

# KONFERENZ DER *Kultur* LABORE *Hanse*

*May 15, 2025  
Stadtwirtschaft,  
Chemnitz*



# FUNDING

**T**he Conference of the Kulturhanse Laboratories was supported by the **DROSOS STIFTUNG**. The Conference of the Kulturhanse-Laboratories is part of the project **Kulturhanse-Transfer: Starke Gemeinwohlunternehmen und Ökosysteme jenseits der Metropolen** and is funded as part of the **Nachhaltig wirken – Förderung Gemeinwohlorientierter Unternehmen** program by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy and the European Union via the European Social Fund Plus (ESF Plus).



**drosos (...)**

# WELCOME

**I**magine: there is a place in your neighborhood where active citizens and social entrepreneurs work together to develop solutions to your local challenges. Then the cultural change we desire would be achieved.

We wanted to discuss together how we can achieve this cultural change and what it takes to do so. On May 15, 2025, the Kulturhanse set sail for the Conference of the Kulturhanse Laboratories. Under the motto “Entrepreneurship and the Common Good in the Periphery,” we were guests at Stadtwirtschaft Chemnitz, the European Capital of Culture 2025.

This brochure guides you through the topics and results of the conference.

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# Schedule

<b>09:30 AM</b>	<b>11:40 AM</b>	<b>14:00 PM</b>
Embark and fish for a drink	Set sail Second practical tour	Engine Room Slot 1
<b>10:00 AM</b>	<b>12:10 PM</b>	<b>14:55 PM</b>
All aboard Welcome and get to know the Kulturhanse	Lunch in the cabin	Engine Room Slot 2
<b>11:00 AM</b>	<b>13:00 PM</b>	<b>16:00 PM</b>
Set sail First practical tour	Kulturhanse Position Paper Insights into the work in progress	Coffee and Cake In the cabin
		<b>17:00 PM</b>
		Goodbye And thank you



*Katja Großer*  
led us through the conference as our moderator

# MEDIA Wall

What did the participants take away from the Conference of the Kulturhanse Laboratories? See here what thoughts they shared.



## GÜNTHER MAGAZIN

"A review of the Kulturhanse Conference: The Kulturhanse Conference 2025 was once again more than an exchange of good practices. It was a pause for reflection. A joint reflection on what works – and what is missing for it to remain. It was about spaces of possibility. About places where people not only start businesses, but stay. About structures that need to be built up further in order to be sustainable.

Kulturhanse, which started as an association of East German start-up labs, is on the move. And with it, a growing awareness: the common good does not arise from ideas alone – it needs places, resonance, and resources.

At the heart of the conference was a white paper. Seven demands, born out of practice, addressed to politicians. An impetus for a future in which social innovation is not the exception, but the starting point.

Thank you Plattform e.V., thank you drosos Foundation!!! We are very happy to be on board with @kulturhanse!"

 [@stadtlandgestalten](#)

Full article in Günther Magazine here:



## DEUTSCHLANDFUNK

Following the conference, crew member Steffen Präger spoke in a 25-minute interview with Deutschlandfunk about Kulturhanse, its goals, and the conference. Feel free to listen in here!



## NETZWERK ZUKUNFTSORTE

Thank you very much for this great @kulturhanse conference in Chemnitz!



We take away with us how important #networking is for a vibrant civil society and social innovation in rural areas. The Kulturhanse start-up labs @angerwerk.de, Ahoi Görlitz, Ahoi Altenburg, @gruendungsgarage\_chemnitz, @stadtverwicklung Weimar, and @werkhausinklusion in Erfurt are all important places of inspiration with a spirit of #futureplaces – we feel very connected to our network and hope that our discussions and mutual inspiration will bear much more fruit."

 [@zukunftsorte](#)

## ANGERWERK

"We are proud to be part of the Kulturhanse network and look forward to actively shaping the future of the periphery together."

 [@angerwerk.de](#)

## TOBIAS KREMKAU

"A piece of the Altmark region in the cultural capital Chemnitz – encounters like this always move and inspire me. I am particularly pleased that @kulturnische from the Hanseatic city of Salzwedel is presenting a place from the Altmark region as an example of active citizen participation and a low-threshold culture of encounter – and that it is being presented directly by @ybelkeit and Birke Kleemann themselves."

 [@tobiaskremkaus](#)

Follow us on social media to stay up-to-date!



[@kulturhanse](#)

## OUR HOSTS

# Stadtwirtschaft Chemnitz



### *From an old city economy to a new cultural hotspot.*

We were guests at the newly opened Stadtwirtschaft. As an intervention area for the 2025 Capital of Culture and a national urban development project, it has become a meeting place for production, creative work, and entertainment. The Stadtwirtschaft is also one of nine maker hubs in the Chemnitz cultural region and home to the Gründungsgarage—a Kulturhanse laboratory in Chemnitz.

As a central component of the Capital of Culture concept, the maker hubs, like the Kulturhanse laboratories, are places where designers, craftspeople, entrepreneurs, the skilled workers of tomorrow, and doers from all over the world come together. Would you like to find out more?



### *How can we create prospects for people to stay in rural areas of eastern Germany and beyond?*



To seek answers to this question, the Kulturhanse Laboratories Conference invited participants to Chemnitz, the European Capital of Culture 2025, on May 15. Over 100 participants accepted the invitation to the newly opened Stadtwirtschaft, a central part of the Capital of Culture program as one of nine maker hubs that

exchanged ideas with operators of third places; the press engaged in conversation with associations and academia with foundations. In six field trips to exemplary places of social innovation and eleven workshops led by (inter)national experts, the topics of the Position Paper were addressed and supplemented by the diverse perspectives of the participants.

The discussion was based on the publication of the Kulturhanse Position. The Position Paper can be found on page 11. The aim of the conference was to discuss the demands of the Position Paper in an interdisciplinary exchange with experts.

On the next pages we will introduce you to the Position Paper before finding out more about the Kulturhanse (page 22). After that, we will introduce you to the practical tours (page 32). At the end we will take you with us to the results of the workshops (page 48).

