

In the frame of the European Programme



# ECO-SUFFICIENCY

**A EUROPEAN TRAINING COURSE ON SOCIAL INNOVATION,  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY LIFE**

**Midi-Pyrénées (FRANCE)  
From August, the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 27<sup>th</sup> 2015**



# SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT

« *I always thought that who sows utopia will reap reality* »  
Carlo PETRINI

The crisis we are going through reinforces the idea that we need to change the way we live. In this time of austerity and lack of opportunities, many people experience self-absorption and identity regression. However, a growing number of citizens strive to find **new solutions** in order to face their problems. They develop **collective projects** that prove that we have the capacity to ensure **local and sustainable development** and each individual's **well-being**.

The training course **Eco-Sufficiency** aimed at promoting these projects based on **human values**. We wanted to **shed light** on those projects to give people some **perspective** about their own needs, to help them to **develop their projects** and **reach more autonomy**.

The training took place in South-West France (Midi-Pyrénées) from August, the 10<sup>th</sup> to August, the 27<sup>th</sup>. It gathered 28 youth workers and people involved in social projects from France, Spain, Italy and Portugal.

Participants:

- experienced **community living** and **lowered their ecological footprint**;
- **met people involved in social and/or eco-friendly projects** and shared some of their daily activities;
- worked together and challenged their **cooperation skills**;
- **exchanged knowledge, know-how and ideas** with each others and built relationships that should lead to deeper partnerships and cooperation in the future.

The training was designed as a **research based on action**, with learning courses (**to think**) and actions in the field (**to do** and **to feel**).

Each step was an opportunity to meet people involved on the ground and get first hand experience at their side in various fields: culture, youth work, popular education, social economy, inclusion of people lacking opportunities or facing disabilities, etc. Participants shared their **skills** and **experience**, identified **key factors of success** and **pitfalls to avoid** while leading a social project.

At the same time they experienced **eco-friendly lifestyle** and **community living** for 17 days. They questioned their way of living and shared **practical tools** to achieve their objectives. They imagined ways to **interact** and **cooperate** with each other and developed their skills in the areas of **group facilitation**, **mediation** and **communication**.

Participants actively contributed to the **building process** of the workshops, interviews, debates and to an extended experience of community living during the training. They prepared the training with the support of their sending organisation and took an active part in the project evaluation and in knowledge capitalization and dissemination.

The training course was finally an opportunity to **gather, formalize, share** and **spread knowledges based on experience** all around Europe in a **collaborative** and **trans-sectorial** way. Participants enhanced their **practical intelligence** and developed skills to increase the quality of their action.

We hope this training course will stimulate the development of social projects in the partners' communities by showing a glimpse of what our future can be and giving people confidence in their ability to create and to do.

This document is an attempt to share our experience. We hope it will encourage you to go deeper in the matter.

Wish you a nice reading!

Via Brachy's team

# EUROPEAN COUNTERPARTS



**Via Brachy** is a French non-profit association established in Toulouse. It advocates **social change** by fostering **cultural dialogue**, **experience sharing** and **cooperation** between people and organisations from different backgrounds looking for **inclusive and eco-friendly solutions** to overcome the challenges we face.

It's main goal is to organize **mobility projects** and **non-formal educational activities** to empower people and help them find (or build) their way in our society. It gives participants the opportunity to experience **community living**, to acquire **practical skills** that fit **their needs on the ground** and to build **strong relationships** which may lead to new cooperations.

More on: [www.viabrachy.org](http://www.viabrachy.org)



**In Loco** is a non-profit and non-governmental organisation based in Faro, Portugal. Since 1988, it **supports people in their initiatives in both rural and urban areas** in order to improve their **living conditions**.

The association considers the “development” as a process. It encourages people to take action in **local projects** which answer their needs and lead the **sustainable development** of the area. It empowers people through various **trainings** and facilitates **cooperation** between actors **from different fields and backgrounds** in order to achieve its objectives.

More on: <http://www.in-loco.pt/>.



Nexes is a Catalan non-profit youth organisation created in Barcelona in 1999. It works at local and international level to foster **intercultural learning**, boost **active participation**, promote **democracy**, **human rights** and international **cooperation** and fight social exclusion.

It provides **mobility projects** and **non-formal educational activities** in order to lay the foundations for **sustainable social transformation** based on **cultural diversity** and **integration**.

More on: <http://www.nexescat.org/>



FORME is a non-profit and non-governmental organisation based in Palermo, Italy, since 2014. It gathers project managers, educators, social workers, journalists and other actors active in the **social and educational fields** who strongly believe developing one's skills is a

trigger for **positive social changes**.

The organization aims at **empowering individuals, communities** and **social networks** through **skills development** and through **mediation** between different fields. It promotes **non-formal education** as a complementary methodology to formal education. It develops educational courses in order to reach tangible outcomes ant to **bring closer together theory and practice**: the world of education to the world of work.

More on: <http://www.associazioneforme.com/>

# PROGRAM AND VENUES

The courses took place in South-West France (**Midi-Pyrénées**) from **August, the 10<sup>th</sup> to August, the 27<sup>th</sup> 2015**. It included **4 stages** in 4 different places:

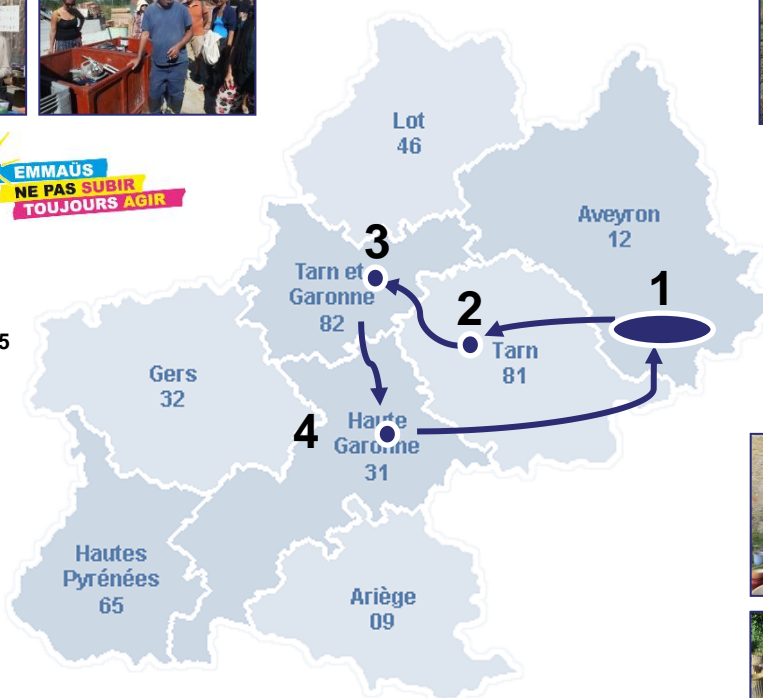
**Step #3: From 20/08 to 24/08/2015**  
LA VILLE-DIEU-DU-TEMPLE



**Step #4**  
From 24/08 to 27/08/15  
TOULOUSE



**Step #1: From 10/08 to 17/08/2015**  
SAINT-SEVER-DU-MOUSTIER / SAINT AFFRIQUE



**Step #2: From 17/08 to 20/08/2015**  
BUSQUE / GRAULHET



Each step was an opportunity to **meet people involved in various field projects**: culture, popular education, social economy, inclusion of people lacking opportunities, etc.

During the day, participants generally split into small teams to take part in workshops. At each stop, they ran a **public event** in order to **interact with the inhabitants** and to share their opinion on social innovation in their home country.

## STEP 1: SAINT-SEVER-DU-MOUSTIER / SAINT AFFRIQUE (AVEYRON)

From the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup>, participants got to **know each other**. They set up their **collective rules** and got familiar with their **equipment**.

