’s rabble-rousing against refugees is just loathsome. Should this man really enter the Parliament?

The post has over three hundred likes and almost a hundred comments.

“Read them”, she ordered.

I read.

There is freedom of opinion in Germany. If you don’t like that, just swim back to Africa. Shut your face nigger bitch, and go pick some cotton. Such a welcoming fascist like you should be put through a real Arab sex mob. That’s what you really want, isn’t it? You are just frustrated because our new Muslim citizens have set their eyes on blond, German women and not on a black bitch like you. But there is a solution for that. Maybe I will drop by sometime myself. So next time you go out alone at night, make sure to check who is following you.

And so it goes on and on. I stop reading. The first impression is enough.

“I have reported all of them”, Henry says. “Most of them actually write under their real name. But the police have only investigated the one that threatened to rape me. I pictured him like a crude, bald Nazi, who sits around alone all day with a pack of beers in front of a computer. But it’s a completely normal guy: he’s a father, works in the IT-sector, goes to watch hockey games with his kids on weekends. He was shocked when the police showed up at his doorstep. Probably he didn’t expect that his comments on Facebook could have any consequences. He sent me a long letter and apologized a thousand times, explaining that it had been a knee-jerk reaction and that he meant it in a satirical way. He thought I was just a fake profile and that he would never threaten a young woman for real, and said that he was terribly sorry, blabla. He donated a large sum of money to the relief agency and the case was closed.”

She clicks to close the picture and goes back to sit on the couch.

“Yes”, she says, “of course you’re right. You cannot stop someone from electing the Alternative for Germany by exposing the party as racist. But that is exactly why we have to fight for a more open-minded society. Sometimes it seems to me like society is experiencing a collective burnout. The world has simply become too stressful and confusing for such people to cope with. Wars, crises, climate change; there is a constant pressure to perform faster and better. Not just for the so-called forgotten men and women, but for people from all walks of life. Still, we cannot just hide. We must stand up and fight against it. Stand up for what we believe in.”

She looks at me, searching for a reaction in my face. But she doesn't find any.

I clear my throat and say: "I have not understood much of your clever talk. Except for the bit about

stress and pressure because I don't want any of that. That's why I am not fighter. I don't want to stand up for anything, okay? I just want to be left alone."

(from *Der Schuss*, p.94-96)

3

An excited crowd was gathering at a crossroad. That means: men. You barely ever see women out on the street. I have seen such crowds several times during our stay. They usually mean that someone is being punished for something somewhere. So the men were clustering at this crossroads. There were not just adult men but also many boys, some even very young, like preschool children. They had all put their head back and were looking up. There is a high-rise building at the crossroads. The building is not yet finished; it's just a framework. As we approached, we saw what the men and boys were staring at: on the top floor, there was a plastic chair standing at the edge of the building. A man was sitting on the chair. He had been blindfolded, and his arms were tied up behind his back. Four masked brothers were standing behind him. One was waving our flag, two were demonstratively holding up their Kalashnikovs and the fourth one was filming the scene with his smartphone. At that moment, I suddenly thought about what you said to me the very last time we spoke. It was almost as though you were standing beside me and whispering the same words as the ones you said back then. "And if it were a thousand times haram to suck another man's dick", you said, "it is still ten thousand times worse to push him off a tall building because of it. But you were not standing next to me yesterday morning at that crossroads in Raqqa. It was not you; it was Max and Mirza.

"Look mate, a queen, right?", Max whispered "That's the punishment for homos, isn't it?"

I shrugged my shoulders and turned around to walk away.

"Wait", Max shouted, "we have to watch this."

But I retorted sharply: "God! You have seen so many dead people already. And you will see more when we return to the front."

Several people turned around and looked at us. I had been a tad too loud, but I had spoken in German obviously, so they just gave us a questioning look before turning back towards the scene on the building.

"Have fun", I snarled, and left.

None of my brothers followed me. They had joined the gaping crowd and were staring at the top of the building with their mouths open.

When I reached the next street corner, I stopped. Something forced me to turn around one more time. And as if they had just been waiting for me, they did at this very moment: the two brothers with the rifles gave the chair a kick, the first one waved our flag and the fourth one bent forward to make sure he caught everything on his camera phone. The condemned with his blindfolded eyes and his hands tied up somersaulted involuntarily in the air and plunged into the depths like a missile. He didn't scream. Everything was dead silent, as if someone had muted the volume. The plastic chair came down floating behind him. I didn't see the man hit the ground. I only heard a muffled sound, as though all the men jointly heaved a long sigh. I had expected an outcry, perhaps cheering, or - on the contrary - cries of horror. But this muffled sound and the fact that I didn't hear the man's body smash on the ground, confused me. Obviously I was standing far away, but something inside me was still waiting for a loud impact. And as crazy as it may sound, I am still waiting. As if the man were still in the air, somersaulting silently and plunging into the endless depths without any hope.

(from *Dschihad Calling*, p. 207-210)

4

She held my hands in hers and said: “Sometimes when I pray, looking towards Qibla, I imagine looking through these walls and the other houses, beyond the roofs of the city, beyond the forests and the mountains and the seas and the continents, and that my eyes meet those of hundreds of millions of others from the entire world at the Kaaba. And when I think about it, about the diversity of the umma, I realise how presumptuous we are. I mean, only God and the Prophet can judge what qualifies as *true* Islam and what doesn’t. Isn’t it blasphemy when we claim that we are the only ones who truly live according to Islam and that the other ninety-nine per cent of Muslims don’t?”

“Wait a minute”, I shouted, and withdrew my hands. “What are you talking about? Stop changing the topic all the time.”

“I’m not. Everything is interconnected: what we believe in, the way in which we live, the consequences that follow from these decisions. I don’t need to be put on display by Abu Tarek just because I’m a woman. That is not Islamic. Umm Ammarah was a companion of the Prophet and she defended him against the Meccans with her sword. Zaynab Fatima bint “Abbas was a poet and a legal

scholar, and she preached in Cairo and Damascus seven hundred years ago. Malala Yousafzai was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. She is younger than me and yet a role model. I want *that* to be my Islam.” She grabbed my hands again. “For a long time, I have refused to see it. Only you have made me see it.” “Excuse me?” I cried out for the third time and pulled my hands away. But this time, she held on to them.

“Yes, you. Do you remember how you explained to me why you don’t believe in Hell? Without a deep understanding of Islam, you spoke from your heart about the love and the mercy of Allah. And that’s when it became clear to me that I had to read the Qur’an again in a different way.”

This time I pulled away, jumped to my feet and looked down on her coldly.

“You should have told me so back then. In the meantime, I can actually picture Hell pretty well. And I will not let you – or the both of us – end up there.”

“What does that mean?”

“Adil is going to jihad. And I am going with him.”

(from Dschihad Calling, p. 276f)

Note on translated documents: The proposed translation reflects the position of the multi-LEARN institute regarding multilingualism in action and interaction. This position assumes, on the one hand and classically, that a translation strives to respect the spirit and the letter of the source language and, on the other hand, that the linguistic identity of the translator manifests itself from the inside of the translated version that can evolve over time.