Representatives of federal politics met with mayors; employees from federal and state ministries



## Gemeinwohlorientiertes unternehmerisches Denken und Handeln stärken

Die Welt und ihre Herausforderungen ändern sich immer schneller, wofür wir fortwährend passende Lösungen brauchen. Allerdings passen Lösungen aus den Innovationszentren der Großstädte nicht zu den Herausforderungen und Chancen ländlicher Räume. Und so braucht es auch in kleineren Kommunen klare Anreize und Möglichkeiten innovatives, unternehmerisches und gemeinwohlorientiertes Denken und Handeln zu erfahren und aufzubauen. Es braucht lebendige Ökosystem für Innovateur\*innen, damit sich neue Perspektiven entwickeln.

### FORDERUNGEN

- ✓ barrierearme Experimentierräume für die Arbeit an Ideen und
- ✓ Kompetenzen, Kontakte und Ressourcen aufzubauen
- ✓ Anreiz und Steuerung für die Initiative der
- ✓ negativen Beiträge fürs Gemeinwohl
- ✓ Fördermitteln und
- ✓ als auch für gemeinnützige

# POSITION PAPER\*

## *Ahoi, we are the Kulturhanse!*

**A**s innovation hubs focused on the common good, Kulturhanse laboratories contribute to strengthening local and regional communities. We see ourselves as local partners who open new avenues for social cohesion and sustainable development:

### *Partnership-based cooperation*

Cooperation instead of competition: the public sector, economic development agencies, welfare organizations, social enterprises, and civil society all contribute to local and regional prospects and the common good. We believe that they achieve the greatest impact when they work together. Through close partnerships, we maximize synergies and thus achieve more than individual actors could.

### *Promoting cultural change*

We initiate and strengthen ecosystems that empower people to work independently and collectively to improve their living environment. Unlike traditional labor market programs, we focus on sustainable social innovation—even if this means that jobs are not created on a large scale in the short term. Our approaches are often far more cost-effective than conventional business development and create liveable structures. Where jobs are available and being created, people want to live well outside of work as well.

The geographical focus of our work is in eastern Germany—a region facing structural problems. In our daily work, we encounter, among other things, obstacles to civic engagement, vacant former community centers, and the shift of many citizens toward populist and even anti-democratic politicians and parties.

To counteract these developments and generate positive momentum, we invest time, ideas, and energy. However, a sustainable improvement in the situation also requires suitable resources, effective instruments, and conducive framework conditions.

\*This is the status as of August 2025. If you would like to read the entire current Position Paper, please contact [kontakt@kulturhanse.org](mailto:kontakt@kulturhanse.org)

# FOCUS OF *the Position Paper*

1 Building and strengthening places for social innovation

2 Use vacancy as a starting point and opportunity for action

3 Strengthening public welfare-oriented entrepreneurial thinking and action

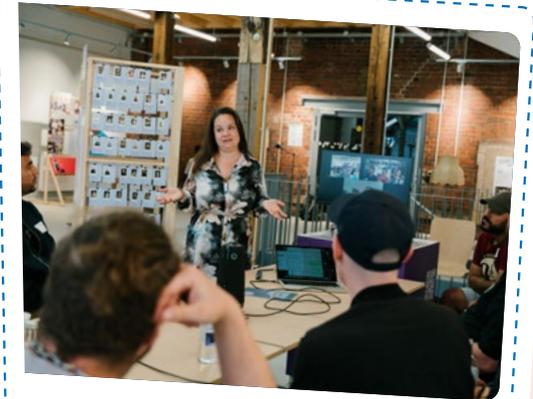
# INSIGHTS INTO THE *Conference*

Below you can find out how the basic assumptions of the Position Paper were discussed and debated during the conference.

## WORKSHOP

### *The (in)ability of small towns and villages to act – What needs to happen for something to happen?*

Prof. Dr. Katrin Großmann and Martin Arnold-Schaarschmidt discussed the realities of life in rural eastern Germany, the challenges for engagement, and the framework conditions for greater opportunities for change. You can find out what resources are needed for this and what approaches for change have been developed on page 53.



## WORKSHOP

### *Threats of de-democratisation for social renewal*

The workshop *Threats of de-democratization for social renewal* offered a change of perspective. From the point of view of Hungarian operators of a social impact hub, participants discussed the scope for action left by the shift to the right in Hungary and the strategies developed by civil society. More on this: page 60.

# DEMAND 1

## Build and strengthen places for social innovation

The Kulturhause laboratories and other places for social innovation encourage residents to contribute their ideas for local/regional development and to work together to develop solutions to challenges. They employ qualified staff who empower those who want to implement ideas and try out solutions. This gives these places the potential to increase the quality of life and satisfaction of people in the communities.

We call for a funding program to initiate, establish, and anchor at least ten locations of social innovation in eastern Germany each year. The funding should:

*be straightforward:* for example, by subsidizing personnel costs and a proportionate lump sum for material costs, and by recognizing contributions in kind and personal contributions as personal contributions.

*be long-term:* with degressive financing over at least five years per location to promote and demonstrate genuine developments.

*ensure quality:* with a qualification phase for development and accompanying individual consultation to develop a long-term operating concept – so that structures are established that will continue to exist after funding ends.

## INSIGHTS INTO THE *Conference*

What are some good examples of the required locations for social innovation? During the conference, we learned about the following two.

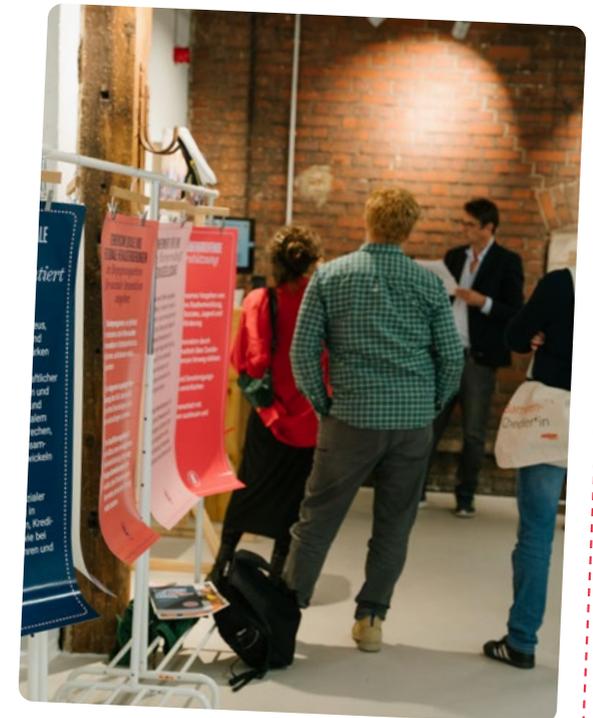
### PRACTICAL TOUR SILICON VILSTAL, GEISENHAUSEN

In his practical tour, Helmut Ramsauer impressively demonstrated what happens when an entire village, Geisenhausen, decides to change and thereby changes a whole region. Real-world laboratories, economic cycles oriented toward the common good, formats for civic engagement, and a multi-award-winning ecosystem were created. Find out more about what Geisenhausen is achieving as a place of social innovation here: page 34.