From the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup>, they discovered different projects dealing with local and sustainable development in the area. They discussed those initiatives with the people involved in and took part in various workshops on **organic farming, eco-housing, crafts, art...**

<b>09.08.2015</b>	<i>Welcoming of the first participants in Toulouse. Shared meal and discovering of the city.</i>
<b>10.08.2015</b>	<p><b>Morning:</b> Welcoming of participants at Via Brachy's office. Departure for St-Sever-du-Moustier.</p> <p><b>Afternoon:</b> Introduction to the venue and of the hosting organization (<i>The New Troubadours</i>). Settlement of the eco-camp. Introduction to the equipment. Handling the logistics and organizational framework.</p> <p>Ice-breaking games. First collective cooking workshop.</p> <p><b>Evening:</b> fireside evening gathering.</p>



11.08.2015	<p><b>Morning:</b> Stretching / acclimatization Reminder of the objectives, spirit and progress of the training course <i>Eco-Sufficiency</i>. Presentation by each participant of its expectations and the reasons that led him/her in the project. Definition of common rules for the community life.</p> <p><b>Afternoon:</b> Practical workshops to organize the camp and to manage the group (creation of the planning, setting up of the cooking area, etc.). Guided visit of the <i>Unusual Building</i> by the <i>New Troubadours</i>. Collective cooking workshop (Portuguese cuisine).</p> <p><b>Evening:</b> fireside evening gathering</p>
12.08.2015	<p><b>Morning:</b> Stretching / acclimatization <b>Whole day:</b> Workshops at Saint-Sever-du-Moustier with the <i>New Troubadours</i>: Group 1 (11 pers.): Artistic workshop, “unusual walk” in the village, visit of the <i>Outsider arts museum</i>, discovering of a forge, open discussion with the local blacksmith. Group 2 (11 pers.): Workshop on the <i>Unusual Building</i>. Group 3 (6 pers.): Cooking (Catalan cuisine).</p> <p><b>Evening:</b> Outdoor screening of <i>UMBRA</i>, an experimental movie by Pol Lemetais &amp; Florent Rush with the participation of the film maker and inhabitants. Open discussion about the film’s meaning and debate on artistic creation in rural areas.</p>
13.08.2015	<p><b>Morning &amp; Afternoon:</b> Get to know people involved in solidarity-based economy in the area: Group 1 (8 pers.): <i>Morning:</i> Interview with the coordinator of <i>IDEES</i>, an association which supports social entrepreneurs and provides information about social economy and project management. <i>Afternoon:</i> discovery of an alternative radio (<i>Radio St Affrique</i>) &amp; recording of a radio program on social issues in Europe. Group 2 (10 pers.): <i>Morning:</i> Interviews with the co-founders of a self-organized organic community farm (<i>Hameau de Vispens</i>) and with people involved in <i>Terre de Liens</i>, an investment firm which helps organic farmers to access to the land. <i>Afternoon:</i> Practical workshops in the fields. Group 3 (5 pers.): <i>Morning:</i> Interviews with the coordinator of <i>RELIER</i>, an association which supports social entrepreneurs in rural areas. <i>Afternoon:</i> Discovering of a community bar-restaurant (<i>Le Lieu-dit</i>). Group 4 (5 pers.): <i>Morning:</i> Interview with organic farmers involved in the collective producer store <i>Farmers from Rance</i>. <i>Afternoon:</i> Delicatessen workshop at <i>Christophe’s</i>, artisan butcher in Saint-Sever.</p> <p><b>Evening:</b> Collective cooking workshop. Introduction to the <i>Sputnik Theatre</i>, a living art company working with anthropologists on humanist and social issues. Convivial evening with young volunteers on site.</p>
14.08.2015	<p><b>Morning:</b> Stretching / acclimatization <b>Whole day:</b> Workshops with the <i>New Troubadours</i> at Saint-Sever-du-Moustier: Group 1 (11 pers.): Artistic workshop, “unusual walk” in the village, visit of the <i>Outsider arts museum</i>, discovering of a forge, open discussion with the local blacksmith. Group 2 (11 pers.): Workshop on the <i>Unusual Building</i>. Group 3 (6 pers.): Cooking (Italian cuisine). Exchanges / interviews with Marion &amp; Mickael, co-founders of the <i>Sputnik Theatre</i>.</p> <p><b>Evening:</b> Convivial evening on site with local partners and inhabitants.</p>
15.08.2015	<p><b>Morning:</b> Expression of participants’ feelings and evaluation of the first step. <b>Afternoon:</b> Preparation of a public evening dealing with local development and social innovation within Europe. Personal interviews with Marion &amp; Mickael from the <i>Sputnik Theatre</i>. Sharing circle with European participants, inhabitants and social entrepreneurs for the area to get to know each other better.</p> <p><b>19h30:</b> friendly aperitif and shared meal in St-Sever-du-Moustier’s community hall. <b>20h45 - 22h45:</b> European participants’ testimonies on local development experiences, reportage screenings and debate with the inhabitants on social issues. <b>23h:</b> Concert with the local brass band <i>La Berezina</i>.</p>

<b>16.08.2015</b>	<p><b>Morning:</b> Stretching. Free workshops provided by participants. Brunch.</p> <p><b>Mid-time and afternoon:</b> Workshops on human feelings, personal identity and social interactions within a group led by the <i>Sputnik Theater</i>.</p> <p>Preparation of pizzas with Cisco, an Italian artist and craftsman from Saint-Sever-du-Moustier (Group 1: Paste confection / Group 2: Preparation of the garnish / Group 3: Wood collection).</p> <p><b>Evening:</b> Pizzas on wood fire. Convivial evening on site with the local partners.</p>
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## STEP 2: BUSQUE / GRAULHET (TARN)

From the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup>, participants discovered Graulhet, a city where leather industry was the main activity from the Middle Age to the 80's - 90's. Shutting down the plants resulted in a high rate of unemployment and various social problems. Artists and social entrepreneurs recently moved in the neighbourhood, creating a new dynamic in the town.

Participants settled their camp in an organic community farm from the surroundings. They took part in the different activities of the venue: vegetable harvesting, eco-building, wood collection, maintenance of the fountain, etc.

They also visited the town to embrace its specific atmosphere and to discover former factories that shelter artists and social projects.

<b>17.08.2015</b>	<p><b>Morning:</b> Camp uninstall, contacts exchange and last shared moments with the local partners at St-Sever-du-Moustier. Departure for Graulhet (Tarn).</p> <p><b>Afternoon:</b> Settlement of the eco-camp at <i>La Fontié</i>, an organic community farm. Visit of the venue. Open discussion on collective property and self-organization. Collective cooking. Shared meal with the local partners.</p> <p><b>Evening:</b> Fireside evening gathering</p>
<b>18.08.2015</b>	<p><b>Morning:</b> Small workshops in <i>La Fontié</i>:</p> <p>Group 1: Wood collection, discussion on forest management and sustaining natural resources.</p> <p>Group 2: Workshop in the potato fields and discussion on food sovereignty.</p> <p>Group 3: Maintenance around the water source.</p> <p>Group 4: Fruit picking, vegetable harvesting and collective cooking.</p> <p>Group 5: Exchanges / interviews with Marion &amp; Mickael from the <i>Sputnik Theatre</i>.</p> <p><b>12h30:</b> Shared meal with the local partners.</p> <p><b>14h - 17h:</b> Perambulation / orienteering race (in small-groups) in Graulhet to discover the city, its history, its challenges.</p> <p><b>17h - 17h30:</b> Sharing feelings about the city at <i>l'uZine</i>, a former leather factory transformed in a place of multi-disciplinary artistic creation.</p> <p><b>17h45:</b> Setting up of the public event for the evening in partnership with local partners.</p> <p><b>19h - Midnight:</b> Guided visit of the place (<i>l'UZine</i>). Living performance ("<i>The world's smallest trapeze</i>"). Introduction to the local and European initiatives dealing with environmental, social and cultural issues (<i>Tavira em Transição; La Fontié; Un lieu qui bouge; Les Timides, Volubilo</i>).</p> <p>Live concert of the local band "<i>Cinq Oreilles</i>".</p>
<b>19.08.2015</b>	<p><b>Morning:</b></p> <p>Group 1: Harvesting aromatic and healing herbs. Open discussion on the use of plants in traditional medicines.</p> <p>Group 2: "<i>Why do we eat?</i>": Open discussion about feeding (meaning, impacts) with Dr M.N Guérout (alternative medicine practitioner);</p> <p>Group 3: Visit of a local open market (Réalmont). Open discussion with producers about their living conditions. Sharing among participants on food sovereignty and sustainable agriculture.</p> <p>Group 4: Exchanges / interviews with Marion &amp; Mickael from the <i>Sputnik Theatre</i>.</p> <p><b>Afternoon:</b></p> <p>Group 1: Drying of fruits and vegetable with <i>La Fontié's</i> solar dryers. Open discussion on alternative energies.</p> <p>Group 2: Renovation of a traditional barn with ecological methods (cob and straw).</p> <p>Group 3: Guided visit of a former leather factory transformed by social entrepreneurs (<i>l'Usine du Rey</i>) to produce organic food and promote local and international solidarity. Workshop around raw food with the general manager of the firm <i>Gaïa</i>.</p> <p>Collective cooking (barbecue) at <i>La Fontié</i>.</p>

	<b>Evening:</b> Convivial evening at <i>La Fontié</i> with partners and inhabitants. Swaping of organic seeds.
20.08.2015	<b>Morning:</b> Participants shared their feelings and evaluation of the second step. <b>Mid-time:</b> Shared meal with the local partners. Exchange of contacts. <b>Afternoon:</b> Camp uninstal. Departure for La Ville-Dieu-du-Temple (Tarn-et-Garonne).