### PRACTICAL TOUR APPENNINOL'HUB, NOVAFELTRIA (ITALY)

The Appenninol'Hub is a powerful example of what places of innovation can achieve in a structurally weak region of Italy: here, vacant properties are put to use, local identity is strengthened. People are encouraged to put their ideas into practice. The city administration, regional administration, organized civil society, and businesses are working to encourage people in the middle of nowhere to try out their business ideas with professional help and a supportive ecosystem. More on this: Page 44



## DEMAND 2

### *Use vacancy as a starting point and an opportunity for action*

Many committed communities in eastern Germany are working to preserve and revitalize vacant buildings such as schools and libraries as places of encounter and identity. Despite a lack of expertise and limited resources, they are succeeding in creating new impetus for local community life and social cohesion through civic engagement. Vacant buildings, i.e., lost meeting places, are seen as an opportunity for innovation and change and are being put to use. Such communities deserve support and favorable conditions.

We therefore call for:

*Targeted financial and organizational support for civil society initiatives to repurpose vacant buildings.*

*The removal of bureaucratic hurdles to facilitate local engagement and innovation.*

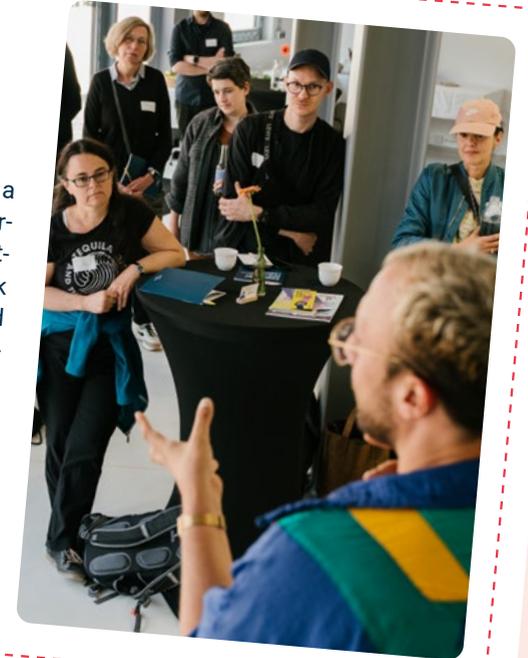
*The promotion of sustainable organizational concepts, that transform vacant properties into vibrant places for social innovation and community.*

## INSIGHTS INTO THE *Conference*

Two best-practice examples showed us how vacancy revitalization motivated local residents to become more involved.

### **PRACTICAL TOUR** **KULTUR-NISCHE, SALZWEDEL**

The pub. After the former pub closed, a group of Salzwedel residents joined forces because they did not want this important meeting place to disappear. They took courage, bought the building complex, and founded a new association to save the building. The renovation was carried out with a lot of muscle power, and everyone pitched in. Even the craft businesses helped out after work with materials and manpower. The Kultur-Nische is a good example of how vacant properties can become a starting point for civic engagement. Find out more about the study trip to Salzwedel: page 42.



### **PRACTICAL TOUR** **STRAZE, GREIFSWALD**

The community center. The former community center was built in the 19th century and was once a venue for dance, theater, music, and social gatherings. After years of standing empty, it was acquired by an investor with the aim of demolishing it. A social alliance was formed to oppose this. After six years of struggle, STRAZE was transferred to a non-profit organization and is now a cross-generational meeting place and cultural center, a multi-generational house, and a meeting place for over 30 civil society groups. More on this: page 38.



## DEMAND 3

# Strengthen public welfare-oriented entrepreneurial thinking and action

The world and its challenges are changing at an ever-increasing pace, requiring us to continually develop appropriate solutions. However, solutions from innovation centers in large cities are not suited to the challenges and opportunities faced by rural areas. This means that smaller communities also need clear incentives and opportunities to experience and develop innovative, entrepreneurial, and public-spirited thinking and action. Vibrant ecosystems for innovators are needed to develop new perspectives.

We therefore call for:

*Barrier-free experimental spaces* for working on ideas and projects to build skills, contacts, and resources.

*Flexible micro-budgets* as an incentive and control mechanism for local people's initiatives.

*The recognition of positive and negative contributions* to the common good when awarding contracts, loans, subsidies, and agreements for both commercial and non-profit organizations.

## INSIGHTS INTO THE *Conference*

How can social innovations be encouraged in vibrant ecosystems?

### WORKSHOP

#### *Fostering new local economies in peripheral areas*

How can creative, community-run spaces promote new local economies in peripheral areas? Practical tools and case studies from Italy were examined to discuss how local entrepreneurship, vacancy revitalization, and social innovation can become drivers of sustainable development and active citizenship. For more on the results, see page 58.



### PRACTICAL TOUR ANGERWERK, ANGERMÜNDE

A good example of a social-entrepreneurial ecosystem in the periphery is found at the AngerWERK in Angermünde. Here, various supporting structures and interest groups came together to consider whether it would be possible to create a place for negotiation and innovation in the periphery. Civil society, the Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development (HNEE), and the city administration, which provided the building through its economic development program, sat down together at one table. The result was the AngerWERK, whose appeal even attracts people from Berlin. Learn more about this on page 36.