### STEP 3: LA VILLE-DIEU-DU-TEMPLE (TARN-ET-GARONNE)

From the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> participants stayed in La-Ville-Dieu-du-Temple in a place where excluded people are given a shelter and helped with finding a job. They shared their daily activities, **sorting, repairing and selling second-hand objects**. They were more specifically involved in the “**Big Fair**” that takes place twice a year in *Emmaüs* and organised a convivial evening with the workers and the volunteers, as an opportunity to deepen dialogue.

20.08.2015	<b>Late afternoon:</b> Short presentation of the venue ( <i>Emmaüs 82</i> ). Camp settlement. <b>Evening:</b> Fireside evening gathering.
21.08.2015	<b>Morning:</b> Guided tour of <i>Emmaüs 82</i> : history, objectives (welcoming and supporting homeless people, refugees and people with fewer opportunities), activities (sorting, repairing, and commercialization of second-hand objects) & achievements. <b>Afternoon:</b> <i>Part 1:</i> Moving debate to answer the participants’ questions, address frustrations, highlight opportunities and reach consent. <i>Part 2:</i> Practical workshops with the journeymen/women of the community: participants were divided into various stations of activities within the community, depending on the needs. <b>Evening:</b> Fireside evening gathering.
22.08.2015	<b>Morning:</b> Group 1 to 5: Participation in the <i>Big Summer Fair</i> organized by <i>Emmaüs 82</i> (participants are divided into 5 different workstations of activities. Open discussion with the journeymen/women of the community and international volunteers on site). Group 6: Discovering the producers market of Montauban. Open discussion about organic and sustainable agriculture with local producers. <b>Afternoon:</b> Group 1 to 5: Participation in the <i>Summer Big Fair</i> organized by <i>Emmaüs 82</i> (participants move from a workstation of activities to another). Group 6: Setting up the activities for the festive evening with the community journeymen/women of the 23 <sup>rd</sup> . Cooking. <b>Evening:</b> Pétanque at <i>La Ville Dieu du Temple</i> . Fireside evening gathering.
23.08.2015	<b>Morning:</b> Group 1: Cooking in the community kitchen with the journeymen/women. Group 2: Crafting of a barbecue out of recycled materials. Group 3: Setting up various activities for the evening. <b>Afternoon:</b> Yoga, contact dance and vocal meditation workshops. Presentation of a <i>rocket stove</i> . Experience sharing among participants on alternative energies and low-energy tools. Interviews with international volunteers in the field. <b>Evening:</b> Festive evening, alcohol-free, with the community journeymen/women, the social workers and international volunteers: shared meal (barbecue), Jam session, songs & dances from here and there. Fireside gathering.

### STEP 4: RAMONVILLE SAINT AGNE / TOULOUSE (HAUTE-GARONNE)

From the 24<sup>th</sup> to the 27<sup>th</sup>: Participants reached Toulouse to discover the **Fablab** and some **co-working places**, taking time to **assess** what they’ve done using unconventional methods. The training ended on a cheerful note with a final **party** gathering most of Via Brachy’s partners from Toulouse

<p><b>24.08.2015</b></p>	<p><b>Morning:</b> Camp uninstall. Departure for Ramonville-Saint-Agne (Haute-Garonne).  <b>Mid-time:</b> Shared meal at the <i>Social-based-economy House</i>.  <b>Afternoon:</b> Introduction to the <i>Social-based-economy House</i> project and its counterparts. Discovering a range of social projects on site: <i>2Bouts/Friture</i>, an association which organizes vocational trainings on eco-building; "<i>Roule ma frite</i>"; an ecofriendly firm which recycles used oil to fuel chain saws, "<i>Caracole</i>": a small-scale association which organizes various activities for the inhabitants dealing with sustainability, social economy and fair trade, <i>l'Ouvert du Canal</i>, a shared housing in Ramonville-Saint-Agne.  <b>Evening:</b> Fireside evening gathering at the <i>Social-based-economy House</i>.</p>
<p><b>25.08.2015</b></p>	<p><b>Morning:</b>  Group 1: Perambulation (in small-groups) in Toulouse to discover the city.  Group 2: Herbalist workshop (fabrication of home-made natural healing balms). Open discussion on herbalism and presentation of various ways to use plants for human care with the association <i>Serpettes et Chaudrons</i>.  <b>Mid-time:</b> Shared meal at <i>La Serre</i>, a co-working place dedicated to social innovation in Toulouse.  <b>Afternoon:</b>  <i>Whole group:</i> Introduction to <i>La Serre's</i> project and of the FabLab <i>Artilect</i>. Guided visit of the co-working space and workshop. Introduction to the equipment (3D &amp; laser prints).  Group 1: « <i>Kludge</i> » Workshop in the <i>Fablab</i>.  Group 2: Crafting of various equipments for <i>Alternatiba</i>, a wide open public event on climate change and social innovation: bamboos building and painting.  Group 3: Herbalist workshop (fabrication of home-made natural healing balms). Open discussion on herbalism and presentation of various ways to use plants for human care with the association <i>Serpettes et Chaudrons</i>.  <b>Evening:</b> Gathering at the Garonne river. Festive evening in Toulouse.</p>
<p><b>26.08.2015</b></p>	<p><b>Morning to mid-afternoon:</b> Participative assessment of the training course and logistic arrangements.  <b>Afternoon</b> (part 2): Organization of the Closing night.  <b>18h30 - 23h:</b> Festive evening at Via Brachy's office. Presentation of the objectives and frame of the training. Participants' testimonies. Live concert. Open stage / Jam music session</p>
<p><b>27.08.2015</b></p>	<p><b>Morning to mid-afternoon:</b> Perspectives. Exchanging contact details, starting to tidy up.  <b>Late-afternoon:</b> Departure of the Catalan participants.  <b>Evening:</b> Taking part in an open traditional Occitan ball in Toulouse.</p>
<p><b>28.08.2015</b></p>	<p><b>Morning to mid-afternoon:</b> Free day. Shared meal and visit of Toulouse with the participants who could stay.  <b>Late-afternoon:</b> Departure of the Italian and Portuguese participants.</p>



# Think out of the box

The training course was an opportunity to **gather, share** and **spread knowledge** based on experience in the fields of non-formal education, social work, eco-building and social entrepreneurship. We shared our skills and experience. We participated in workshops, discussed with people who are involved in cultural/social/environmental projects in order to better understand their **philosophy of action** and the way they **put their ideas into practice**.

Below you'll find short presentations of some inspiring initiatives we discovered during the training.

## **The New Troubadours: When Culture brings people together and revives a small village**

*The New Troubadours* is a non-profit organisation based in the village of Saint-Sever-du-Moustier, in South Aveyron. They have been setting up yards, workshops, exhibitions and shows for different target groups, for over 25 years, considering arts as a key factor of social, intercultural and intergenerational dialogue and as an opportunity to boost the economy of the area.



Born from the desire of a group of people (mostly conscientious objectors who were volunteering in the village at the time and some natives of Saint-Sever-du-Moustier) to revive the village in the 80's, by providing building workshops for volunteers and summer camps for youngsters, it is now a pillar of the local economy and a cornerstone for the local social dynamic.

The association managed to develop various activities with local schools, cultural centers, social institutions and small-sized companies from the surroundings. They provide handicrafts and artistic workshops for young people (including young people with fewer opportunities), adults and disabled people, all year-long. It specifically organizes non-formal education workshops during holidays and summer for volunteers who want to experience eco-building and handicrafts (ironwork, mosaic, ceramic...). It also manages the museum of *Outsider Arts*, which brings together works of crude and singular art from all over the world.

The association tries to gather the inhabitants around shared values of solidarity, freedom and sustainable development. It sets up various activities, both accessible and affordable. It works in schools, gets into local associations, offers spaces of expression and creates opportunities for dialogue between people from different

group ages and backgrounds in both private and public spaces, in accordance with the local community life. The workshops it organizes with volunteers during summer directly contribute to preserve the village's cultural heritage and thus to the well-being of inhabitants.

We were involved in several activities in order to get a hold of the context and the impacts. Between others, we experienced concrete sculpting techniques on the *Unusual Building*. It enabled us to express our creativity and to contribute humbly to the growth, by bringing our own little stone to this unexpected building that inhabitants, young people with fewer opportunities, disabled people and others volunteers from here and there, patiently built for 10 years.

The workshop required patience, modesty, ability to let go and capacity to trust the trainer (as none of us were experienced in the field). It was also a good excuse to connect with inhabitants, by contributing to a collective work which is meaningful for them.

Symbolically speaking, the *Unusual Building* illustrated how beautiful and robust, an edifice made by unique pieces that complete each other, can be. The same way our projects, organizations, societies are composed of people who can complete each other to ensure local and sustainable development and each individual's well-being.



### Le Hameau de Vispens

At the heart of Aveyron and a few kilometers from Saint-Affrique, a group of people gathered and created a non-speculative, ecological and solidarity hamlet, in connection with a diversified farm, with the objective to revive the place and to earn their living in an eco-friendly way.

The project was financially supported by *Terre de Liens*, an investment firm which helps organic farmers access to land property. It aims to be part of a transmission process and openness through public reception on the activities sites: agriculture, cultural and artistic practices, community projects, sustainable buildings...

Vispens' members try to share food, crafts, means of transport and daily work in a spirit of individual responsibility and solidarity. They experiment lactating cattle, goat's milk processing, valuing horticultural land, poultry farm, chestnut and beekeeping.

They progressively restore the old buildings and build new ones with ecologic methods and materials, using straw and clay, wood, lime, wool... Each building is an opportunity to try a different method, according to its expected utilization.

The group especially questions community life, focusing on rural areas. It created a "guide" to share its experience with others on community life: Why to live with others? How to set up a collective project? How big should the group be to be sustainable? How can we overcome traditional leaderships? gather people around joint objectives? make decision while taking diversity into consideration? etc. It takes advantage from its experiences and supports others in their initiatives.

We had the opportunity to question the project with some of its co-founders, while visiting the site and its different aspects. We also took part in an eco-farming workshop, discovering on the spot in the principle of organic cultivation and permaculture.



### Radio Saint-Affrique

This radio station used to be a "pirate" radio. Born in 1981 around the theme of freedom of expression, it was first issued by a pedal transmitter, running from battery propellers. It grew progressively, taking part in many local entertainments with local artists' concerts, theater and shows, themed weeks, providing radio workshops in schools or with disabled people, etc.

From year to year, it became a major player in the community life, constantly developing new projects such as recent radio journalism internships. The station bears high its values: Total independence, defense of human rights and of the environment, refuses the exclusions and discriminations of all kinds and promotes independent artists. No small waffle, the radio does not hesitate and speaks freely.



A part of us recorded an emission in the radio's studios on August, on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Others were interviewed during the public event that Via Brachy, *The New Troubadours* and some of their local partners organized on August, the 15<sup>th</sup>, on the topic of local dynamics and social innovation.

The visit of the studio, recording on site and the various interviews were a rich experience for most of us. Some even took the initiative to contact local radio stations to broadcast specific talk-shows on Transition movement and social initiatives when they came back to their community after the training.

## La Fontié

For the second step of the training, participants settled their eco-camp in La Fontié, an unusual farm in the surroundings of Graulhet.

La Fontié's farm is an intergenerational group of 7 people (under 30 to over 60 years) who jointly acquired land, as well as agricultural and residential buildings where they could live and work. It is also the combination of Dadagout peasant cooperative, which has many adherents/participants, helping or not in the fields or for big workshops.

The association is part of a movement rooted in many places in the world to promote openness to other ways of life, movement that seeks to rebuild common with those who want to feel co-responsible of the territory they inhabit and which feeds them.

As Claire, one of La Fontié's members said, *"the place is both a testing and a learning ground, a local carrier of ancient stories and dreams to come. We do not consider ourselves as the owners of a territory. With the support of the adherents of the association, we are keepers and leaders."*

The project is about finding a life based on collective self-reliance, mutual aid, simplicity, joy of life. Its members try to *"frankly make a recovery of power over [their] lives stuck in the progress of ambient confinement"*.

Here are conducted peasant activities, breaking with the industrial logic in a cooperative framework. Inserted in a broader set of various productions, mutual aid, exchange and solidarity with farmers and inhabitants of the region, La Fontié aims to promote access to land, the diffusion of knowledge and cultural, pastoral, educational, health, political and festive practices.

A great connection occurred between us and our hosts. Several workshops were proposed, among which the followings:

### > Workshop #1: Eco-building (wood construction)

We gave an hand on two buildings on La Fontié's farm. One team helped to rebuild an old pigeon loft that was supposed to become a house. The second made straw-clay bricks to renovate an old barn. The environmental approach was a priority for both the design and the realization.

*"Understand and participate in the implementation of a wood siding made of recovery planks, allowed us to acquire knowledge in construction and gave us ideas for our future homes. We spend a whole day, always in a fun but so studious way, to learn and experiment the placing of a siding, from the cutting of boards, through the installation of the battens and finally nailing the siding. We regret that we could not stay longer and thus see the completed house but some of us will surely come back one day to see this common building."* Hélène, France.



### > Workshop #2: Wood collection

The estate of La Fontié includes nearly 20 hectares of woods, which are constantly cleared and maintained. Oaks, acacias and chestnuts collected are used for construction, fences, etc. and other wood used for heating. Indeed, the central heating runs on wood, the resource on site was quite abundant. We helped our hosts with the collection

of pruned and cut wood to clear paths. According to the wood's size, we stored it so that it could dry for winter or arrange it before it gets cut in smaller pieces.

The workshop was an opportunity to discuss our ability to use local natural resources in a sustainable way to satisfy our needs. It questioned our society's reliance on fossil fuel and helped us to take the scope of our energy consumption (looking at the quantity of wood stored).

### > Workshop #3: Source maintenance

La Fontié's inhabitants rely on two permanent water sources for their water supply. The one connected to the house brings enough water for drinking, bathing and watering, the other one is used for gardening, raising livestock and other farming needs. A solar panel provides hot water.

The two sources are vital for the survival of the farm and require thus extra cares. We were involved in clearing and cleaning the surroundings of the source connected to the house. Working altogether, making human chains to achieve our objective. *"One was shoveling, one was holding the bags, one was walking to the trailer, another was emptying the bags of stones: so much work to preserve a resource we basically access in our daily life by simply turning a tap!"*

### Wandering to discover a town and its inhabitants

On August, the 18<sup>th</sup>, we reached the city of Graulhet for an unusual walk. We split in small teams to discover the town and to feel its atmosphere, looking for sounds from the city, specific smells, atypical, outstanding or surprising aspects, attitudes, anecdotes, life-stories from the inhabitants.



Some decided to stay in the city center to take a seat in a local coffee shop, some entered shops and supermarkets, some took sideways along the local river which goes through the city while others shared words with elders playing pétanque at the main square or unemployed people waiting on public benches...

Each team had 3 hours to collect stories, words, views... The stroll aroused our curiosity and creativity. It allowed us to take a breath after a long journey within a big group and to acquire knowledge by ourselves in a smooth way.

The pooling of what we had seen/smelled/heard/etc. at the end of the afternoon, in the former factory of *I'UZine*, was an attraction it itself. Beyond anecdotes and pictures relied astonishment, caring for people, ethical reflection... We expressed our feelings honestly, laughing together, questioning the history of the town and what it was meaning for ourselves, according to our backgrounds and contexts.

*"Graulhet, a town designed by the now extinguished tawing factories, a mirage like an oasis that promised greener grass. Men and women who left their country and crossed seas in the hope of living under repainted skies. Today, the paint is slowly peeling off, walls are covered with cracks and roofs that seem to be on the verge of collapse. A multitude of abandoned factories seeking buyers, enthroned like phoenixes hoping to rise from the ashes."*

*"All our senses keen, we are immersed in local life. We are the new strangers, trying to talk with the inhabitants. They are quite happy to tell us about their lives. We meet a man from Algeria, another from Marocco, a third from Spain, who worked in the factories. They explain us that the city has changed a lot, that it is not as bustling as it used to be, that it is a sad story. But they are living there. Even if their life is broken, even if their knees are painful because of their former work in the leather industry, even if they were not expecting the life they had, they will stay there. Eventually, they met friends there and they found a way to grow their roots in this shattered environment"*

The workshop was a nice experience of informal education. It showed how much we can learn from a place / a situation we don't know by simply paying more attention to the small things that are around us and how far we can go in our understandings of complex situations by joining our points of view and experiences.



## L'Uzine: from leisure industry to art



Paradoxically, the economic difficulties Graulhet is facing (high rate of unemployment, water and soil pollutions, social tensions, etc.) have open new perspectives. A growing number of artists and people involved in social projects set up their activities in the town thanks to the fall of house prices those last decades.

Among those projects, l'UZine, which has reborn as a gallery and artists' residence. The place is run by the collective *ACA des Toustous*, where a dozen artists have made their nest, crossing their universe: metal, wood, fabric, music, theater, painting, art therapy workshops...



The vast spaces of the former factory are now a delight for the creators, who are free to create their universe. It also shelters social work. Some of the artists work with people who are overwhelmed by loneliness, fear of loss, in search of their identity. They try the best they can so that people leave with a smile. *"It is about making things that make the world possible, shared Sylvie. To rebuild a town, people first need to rebuild themselves. Each little stone must be confident enough to believe it can be a part of the construction"*.