# Kultur Hanse



## WHO WE ARE

With AngerWERK in Angermünde, Gründungsgrage Chemnitz, Ahoi Altenburg, Stadtverwicklung Weimar, Werkhaus Inclusion Erfurt, and ahoj Görnitz, there are six Kulturhanse laboratories. These are public meeting places, but also spaces where creators and founders can gain qualifications and network. There, we initiate cultural change so that more people can tackle issues that affect them collectively, both individually and collectively.

A shift from residents to active citizens. Whether it's a cultural café, an open workshop, or a village store, our Kulturhanse laboratories create prospects for founders to stay, but also for everyone else who benefits from them. In doing so, we initiate and support regional ecosystems so that more people can live well locally.

## WHAT WE *plan to do* TOGETHER

Together, we form the Kulturhanse association. As an association, we promote a more public welfare-oriented start-up culture in rural eastern Germany. We not only want to make strong civic engagement more visible, but also improve the framework conditions for entrepreneurs and

civil society activists. In addition, we initiate and support other public welfare-oriented laboratories and ecosystems. We do this in a spirit of solidarity and cooperation. Join us!

### THE KULTURHANSE IN NUMBERS

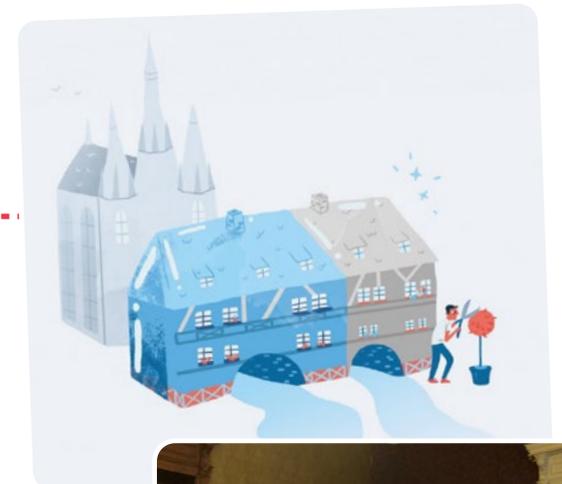
**7297** children and teens reached (Entrepreneurship Education)

**5063** interested entrepreneurs reached at events

**537** founders supported

**1.684.382€**  
in own funds generated

Stand: 28.02.2025



[www.kulturhanse.de](http://www.kulturhanse.de)



# AHOJ Görlitz

Ahoj is a port for people who want to contribute their ideas to revitalizing Germany's easternmost city in the long term and are looking for space, community, and support to do so. A few years ago, we lacked a place for this – so we created it. Now travelers, newcomers, adventurers, people interested in starting a business, the self-employed, and committed individuals have a place to go. As a start-up lab, we offer people support in developing business models from their ideas.



### *What makes our lab special:*

Our scholarship program is at the heart of what we offer. A shop serves as a workplace for us and the founders. At the same time, it is a meeting place. Free training courses and exchange formats take place there regularly. We are a public-interest-oriented addition to the sterile world of start-ups.

### *Start-up ideas we support:*

Camillo cinema, feminist forum, city magazine, film cooperative, community field, tree pruning collective, restaurant start-up, pottery, sourdough daytime bakery, sex counselor, mediator, transformation coaching, body therapist, screenwriting workshop, spoken word academy.



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# ANGERWERK Angermünde

An old villa, a forward-thinking mayor, a dynamic university, and the idea of shaping change locally: this is how AngerWERK came into being—a place for start-ups, transformation, and engagement in the Uckermark region. We believe that people can shape their own region—if they are given the space, networks, and support to do so.

### *What makes our lab special:*

We combine entrepreneurial spirit with the common good: with workshops, consulting, events, and our idea and start-up grants. Our focus is on entrepreneurship oriented toward the common good and socio-ecological engagement in rural areas – open, creative, impact-oriented.



### *Start-up ideas we support:*

Idea and space scholarship holder **Sabrina Rudick** is a cycle consultant and expert in hormone-free contraception. With humor, heart, and Anke—her plush uterus—she is shaking up sex education in schools. Sabrina and Anke empower teenagers in the Uckermark region—honestly, humorously, and on equal terms.

[www.natuerlich-hormonfrei.de](http://www.natuerlich-hormonfrei.de)

AngerWERK im Haus mit Zukunft  
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@angerwerk.de  
Contact person: Nadine Binias  
mail@angerwerk.de  
angerwerk.de



# Anger WERK

# AHOI Altenburg

In the heart of Altenburg, two former administrative employees took the plunge from administration to design—and created Farbküche, a hybrid space for creativity, participation, and change. This is where children, young people, and adults come together—they paint, design, discuss, draft, discard—and found. Creativity, support, and networking are key tools for building bridges, initiating new projects, and shaping the future together.



## What makes our lab special:

Our lab is a space where ideas can flourish. Whether through open exchange in our “Mach-Bar,” idea checks in small groups, inspiring input from experts, or simply a good conversation at the right time—we create spaces where founders can grow.

Erlebe was geht gGmbH  
Moritzstraße 6, 04600 Altenburg  
Contact persons:  
Susann Seifert & Anja Fehre  
hallo@erlebewasgeht.org  
linktr.ee/erlebewasgeht



## Start-up ideas we support:

**Radiologie** – bicycle repair shop with café as a place for people to meet and promote mobility  
[www.radiologie-abg.de](http://www.radiologie-abg.de)  
**Kulturspäti** – a members’ store for culture, exchange, and events  
[www.kulturspaeti.de](http://www.kulturspaeti.de)  
**Mobiles Spielecafé** – brings games, socializing, and community to public spaces  
[www.mobilesspielecafe.de](http://www.mobilesspielecafe.de)



# GRÜNDUNGSGARAGE Chemnitz

We want to live in a world where values and sustainability are important—in our private lives and at work. A world in which young people are self-effective and work according to social entrepreneurial principles. Where people from all walks of life are not intimidated by their diversity, but instead are curious about solidarity-based exchange and benefit from it. And where transparency and collaboration are firmly anchored. A world that transforms the spirit of entrepreneurship into social start-up energy.



## What makes our lab special:

We offer low-threshold, impact-oriented start-up consulting for young people with an East German and/or migrant background. Our focus is on socio-ecological ideas, early support, education, and inspiration—unique in the Chemnitz, Central Saxony, and Ore Mountains region.

## Start-up ideas we support:

**Mummel**  
Soft, flexible heating pads that provide relief from abdominal pain through heat.  
[www.instagram.com/mummel.plattform](http://www.instagram.com/mummel.plattform)  
**U Brambory – Czech Craft Beer Bar & Creative Space**  
A safe space for socializing and collaboration, a low-threshold co-working space, and a hub for social innovation.  
[www.ubrambory.space](http://www.ubrambory.space)  
**dauntenrum – Empowerment durch Kunst**  
Exploring social bonds, insecurities, and sexuality with the help of vulva prints.  
[www.dauntenrum.de](http://www.dauntenrum.de)

Gründungsgarage | ASA-FF e.V.  
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[www.gruendungsgarage.de](http://www.gruendungsgarage.de)



# STADTVERWICKLUNG

## Weimar

We are urban developers with a clear mission: we design places that focus on encounter, care, and community. We know from our own experience that implementing such projects is challenging.

In our work, we see ourselves as an active part of civil society, committed to social and ecological transformation not only locally but also within the framework of international initiatives. Through our projects, we want to realize the vision of a just and solidarity-based society and help people shape their own future.



### What makes our lab special:

We offer space for committed people who develop their ideas in an impact-oriented way. We initiate hackathons and idea workshops and work together to find solutions to socio-ecological challenges. We support initiatives for new business models and offer training in organizational development and group processes for community-based projects.

### Start-up ideas we support:

The Thüringer Brückenfeste create new formats for encounters in rural areas. With their artistic profession, they promote appreciation and open up new dialogues. They are winners of the "Power of the Arts Award."

The Weimar Repair-Café „Kabel und Faden“ consists of a group of committed individuals and tinkerers who enjoy repairing things together. In addition to the positive environmental aspects, they also create a low-threshold meeting place.

Stadtverwicklung gGmbH  
Erfurter Straße 39, 99423 Weimar  
Alte Feuerwache Weimar  
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info@stadtverwicklung.de  
www.stadtverwicklung.de



stadt  
verwicklung

# WERKHAUS INKLUSION

## Erfurt

We create spaces of opportunity where people can experience and develop the power to shape their own ideas, actions, and economic activities. To this end, Werkhaus offers an inspiring introduction, an initial budget, and a laboratory for anyone who wants to start a business. We want to actively support start-up ideas with exciting workshops, multilingual advice, and intensive individual coaching.



### What makes our lab special:

At Werkhaus, we are particularly keen to encourage people who struggle to find suitable support elsewhere. These include young people with physical, mental, or intellectual disabilities, people who were born abroad themselves or whose parents were born abroad, and people without family security or support.

### Start-up ideas we support:

DO'STLAR SOMSAS is a place with an inclusive kitchen where people from different backgrounds and with different interests cook together.

Stadtgärtner\*innen Erfurt (Erfurt City Gardeners) are Erfurt citizens who are committed to a diverse green city and a strong social community.

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werkhaus



# PRACTICAL TOURS

## *Set Sail!*

Which foundations contribute to a more liveable environment? What does a public welfare-oriented ecosystem look like and how can it be built? How can vacant properties be used to make one's own locality more attractive? What characteristics must places have in order to make encounters and exchanges with one another possible again? How can we strengthen civil society, which is currently under pressure? How can we mobilize support from the broadest possible alliance of stakeholders from politics, business, administration, and institutions?

During the conference, we presented six inspiring places that have found their local answers to these questions. In a total of six adventurous travel groups, we "traveled" with the participants to two places each. These places and their answers reflected the main points of our Position Paper, the contents of which you learned more about in the previous pages. Now, enjoy the journey to the practical trips.



# SILICON VILSTAL



*We are turning rural areas into laboratories for social change.*

Silicon Vilstal is an independent initiative from Lower Bavaria that shows how rural regions can become places for innovation, public welfare, and creative collaboration. The initiative was founded in 2016 with the desire to highlight the potential of rural areas and rethink social participation.

Today, Silicon Vilstal brings together a wide variety of people—from schoolchildren to social entrepreneurs, from local volunteers to international partners. Together, they develop new solutions to key challenges, for example through real-world laboratories, educational formats, cultural activities, and a large annual festival.

What makes it special is that the focus is on practice rather than theory – in workshops, in the field, in vacant buildings, in real life.

Silicon Vilstal offers creative freedom and methodological support to test ideas, strengthen networks, and make an impact. Our team is locally rooted in Geisenhausen, but with a view beyond regional and national borders. This has resulted in a multi-award-winning ecosystem for social innovation – open, experimental, and participatory.



## TRAVEL GROUP

P. 14

Focus point:  
Building and strengthening places for social innovation

*Because social change begins where people act together.*

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www.siliconvilstal.de



**Silicon**vilstal

# ANGERWERK ANGERMÜNDE



*Space for change –  
founding, common good, and  
community in the heart of the  
Uckermark region.*

**A**ngerWERK is a center for public welfare-oriented start-ups, transformation, and engagement in rural areas. Created through the collaboration of a forward-thinking mayor, the **Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development**, and committed local stakeholders, it supports those interested in starting a business and those who are already engaged in the process on their path to socially and ecologically sustainable self-employment.

***Our vision:*** a region where people with entrepreneurial thinking and solidarity-based action shape change themselves – locally anchored, networked and impact-oriented.

***Our mission:*** We offer space, consulting, scholarships, co-working, events and community formats for founders, creative people, self-employed individuals and committed people.



P.18

## TRAVEL GROUP

Focus point:  
Strengthening entrepreneurial thinking and action with a focus on the common good

*Anger-WERK aims to encourage, provide space for ideas, and connect people who want to actively shape change in the region.*

AngerWERK im Haus mit Zukunft  
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# Anger WERK

# STRAZE GREIFSWALD



## *How engagement breathed new life into a ruin*

**S**TRAZE stands for Stralsunder Straße 10. The community center near Greifswald's city center was built in the 19th century and was once a venue for dance, theater, music, and social gatherings. After various temporary uses, the building was put up for sale in 2007 and purchased by an investor with the clear intention of demolishing it. The fact that this plan was prevented and STRAZE passed into non-profit hands in 2013 is the result of years of struggle.