L'UZine's members try to revive the town by organizing events mixing and matching people with various profiles. Along with the uZine team, we organised a public event on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August, in the shape of a meeting and a debate about "utopias in action". Two hundred people took part in the event, sharing with people involved in social/cultural/artistic projects in both formal and informal way, in a convivial atmosphere.

*"Slowly, the place was crowded by people coming from Graulhet and its surroundings. A mix of locals and newcomers, all delighted to see some animation in the city. Some have settled to experiment new ways of doing and living together, trying to connect and to reactivate the taste of meaning, to define the "why". They shared about their values, giving a glimpse of their professional and personal paths, answering people questions. "It is about carving one's little stone so that it can fit with the other", explained Ben, one of the guy on the stage. "Remaining isolated is out of the question, the point is to meet each other, make oneself known, exchange ideas to keep building the world we want for tomorrow"*.



We shared our experience and questions with inhabitants, artists and social entrepreneurs from Graulhet. We also faced intercultural misunderstandings and saw from inside how interesting and difficult in the same time it can be to organize a meeting mixing people from various backgrounds, with different approaches or coming with different expectations. *"Entering a place where, initially, one doesn't belong requires some audacity, but an open door out of which some light flows always attracts some curiosity. We hope that the event we took part in will help new local projects to raise and awake the city again. Meeting people, sharing ideas, melting one's dreams is probably the best way to make things happen". (Joana)*



## Gaïa, a glimpse of raw food in a former factory

We eventually discovered Gaïa's project in Graulhet. Settled in a former factory, the company produces organic breads, cakes and biscuits made of sprouted grains for years. It associates culinary expertise of different people and cultures over the world to provide healthy products and renew our food habits. It is also committed since 2002 into the organic and fair trade sector (specifically in Western Africa with the promotion of an ancestral African gluten free cereal).

The company developed recently a raw product line. We experienced more specifically this aspect of the project, trying some raw food recipes. Discovering an unusual approach of feeding appeared as a playful way to share about our daily diet and to question our habits.

## **Emmaüs 82 : The alternative junk shop of La Ville-Dieu-du-Temple**

The third step of the training course took place in *Emmaüs 82* in the surroundings of La-Ville-Dieu-du-Temple, a small town close to Montauban. Just like other *Emmaüs* communities around the world, the association fights exclusion, poverty and social injustice through reception and development of civic, solidarity and integration actions, such as recovering, upgrading and re-purposing so-called "waste/junk", and selling them.



We settled our camp on the community ground in order to share the daily life of the people living there. We discovered day after day the work of the community, born in 1995, through guided tour with the social workers and coordinators, practical workshops and informal discussions with companions and volunteers.

*"After two stages across bucolic country sides in Aveyron and Tarn, we arrived in a more urban place. In front of us, huge hangars full of odds and ends, a hodgepodge of things. Countless objects and furniture were amassed in the numerous halls of this unexpected place as immeasurable treasures of anonymous pasts..."*

*We were a bit abashed. We joined the training course in search of alternative projects, new possibilities, social and ecological changes in a peaceful society and we were welcome in a junk shop! Was it really on purpose?*

*The guided tour we did the day after we arrived helped us to better understand what was going on there. Around us, people from everywhere: migrants from North and Western Africa, unemployed and roofless people from the surroundings, refugees from Caucasus and Middle East, international volunteers from Asia, Europe and Australia. All were welcome to stay a few days, a month, a year, even a life to live, no matter where they were coming from and no matter their past. They worked together as a community, earning a living together by sorting, repairing and selling objects offered by people from all over the area.*

*We were encouraged to take a part in the community for a couple of days. At first, it took us some time to feel at ease. Most of us were out of their comfort zone. The magic operated when we started to work with the companions. We supported them by sorting stuffs in the big halls and welcoming visitors at their side for the "Big Summer Fair". Some of them remained quiet but others opened themselves to us in an amazing way! The treasure was definitively not in the objects accumulated in the numerous halls of the place we were sorting, it was in those guys whose lives were strewn with vanished loves, unseen injuries, dashed hopes, fears, violence...*

*We slowly get used to live side to side, sharing both daily activities and work. Our journey took an end with a shared barbecue and a major music jam session. Within one hour, some companions built a giant barbecue out of old barrels. In the meantime, a group of volunteers was preparing the brochettes, marinated meat and roasted potatoes. How strange looked our vegetarian brochettes and nettle pesto for the companions! We had a good laugh together. This mix of cultures, this interweaving of different visions, two worlds that barely get into connection, made us better understand the meaning of intercultural dialogue and tolerance.*

*The Emmaüs experience was maybe the most confusing and the most fascinating experience for us. We were far to imagine when we arrived few days before that the people we were going to meet there were going to help us to look deeper into ourselves, to step out of our comfort zone and make a step towards others. For sure this experience will stay etched in our memories." Claire*





## Serpettes et Chaudrons



The association “Serpettes et Chaudrons” (*“Pruning knives and pots”, literally*) works on passing on and sharing skills linked to the vegetal world. It was founded in 2013 by Irene, a young herbalist from Andalusia who arrived in France in 2010 to achieve her training course in herbalism at the Pyrénées Mountains.

Based in Sarp, in a small town of the Pyrénées Mountains, the association offers environmental education activities in collaboration with local town councils, schools, social institutions and associations active in the field of non-formal education. It organizes various workshops and training for groups, welcoming people from the neighborhood and from Toulouse region.



Irene specialized in natural cosmetics production : soaps, balms, herbal teas, hydrolates, floral waters, mother tinctures... She created a small-size-enterprise in addition to the association in order to sell the products in shops and markets and earn a living.

She is fond of knowledge sharing. She wants to give people a glimpse at what they can do by themselves to meet their needs and how much deeper their relationship with Nature can be if they open themselves to it.

She especially focuses on the pedagogical methods and tools she uses to share her knowledge and be aware about the natural cost of her supplies she is using. *“You cannot do a good job if you’re not looking for good ingredients”* she said. *“Of course, it requires additional efforts to find the proper suppliers, to work with the seasons, to produce your own plants and discover the places where you can collect the wild plants you need. You also have budget and time constraints, and sometimes you make mistake in the process and everything has to be done again. But you stay true to your beliefs. You’re not only providing something which is useful for people, to wash or cure themselves, you’re transforming your relationship with Nature and you invite others to join you on this exciting path.”*



We have had the chance to experience at her side balms confection. We mixed wax, oils, mother tinctures and essential oils, we shared about herbs benefits, questioned the use of essential oils, highlight bad and good practices...

## Artilect: a dynamic FabLab in Toulouse



**Artilect**  
Fablab Toulouse

Toulouse is very dynamic in the fields of new technologies, industry and science. A lot of students, researchers, engineers and artists live there, working in IT, electronics, mechanics, architecture, environment, chemistry, design...

It represents a huge opportunity for the town and its region but these people often work independently while innovation needs collaborations. That’s why *Artilect* created a space, both physical and virtual, allowing people to meet and to join their ideas and skills to develop innovative projects.

*Artilect* puts technology at the service of more humanistic values. It favors interdisciplinarity, promotes dissemination of knowledge to the greatest number and contributes actively in the realization of innovative projects.

It gives people access to machines, software and other resources to make prototypes. The “Do It Yourself” philosophy, at the core of the project, transformed there progressively in a “Do It with Others” ethos.

*Artilect* shelters numerous initiatives, which completes each other: a Fab Café, a yearly international festival, workshops for newcomers and professionals, biological experimentations, public events on IT, innovation and cooperation...

We discovered there unusual machines: 3D printers, laser cutters, digital milling machines and vinyl cutters and had a look at the “Bio FabLab”, discovering aquaponics, mushroom alternative cultivation, in vitro cultivation, spirulina, bacterial paper production and a bioluminescence project.



# A collective and intercultural experience

The training course Eco-Sufficiency was an intense experience of **community living**. We lived 17 days in a group of 28 persons from Spain, Italy, Portugal and France. We were responsible of our **group dynamic**, looking for an appropriate balance between our individual needs and the group's requirements. We had to imagine ways to **interact** and **cooperate** and progressively enhanced our practical intelligence and skills in the areas of group facilitation, mediation and communication.

You'll find below a sample of the animation methods and tools that we experienced to ease dialogue and maintain a positive group dynamic.

## **Activities to get to know each other**

### > **"What is the color of your eyes?"**

We gathered according to the color of our eyes: brown, green, dark, blue...

### > **"Where are you coming from?"**

We take a position to design:

- our place of birth
- the place we are living now.

The game helps to remember who is from where and give a glimpse at our complex origins and backgrounds.

### > **The human knot**

We join hands to create a chain. We close our eyes and move without breaking the chain in order to create a knot. When nobody can move anymore, we stop and try to untie the knot without breaking the chain and without opening our eyes.

### > **The self-portraits**

A few days after the training begun, we were asked to draw our self-portrait. Despite the appearance, the activity was a strong tool to break the ice and to get to know each other better.

The workshop lasted 45 minutes. It was an opportunity for us to express our creativity, which was a nice goal in itself, but moreover, it helped us to drop some of our remaining masks and to overcome our timidity. We drew in the same time, laughing together while looking to the funny faces we were designing for ourselves on the paper.

The provided materials were really basic. We drew on a thick paper sheet (one per person) with dark markers (one per person), wax-colored pencils and diluted ink (from 4 colors: black, brown, red and blue). The workshop was divided in 3 steps:

- 1/ Each participant drew her/himself with a dark marker, without lifting the pen tip;
- 2/ She/he colored his/her draw with the wax pastel, the way he/she wanted to;
- 3/ She/he filled her/his draw with the diluted ink. Thanks to the wax, the ink only went into the remaining free spaces of the draw.

The result was colorful and quite surprising. Who would guess right who was who? Discussions were open between us as well as introspection!





## ***Energizers, games to get into conditions***

### **> Taichi, yoga, stretching exercises...**

We take a breath, embrace the space around us and stretch ourselves to wake up softly...

### **> Vocal meditation**

We seat in circle. Each person performs a sound he/she feels comfortable with as it suits his/her voice range. The different tunes blend into each other freely, creating a surprising spontaneous harmony.

### **> Contact dance**

Contact dance is a dance technique in which points of physical contact provide the starting point for exploration through movement improvisation. We impulse a movement and start to dance by pairs the way we want as soon as we always keep at least one contact point with our partner. The workshop encourage people to let go and to connect with others.

### **> "Wizz": Handing over the energy**

We gather in a circle to share a bowl of energy provided by the animator. According to the sound and the gesture, the energy moves in a different way, going wisely from one person to another, jumping over participants, crossing the round, changing direction...

### **> Sun & Sun cream**

Each participant chooses in his/her mind one person who is "his/her sun" and another one who is his/her sun cream, which will protect him/her from the sun. People move around in a defined space. At the end of the countdown, each person has to be protected from the "sun person" by the "sun cream person".

## ***Tools to facilitate the expression of feelings and bring people together***

### **> Feeling Rounds**

We gather in circle. Each person expresses briefly (1-3 minute(s) per person) how he/she feels at the moment (after the workshop / after the last day).

### **> Closing Round**

We gather in circle. Each person shares a statement: something he/she have heard / seen / experienced that he/she particularly liked or disliked.

*Variation:* To save time and avoid repetition, if one agrees with the last statement, he/she comes to take the speaker's arm and complete what was said.

### **> Music playing, corporal and other non-verbal communication workshops**

Corporal and non-verbal communication workshops strongly participated in maintaining a positive group dynamic and calming down tensions during the training.

Dance and music played a key role in the process. They facilitated interactions between us and our hosts, both in rural and urban areas. Jam sessions and concerts with the local partners and inhabitants were organized at each step and music instruments were provided to encourage music playing. At the end of the first day, we had already improvised a song around the camp fire, using words from our different languages, English and onomatopoeia. In the following days, we taught to each other songs from our countries and sang internationally-known songs together. We eventually wrote a collective song about our experience, in relation with the transition movement (cf. conclusion) that we performed during the public closing event in Toulouse.



The workshops organised by the *Sputnik Company* on August, the 16<sup>th</sup> at Saint-Sever-du-Moustier also had a notable impact on us. For few hours, we were asked to:

- perform emotions (anger, sadness, joy, shame...);
- tell stories without speaking, expressing ourselves exclusively with our eyes and face, asking the others to guess what the story was about;
- imagine short scenes performed by the others (5-6 persons) to represent ourselves (character, attitude, hobbies...).

After the workshops, we better overcome our timidity and language barriers. We also better identified the non-verbal messages sent by the others and thus better respected one's needs and limits. This contributes to avoid misunderstandings and tensions among us all along the training.

### **Attitudes and methods to maintain a positive group dynamic and to prevent and calm down tensions**

#### **> The facilitators' "radical flexibility"**

All along the training, the facilitators tried to keep a positive attitude, adopting a way of action we promptly called "**radical flexibility**". It was an attempt to lead a group while staying open to constructive criticism and to the changes that it may implies. It was about taking into account people's experiences, expectations and needs, without losing sight of the tasks in hands and of the responsibilities Via Brachy had towards its partners.

Practically speaking, facilitators tried to implement the following principles:

**Federating**: Bring people together, welcome and take care of each member, create a good atmosphere (trust, confidence, emotional security) and listen to the group's needs;

**Supporting freedom of speech, respect and solidarity** between members; encourage us to express ourselves, to say what we may not have said otherwise;

**Mandating**: Give responsibility to people, share tasks and facilitate one's involvement; advocate for reciprocity (check the balance between what one gives to the group and receive from the others) and support people in their initiatives;

**Clarifying**: Pay attention to the way information is spread and shared, ensure the respect of the basic collective rules, even if they might change after a while according to the upcoming needs;

**Listening to** and **answering** our expectations / questions / frustrations / satisfactions; Accept dealing with problems as soon as they appear; communicate with everybody to understand divergences to solve them, address and calm down tensions when they occur; take time for meetings, be transparent on what is going on;

**Listening** and **answering** to partners, to ensure the quality of the training;

**Evaluating** what was done daily, to improve constantly, anticipate what could happen as much as possible;

**Thinking positive**: Be open to collective intelligence, look for alternatives when needed, make efforts to get the best out of tense situations, gather people and take their points of view into consideration to find new solutions together, give perspectives;

**Thanking** us and partners for their commitment, **celebrating** the group's achievements.

#### **> Non-violent communication**

On our side, we did our best to put into practice the principles of non-violent communication all along the training:

1/ **Observing** facts, without judging or interpreting;

2/ **Expressing feelings** (emotions, sensations);

3/ **Expressing one's need(s)** to feel better, without speaking about action / strategy to achieve it;

4/ Making a **request** (free of demand) to meet one's need(s).

Following those principles as much as possible during the training contributed to avoid pitfalls of non-said, hypocrisy, over-interpretation or judgement from where tensions generally arise.

#### **> Clown happenings**

We also experienced several times the strength of clown mediation. When situations became tense, the clown *Cafoïne* always appeared, coming from who-knows-where, to defuse tensions.

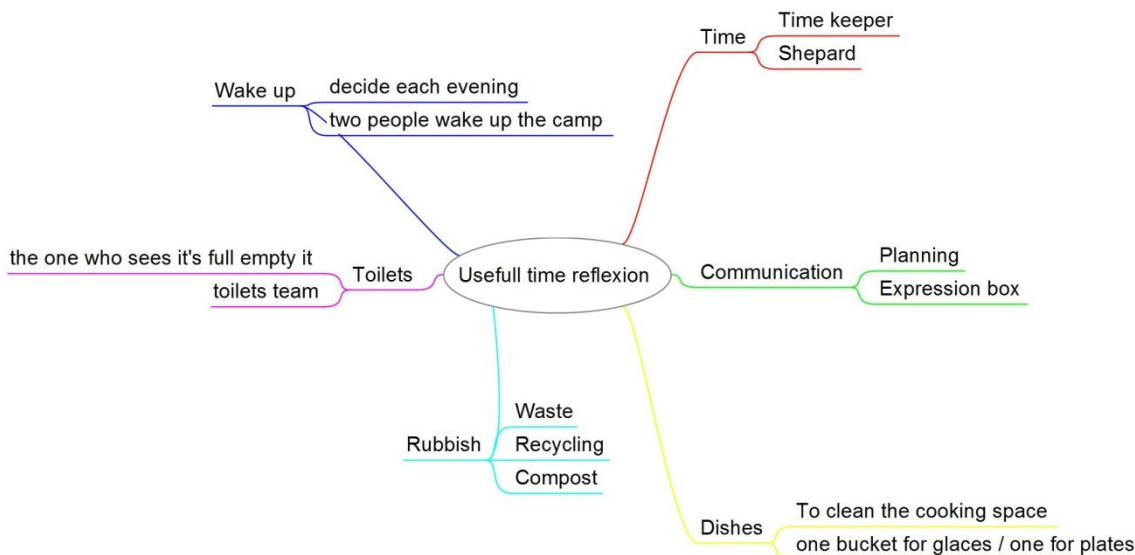
*"How effective were those few clown happenings! Cafoïne always had the right unexpected and funny words and accessories to turn problems into derision and calm down tensions. What we attempted to hide or avoid, she*

brought it to the surface. What nobody knew how to say, she was saying it, frankly. With a string, a skipping rope, a false phone, an unusual hat, or whatever her colourful bag could contained, she performed hilarious scenes which erase tensions. Properly speaking, this clown was a magician.”