We believe that culture and education should be accessible to everyone. The STRAZE socio-cultural center offers space for art, engagement, and encounters and is a laboratory where innovative, democratic, and sustainable ideas are tried out. Around 30 groups from the fields of nature conservation, education, culture, and social affairs

meet here regularly.

People from Greifswald and the surrounding area, aged 0 to 90, take advantage of the services offered at STRAZE. There are open workshops, many regular meetings, and a café that serves as a meeting place. A multi-generational housing project at STRAZE provides living space for 30 people.

Development plans for the Steinbecker Vorstadt neighborhood have been under discussion for years. A cultural center in this part of town will improve the quality of life for those who already live here and those who will move here in the coming years. The users and residents of STRAZE are also jointly involved in the planning for the neighborhood.



### TRAVEL GROUP

P.16

Focus point:  
Using vacancy as a starting point  
and an opportunity for action

*We believe:  
Culture and  
education  
should be ac-  
cessible to  
everyone*

STRAZE  
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# GRÜNDUNGSGARAGE CHEMNITZ



*From doing to founding with us.*

Gründungsgarage Chemnitz is a driving force for social entrepreneurship, social dialogue, and creative, collaborative initiatives.

- We raise awareness of social and sustainability issues.
- We support you in living and working in a value-oriented way.
- We promote social entrepreneurship in our region.

We want a world in which values, sustainability, and diversity are a matter of course. A world in which young people act effectively, think socially and entrepreneurially, and collaboration and transparency are firmly established.

**Our program:**

1. Scholarship program – We support talented individuals in implementing innovative ideas.
2. Youth education program – Our workshops at schools promote personal and professional development.
3. Open Garage – A space for exchange, brainstorming, and creative events.

For social entrepreneurs: We support you in your social or cultural start-up idea – from the initial concept to an effective business model.

## TRAVEL GROUP

P. 18

Focus point: Strengthening entrepreneurial thinking and action with a focus on the common good



**Open Garage:** Our spaces are platforms for workshops, panel discussions, cabaret, and more. The focus is on topics such as empowerment, sustainability, and the economy for the common good.

**Target group:** Are you at least 18 years old, have a sustainable start-up idea, and live in Chemnitz or the surrounding area? Diversity is essential to us—all perspectives are welcome.

**Why it's important:** Chemnitz is experiencing population decline and structural challenges. We create prospects for people to stay, strengthen democratic values, and promote social change.

Gründungsgarage | ASA-FF e.V.  
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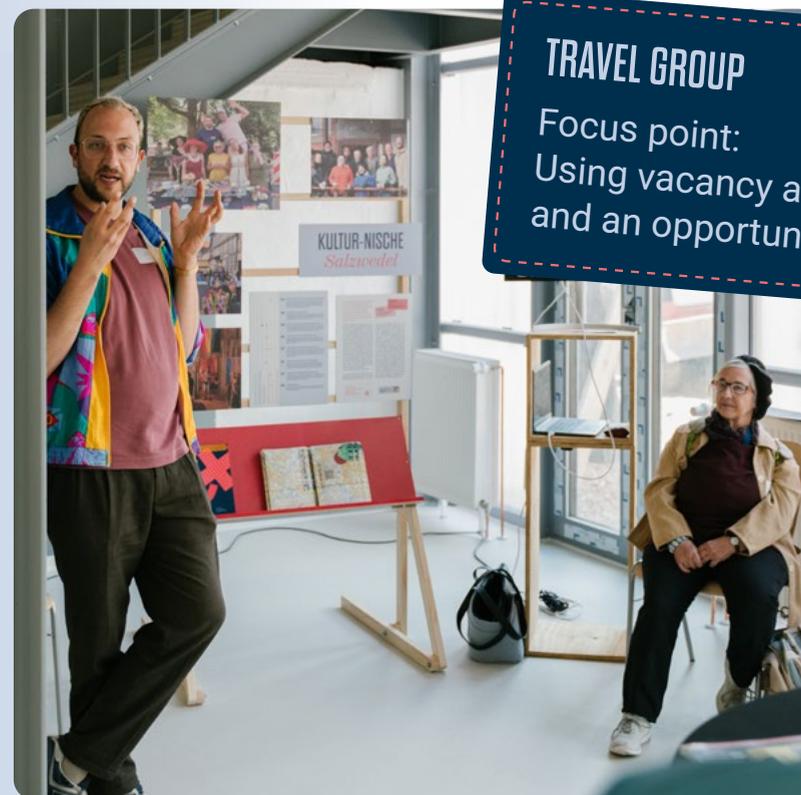
# KULTUR-NISCHE SALZWEDEL



*The people in the Kuniverse are as diverse as the collection of cups in a kitchen cupboard. How, despite all our differences, we repeatedly sit down together at the same table and seek common ground.*

A few men chat loudly in the brewery while the potter places her students' ceramic bowls in the kiln. As the customer from Solawi stows heads of lettuce and a bunch of carrots in her bag, she hears the LGBTQ community singing karaoke upstairs. An elderly woman puts books on the shelves of the exchange library. The felt artist is teaching a group felting in her studio when the first participants of the self-help group

for chronic pain arrive at the corner shop. In the Kultur-Nische\*—a block of houses in Salzwedel's old town—something revolutionary happens every day: this is where the daily paths of different people cross. (\*Good friends call it KuNi.)



**TRAVEL GROUP** P. 16  
 Focus point:  
 Using vacancy as a starting point  
 and an opportunity for action

Founded in February 2009 as a traditional heritage preservation association, Kultur-Nische has blossomed over the past 16 years into an important third place in the Altmark town. It is a meeting place for people of different backgrounds, ages, and lifestyles. Their motivations are diverse: to renovate listed buildings and learn historical craft techniques during regular construction projects, to enrich the town's cultural offerings with their own event formats, to find like-minded people in a sparsely populated area of Germany, or to implement their ideas for a better and more livable Salzwedel. Valuing the individuality of each member of the association and seeing it as an enrichment, welcoming internal group formation and, despite all differences, always sitting down together, seeking common ground and celebrating diversity – that is the essence of this wonderful, eclectic, constantly changing house.

Kultur-Nische  
 Radestr. 1, 29410 Salzwedel  
 @kulturnische  
 Kultur-Nische Salzwedel  
 kulturnische@gmx.de  
 www.linktr.ee/kulturnische




# APPENNINOL'HUB



*We accompany communities and residents to revive Italy's most beautiful places with new businesses and entrepreneurial skills that also regenerate social ties.*

Appenninol'Hub exists because too many communities in Italy's inner and rural areas are disappearing. Towns are emptying, services are vanishing, and opportunities feel far away. We believe this trend is reversible – and that these places can become centers of sustainable, community-led innovation.

*Our vision* is a vibrant, living Italy, where even the most remote areas are full of opportunity, connection, and hope.

*Our goal* is to support the rebirth of these territories by creating local economies rooted in people, identity, and care for the land.

*Our mission* is to build inhabitant economies and startups – businesses that are born from the needs of a community and that give back in terms of jobs, services, and social cohesion. We do this through tailored incubation, project design, coaching, training, access to microcredit, and investment in social infrastructure.



TRAVEL GROUP

P. 14

Focus point:  
Building and strengthening  
places for social innovation

We work with and for local people: young entrepreneurs, cooperatives, non-profits, municipalities, and anyone committed to building a future right where they are. Our services are designed for fragile, marginal areas – especially Italy's internal regions and mountain communities – because these are the places most in need of support and also rich with potential. We're based in Novafeltria (Emilia-Romagna) and active across Italy, with a mobile unit (AppenninoVan) that brings our work directly to even the most isolated villages. We are part of a growing network of public and private partners who share our belief that change comes from the ground up.

*Appenninol'Hub is more than a project – it's a movement to inhabit, imagine, and transform the places we call home.*

Appenninol'Hub:  
accompanying Communities towards Inhabitant Economies  
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## ENGINE ROOM

# *Workshops, open exchanges & collegial consultations*

**I**n the afternoon of the conference, workshops were held in the engine room, where participants had the opportunity to further explore the theses and key points of the Kulturhanse Position Paper.



KEY POINTS  
FROM THE  
POSITION PAPER:  
ALL

## WORKSHOP-RESULTS

# *The Kulturhanse Position Paper critically examined*

In the workshop on the critical review of the Kulturhanse Position Paper, stakeholders from practice, research, and administration engaged in lively discussion about the current situation of meeting places and socially innovative laboratories in rural eastern Germany. The paper describes their potential and challenges and formulates concrete proposals on how their framework conditions can be improved—for example, through adapted funding logic, reliable infrastructure, and greater recognition of their social role.

### Workshop leader:

*Juliane Döschner, Plattform e.V.*



### *Juliane Döschner*

is co-founder and partner of Wandelwerft GmbH, project manager at Plattform e.V., and teaches political science at the FernUniversität in Hagen. In her work, she supports people in shaping their environment in a meaningful way, e.g., through qualification programs for committed individuals or through the evaluation of support structures. Juliane has been on board since Kulturhanse set sail in 2018.

The workshop focused on two questions: Do the descriptions of the situation correspond to actual experiences on the ground? And: Can the demands formulated actually lead to structural improvements? The participants confirmed the relevance and urgency of the problems described in the paper on many points. At the same time, it became clear that it is important to underpin the paper with empirical evidence – especially in order to be able to argue effectively with political decision-makers.

A key conclusion: “Better to start imperfectly than wait for perfection” – the paper should be seen as a catalyst and quickly introduced into the political debate rather than waiting for it to be supposedly complete. It was also emphasised

how important it is to incorporate the results and discussions of the conference into the paper to strengthen its significance and relevance. Another focus was the question of strategic alliances: to achieve effective change, cooperation with similar networks at federal and state level should be sought – in line with the motto “cooperation instead of competition.” The workshop was thus not only a review of content, but also a call for networking, visibility, and political positioning of local actors.

## RESULTS COLLEGIAL CONSULTATION

# How can the Kulturhanse Position Paper be strategically implemented successfully?

KEY POINTS  
FROM THE  
POSITION PAPER:  
ALL

In the collegial consultation, committed individuals from civil society, foundations, and government agencies discussed various ideas on how the Position Paper could be made more effective. One appealing suggestion was to summarize the context and the three core topics of the Position Paper in a handout and include a QR code linking to a website where the specific measures relating to the core topics are explained in detail. The advantage of this would be that the handout could be translated for different audiences and that the measures on the website could be specified and supplemented as the process progresses.

**Moderator:** *Jennifer Hansen, Hansen Organisationsberatung*

### *Jennifer Hansen*

As a systemic organizational and team developer, Jennifer Hansen supports individuals, teams, organizations, and networks on their paths to development. On behalf of the Drosos Foundation, she led the strategic evaluation of Kulturhanse from December 2024 to April 2025.



## WORKSHOP RESULTS

# The (in)ability of small towns and villages to act – What needs to happen for something to happen?

KEY POINTS  
FROM THE  
POSITION PAPER:  
ALL

### *Starting point and objective:*

During the workshop entitled “*The (in)ability of small towns and villages to act – What needs to happen for something to happen?*”, there was intense discussion about the structural challenges facing small municipalities – especially in rural areas – and what options for action are available. The starting point was the observation that these municipalities are increasingly having to take on tasks without having sufficient finan-

cial or human resources at their disposal. This is leading to a gradual withdrawal of public services, the dismantling of social infrastructure, as well as growing frustration, powerlessness, and dwindling confidence in democratic processes.

### **Workshop leaders:**

*Prof. Dr. Katrin Großmann*  
*Martin Arnold-Schaarschmidt*



### *Prof. Dr. Katrin Großmann*

teaches urban and spatial sociology at the University of Applied Sciences in Erfurt and heads the Periphery and Center research collective. Her research focuses on social conflicts and immigration, energy justice, and shrinking cities and small towns.



### *Martin Arnold-Schaarschmidt*

is co-founder of Plattform e.V. and Kulturhanse. As a moderator, networker, and organizational consultant, he travels extensively in rural areas.