### Tools to organize a group, share responsibilities and tasks

Even if people are giving their best to find a balance between their personal needs and the group’s requirements, the daily life in a big group can quickly become a mess if there are no rules to organize and no methods to share responsibilities and tasks. That’s why, on the second day of the training, we gathered to organize our camp. We worked in small groups to create procedures and tools to manage the different fields we needed to. All decisions from the basic rules, through the distribution of spaces (kitchen, showers, compost toilets, fire camp...), to the organization of the common tasks were taken altogether on a consent basis.



### > An “all in one” time table to keep up to date



Considering that ambiguity on the time schedule can strongly affect the group dynamic, we decided promptly to create a time table. A group of volunteers designed and drew an “all in one” schedule, at least two by one meter, in which one week ahead was displayed.

Each day was divided between activities outside the camp (workshops, trainings) and the inside basic tasks such as preparing food for the whole community or cleaning the toilets.

Quite nicely detailed and pleasant to see, the time table quickly appears as a good tool to stay organized. Everyone was free to write his/her name down, choosing the activity duty he/she wanted to perform.

To have it in sight where everybody could see it helped everyone to be aware of when, where and what was going on each day. It was helpful both for us and facilitators, who were less solicited by participants who wanted to get information about the program and the tasks that had to be done.

## > Role distribution

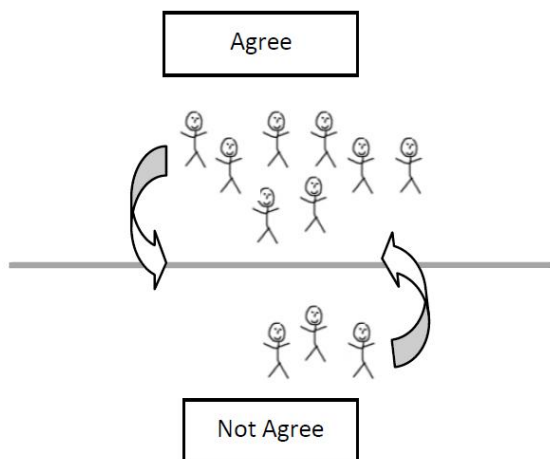
In order to avoid inequality in each others' involvement in the daily routine, we also decided to deliver specific tasks to small teams of volunteers which changed every day:

- Breakfast team (2-3 persons): in charge of waking up the others (the way it wanted, generally singing a song), setting up the breakfast table and preparing the hot drinks (the, coffee);
- Cooking team (3-5 persons): mandated to prepare the lunch and/or the dinner;
- Washing team (2 persons): responsible of washing the dishes;
- Small useful things team (2 persons): in charge of the toilets (looking if the compost tanks were full, if the toilets were clean enough, if it remained sawdust and hygiene papers), of the showers (looking if the soaps, toothpaste and other hygiene products were available for all), of the rubbish and the camp's general cleanness;
- Shepherds (2 persons): gathering people when needed (for the workshops, the appointments, the meals...)
- Time keepers (2 persons): looking for the clock, remaining the others the time schedule.

## Tools to debate on complex issues

### > Moving Debate

The moving debate is a method to take a collective decision on a complex issue. The facilitator draws a demarcation line on the ground and provides a polemic affirmation that split the group in two. Those who agree go to one side, those who disagree go to the opposite. There is no "doubt river": you cannot stay on the line, you have to take position, knowing that you can change along the debate.



When everybody is positioned, we begin to exchange cases. Priority is given to the side where there are fewer participants. One person gives one argument to explain one's position. Those who are on the other side of the line who agree with what he/she said cross the line to show that they agree with the argument. Rather, those who are in the same side than the speaker who disagree with what he/she said go to the opposite side to express their disagreement.

One person from the side who stayed quiet so far offers then one argument. People move depending if they agree or disagree as described before.

The debate continues as long as there is no consent, which means that some people still disagree with the decision that can be taken on the debating issue.

*Note: Consent is different from consensus. A consensus is reached when everybody agrees. A consent is reached when nobody disagrees.*

We used this tool at the 3<sup>rd</sup> step of the training to decide what to change in the schedule regarding the conclusions of the previous evaluation. It allowed the group to overcome disagreements on what should be done and to find a solution in a tense situation.

## Tools to step back and evaluate

### > Comprehensive circle of expression and collective evaluation sessions

After each step of the training, we met together to share about our feelings, expectations, frustrations, etc. regarding the activities provided and what happened.

Each evaluation session took 2-3 hours. After a first feeling round (allowing to evaluate participants' physical and moral state), we shared our points of view on what happened, highlighting both positive and negative aspects. A third round was then organized to provide ideas for improvement, taking into accounts the constraints (time, agreements with partners, equipment available, budget...).

Each session was an opportunity to step back, to boost the group and give it perspectives. It helped us to commit to the training and to feel fully responsible of its success.



Generally speaking, the group regulation and organisation was a daily challenge all along the training. Of course, the above tools, from the creation of a timetable, to the distribution of roles, through the organization of feeling rounds, music sessions and clown happenings... helped a lot but it couldn't solve everything! Our commitment and willing to make things happen remained decisive.

The group organization eventually brought a lot of food for thought to us:

*“After a couple of days, we discovered how difficult it was to keep everything working smoothly, mostly because of the numerous activities and the large group we were. The questions that came to our minds seeing the changes in our routine before and after creating the schedule were: Could a community like ours function solely on the goodwill of the people who compose it? It is a minimal routine necessary for the proper understanding of the group? Does it give more freedom or on the contrary, it gives more control?”*

*“We questioned the frequency of our meetings, about what works or not in our small community. Should we meet in small groups first and then have a meeting with all the spokespersons of each group?”*

There were no obvious answers to those questions. Experimenting appeared as the best way to learn. *“We compared different ways of thinking together, of deciding together, testing good or bad... Living together was not as easy as it looked first! But how exciting the challenge! We were the actors, the initiators and not only the mere spectators.”* From this perspective, the long duration of the training (17 days) was a decisive asset.



# A low-impact lifestyle

All along the training, we experienced an **eco-friendly lifestyle**. We settled our **eco-camp** on the ground and tried to reduce as much as possible our **water consumption**, our **electric supply**, our wastes... We did our best to limit our environmental impact (footprint), adopting behaviors that could guaranty the capacity of future generations to enjoy rich and rewarding lives. Here are some of the tools and recipes we used to stay true to our beliefs and achieve our objectives.

## **Note: What is the “footprint”?**

*An ecological footprint is a measure of human impact on Earth's ecosystems. It allows to calculate human pressure on the planet and to know whether the planet is large enough to keep up with the demands of humanity or not. It has recently emerged as one of the world's leading measures of human demand on nature.*

## **Reducing water supplies by using composting toilets, rationalizing the dish-washing process and taking short showers**

We mainly used dry-toilets during the training. The cabin was designed to be easily carried from one place to another. Inside the cabin, were:

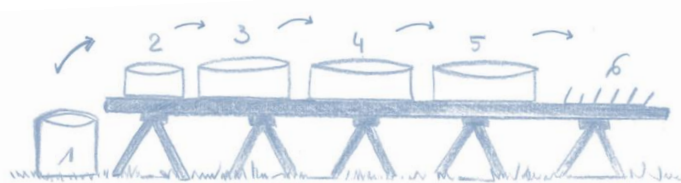
- a big tank, covered by a toilet seat fixed on a drilled wooden plank;
- a big bag of sawdust, with a ladle;
- toilet paper;
- a bottle of alcoholic solution to wash hand without water.

Wastes were composted in specific areas as agreed with the local partners during the advanced planning visits (the chosen areas were far enough from water sources to avoid pollutions).

The shower cabin was designed as the toilets. We washed ourselves with small pots, using the water stored in a big tank. We used natural hygiene products to avoid pollutions (the recipe of the soap we used is provided below). Specific holders were provided inside the cabin to hang towels, clothes and soap.

Most of the time, the water was quite cold, as there were few solar heaters and many users, but the system can of course allow its users to benefit from hot-water-showers! Anyway, coldness encouraged us to take short showers, showing that we require really few water to wash ourselves.

We eventually rationalized the washing dishes process in order to save water and to keep it clean. The washing area was divided into 6 specific distinguish parts:



1/ Compost pot  
4/ Rinse tank #1

2/ Dried pre-wash of dishes with sawdust  
5/ Rinse tank #2

3/ Washing tank, with water, using ashes  
6/ Draining rack.



Dishes were pre-wash with sawdust, which appeared as a really efficient material to take over the oil and most of the dirtiness. We scrubbed the dishes with dry sawdust, without water, by hand.

Ashes from the camp's fire remains replaced the usual dish soap washing liquid. We simply beware that they did not contain residue from plastic, food or other trash that might have been put inside the fire. Few cups of ashes were put in the first washing tank and on the sponge to make a paste. We scrubbed dishes clean in the dedicated tank. We put them then in the first rinsing tank, with clearer water, and finished to rinse them in the second one. Dishes were lastly put on a draining rack.

## **Preventing pollutions by using natural homemade products to wash oneself**

### **> Homemade natural soap**

The French participants produced soaps for the group one month before the training begun, following the recipe below:



Ingredients for 4 kg of soap (superfatted 5%)

- Olive oil: 2441g
- Coconut oil: 271g
- Soda: 359g
- Water: 922g
- 27g of essential oil of lavender or thyme
- 27g of white clay

#### **PROCEED**

1/ Weigh soda. Weigh the water and keep some aside to dilute the clay. Add the soda into the water and dilute well with a spoon. Check the temperature with the thermometer.

It is preferable to put the sodium hydroxide solution outside so that the vapors do not remain in the room but not in a hot spot so that cooling does not take too long.

2/ Heat oils (first coconut oil then olive oil). The temperature must reach 45-50°C.

3/ Dilute the clay in little water. Upholster the wood shapes with greaseproof paper.

4/ When the sodium hydroxide solution reaches the same temperature as the oil, away from the heat, add the solution into the container of oil.

5/ With the blender, regularly stir the soda-oil mixture (by mixing from time to time engine off not to overheat the mixer). When the track point starts, add the diluted clay and essential oils. Mix until the track trace appears clearly.

6/ Pour into wooden molds. Covering the surface of the soap with transparent film. Roll with layers of towels and blankets.

7/ Wipe, clean, tidy.

8/ The next day, remove from the molds and cut into bars of soaps. Let it dry (minimum 3 weeks).

9/ Check the pH before using soap to avoid unpleasant surprises.

#### **PRECAUTIONS**

- Wipe utensils with paper towels BEFORE washing (to take off the grease beforehand)
- Add clay and essential oils just before the track point
- Always keep some water aside to dilute clay
- Always put soda in water and not the contrary! And do not inhale the solution
- Put safety equipment whenever you manipulate the pure or diluted soda.

### **> Homemade natural toothpaste**

We also benefited from a homemade natural toothpaste, crafted following this recipe:



Ingredients:

- 1 kilo of white clay (kaolin)
- 1 kilo (pharmaceutical) of vegetable- glycerin
- ½ kilo of aloe vera gel (barbadensis miller aloe vera)
- 3 ml of Propolis tincture
- 3ml of Mint essential Oil + 3ml of Sage Essential Oil
- or
- 3ml of Spearmint Essential Oil + 3ml of Thyme Essential Oil

PROCEED: Put one by one all the above ingredients in a bowl and mix. The toothpaste is ready!



## Transforming one's daily diet

We were strongly encouraged to buy local, organic and unpackaged food. We mainly picked what we needed to local farmers, open air markets and small-sized shops from the surroundings. We were also invited to promote local biodiversity and seasoning cooking.

To allow us to achieve our objectives, Via Brachy's team provided us information about the various possibilities we had.

We were aware of our budget. We took into account budget constraints while purchasing, which was a good way to compare this experience and our usual habits.



We specifically made an effort to reduce our meat consumption, considering it as a way to reduce our environmental impact as animal's footprint is much higher than the vegetables' one.

The delicatessen workshop at Saint-Sever-du-Moustier was a good opportunity to take the scope of meat consumption. It was much more significant than any long theoretical discussion on animal raising and meat consumption, as attests the following testimony:



*"On the 13<sup>th</sup> of August, we took part in a Delicatessen workshop with Christophe, the butcher/breeder of Saint-Sever-du-Moustier. In the distance we were hearing the pigs in the stalls. They were not as numerous as in a traditional farm. Christophe reduced the number of pigs he was raising a couple of years ago, when he realized that for the fewer animals you have the better it is for yourself (as a professional), for your animals well-being and for the environment.*



*Considering the delicatessen workshop in itself, for most of us, it was the first time that we saw so many raw meat! Liver, grease, guts and so on, impressive and to be honest not really appetizing.*

*Once we were deep in it, we all enjoyed to cook the recipes and were very proud to share our patés and fricandeaux with the others for dinner. But beyond the excitement of discovering a traditional craft and to share what we've done with others, the workshop questioned us a lot on our diet. We better took the scope of what means concretely eating meat, whatever the shape it takes. Eventually, besides the delicatessen, the workshop brought us a lot of food for thought!"*

## Homemade jams and preserves

Last but not least, we produced our own jams and preserved lemons and experienced wild cooking and raw food as much as we could, in order to be more autonomous. Here are a sample of the recipes we used.

### > Fruits jams

Ingredients: Fruits, brown sugar, spices (facultative)

The quantity of sugar depends on one's taste. For a not-to-sweet jam (with matured fruits), take 300 grams of sugar for 1 kilo of fruits (apricots, plums, strawberries, whatever you have on hand). Add spices if you'd like to. Cook the mixture at low heat until it has the expected texture. Sterilize the jars. Pour the cooked fruits in the jars. Close them and turn them upside down for at least 12 hours.

### > Preserved lemons



Ingredients: Lemons, salt

Sterilize the jars. Wash and dry the lemons, remove any stems, and slice the lemons almost in separate quarters lengthwise, stopping just short of the stem end.

Cram a tablespoon of salt inside each fruit, placing them in the jar as you go, together with any salt that has escaped. Press them down as firmly as you can. Stop just before you reach the top, add the last bit of leftover salt and release as many air bubbles as you can. With luck, all the squeezing will have liberated enough lemon juice to comfortably cover the fruit; if not, add more before sealing the jar.

### > **Homemade Nettle pesto**



Ingredients: 3 cups of fresh nettle leaves, 4 garlic cloves, ¼ cup of olive oil, ½ tablespoon of sea salt, 1 tablespoon of lemon juice.

Put a pot of water on. When it's boiling, dump the fresh nettles in for just one minute. Strain well and get as much water out as possible. Smash it to obtain a paste. Add garlic, olive oil, sea salt and lemon juice. Pulse until smoothy and creamy. Salt to taste.

### > **Sprouted seeds**



Wash the seeds or beans. Place them in the jar (make sure they don't take up more than a quarter of the jar; they will expand a great deal) and cover with a few inches of water. Secure the mesh or cheesecloth on top. Let soak for 8 to 12 hours at room temperature.

Drain the seeds and rinse them, then drain again. Find an area out of direct sunlight and place the jars upside-down, but at an angle to allow drainage and air-circulation through the mesh.

Rinse and drain the seeds between two and four times a day, making sure that they never dry out completely.

As soon as they are big enough, harvest! Sprouts are at their best when they're still on the relatively small side and just starting to turn green.

# CONCLUSION

*As a conclusion, we'd like to share the song we wrote and performed on August, the 26<sup>th</sup> to share our experience with other during the training's closing event.*

## THE TRANSITION SONG

*Via Brachy connections, St Sever directions  
French Spanish dishes actions, Sicilians eco perceptions  
Portuguese's Bla Bla's, Intercultural mixture  
Compost toilets overflowing, People gathering always rolling  
Life is growing all around, La Fontié's beat and sound  
Arts and crafts silence town, Keep on moving, learn it how  
Friendship rolling on a fire, Overwhelming Emmaus Hire  
Corn mosquitoes fair helping, Let's go people love connecting*

### REFRAIN

<i>Portuguese</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>Spanish</i>	<i>Italian</i>
<i>E'transição</i>	<i>La transition</i>	<i>Es transición</i>	<i>E' transizione</i>
<i>E'transição</i>	<i>La transition</i>	<i>Es transición</i>	<i>E' transizione</i>

*Movimento, Movimento, Movimento Positivo  
Movimento, Movimento, Movimento e' a vida  
Movimento, Movimento, Movimento c'est la vie  
Movimento, Movimento, Movimento es la vida  
Movimento, Movimento, Movimento e' la vita*

*(back voices ) Urie's papa tiriticucu, we smile together for love*

*Fun and knowledges everywhere, meals free from tasks and swear  
Sight of changing, People's life, Projects standing to assign,  
We will never say goodbye, Heterotopie links our lives  
Skills experience, bright community, Peace and happiness flow our hearts*

*Big Choir for Refrain again...*

*(back voices ) Urie's papa tiriticucu, we smile together for love*

THANKS A LOT FOR READING  
and SHARING this document to whoever you'd like to.