# Structural causes & challenges:

## *Inequalities between urban and rural areas and between centers and peripheries:*

Peripheral locations face different challenges than centers (global phenomenon).

## *Basic funding:*

Instead of targeted support programs, there is a lack of basic funding.

## *Overburdening:*

Local authorities are overburdened with too many mandatory tasks.

This reduces their *creative freedom* to the point of inability to act.

*Lack of trust and recognition* by state and federal governments.

## *Volunteers are burning out:*

Citizens are trying to compensate for disappearing services and structures to the point of overload—or are withdrawing.

## *Strong emotional strain:*

Many municipal challenges are exacerbated by emotional aspects (e.g., loss of control, shame, anger).

# Approaches for Change:

## *1. Structural reforms & financing*

- Introduction of **reliable basic financing** for small municipalities.
- **State reform:** Strengthen local self-government, rethink local financing.
- **Urban-rural burden sharing** – fair distribution of burdens and resources between centers and peripheries.
- **Abolish counties as a political entity**, retain them only as an administrative structure.

## *2. Strengthen democracy, participation, and initiatives focused on the common good.*

- **Create places for experimentation** and highlight examples of good practice.
- **Model projects** are inspiring, but without widespread and long-term funding, they are only a flash in the pan.
- Combine **bottom-up and top-down processes** (“community organizing”).
- **Involve civil society in a targeted manner** - not just to administer, but to shape.
- **Trust vs. power:** More power for the local level requires more trust.
- Promote **self-determination through income**, e.g., through local businesses.

## *3. New ways of working together*

- **Pool resources**, e.g., in public services or municipal services.
- **Use artistic means** to create new perspectives.
- Think about **spatial planning and economic development** together.

## *Central Demands:*

### *Responsibility and trust*

must be central guiding concepts in cooperation between civil society, local authorities, state, and federal government

*A new understanding of dignified control and participation* is needed in municipal development.

People experience the state and society at the local level.

*That is where they must be able to actively participate in shaping things and solving problems.*

## WORKSHOP RESULTS

### *Theory meets practice – What Makerhubs really need and how we can support them*

#### *Starting point and objective*

As part of the 2025+ Vision Workshop, stakeholders from the fields of practice, culture, business, and civil society discussed how maker hubs—as creative places for exchange, experimentation, and production—can be strengthened. The starting point was the observation that it is not people who are the problem, but often the structural conditions that make it difficult to “just do it.” The aim of the workshop was therefore to identify specific obstacles and develop joint solutions for the effective empowerment of makers.

Makerhubs – such as those currently emerging in the context of Chemnitz 2025 European Capital of Culture – bring together a wide variety of actors: craftspeople, artists, entrepreneurs, young talents, and international guests. They see themselves as open meeting places with a regional focus, supported by local communities. However, to reach their full potential, they need targeted structural support.

**Workshop leaders:** *Stefanie Abelmann, Laura Tzschätzsch*



*Stefanie Abelmann*

is an art historian and communications and media scholar. She worked for many years in the national and international cultural and festival sector. Since 2018, she has been involved in the TRAFÖ – Models for Culture in Transition funding program of the German Federal Cultural Foundation, which promotes the strengthening of cultural infrastructure in rural areas. As part of the main project “Makers, Business & Arts,” she develops opportunities for cross-disciplinary collaboration between creative minds, promotes the creation of creative spaces, and is committed to expanding creative tourism offerings.

*Laura Tzschätzsch*

The nine Makerhubs are part of the Chemnitz 2025 main project Makers, Business & Arts, which is being carried out by the Saxony State Association for Cultural and Creative Industries with funding from the European Capital of Culture Chemnitz 2025 gGmbH. Laura Tzschätzsch is the network manager for the Chemnitz 2025 maker hubs. Coaching, mentoring, and networking are her main areas of responsibility.

KEY POINTS  
FROM THE  
POSITION PAPER:  
BUILDING AND  
STRENGTHENING  
PLACES FOR SOCIAL  
INNOVATION

## *Discussion Results:*

#### *External support is crucial:*

Experienced partners such as Kreatives Sachsen or Plattform e.V. are needed, who not only have the expertise, but also a genuine interest in strengthening and further developing Makerhubs in the long term.

#### *Financial resources for supporting structures:*

Not only do local projects need funding, but so do organizations that provide advice, coordination, and networking.

#### *Creating more space:*

Additional, low-threshold locations are needed where creative work can take place—adapted to the respective local needs.

#### *Increase visibility & improve access:*

Makerhubs must be made more visible – to funding bodies, politicians, and the public. Access to resources must be made easier and more transparent.

#### *Strengthen the local population:*

Local people should be encouraged and empowered to create their own third places or further develop existing ones.

#### *Conclusion:*

The workshop made it clear that maker hubs are not only places of creativity, but also key players in regional development. For them to be effective, sustainable structures, political support, and a culture of cooperation are needed.

# WORKSHOP SUMMARY

## *Fostering new local economies in peripheral areas*

KEY POINTS  
FROM THE  
POSITION PAPER:  
STRENGTHENING  
ENTREPRENEURIAL  
THINKING AND ACTION  
WITH A FOCUS ON THE  
COMMON GOOD

### *Background and Objectives:*

In *Fostering New Local Economies in Peripheral Areas* the focus is on how creative hubs and community-driven spaces can further sustainable development and active citizenship, especially in structurally weak and rural regions. Case studies from Italy show practical approaches that connect local entrepreneurship, social innovation, and the reuse of underutilized spaces.

### *Discussion Outcomes:*

An analysis of traditional challenges faced by peripheral areas shows depopulation, the exodus of young people, limited employment opportunities, the closure of essential services, and geographic isolation. These dynamics often lead to a downward spiral of economic and social decline.

Workshop leader: *Ronnie Garattoni*



### *Ronnie Garattoni*

is a mentor and community designer supporting start-ups and new entrepreneurship in fragile and inner areas of Italy. As a co-founder of a Creative Hub, he designs programs for business incubation, local development and social innovation. His work connects emerging talents with local communities, fostering new economies and collaborative ecosystems. He is also a lecturer in entrepreneurship and innovation at universities and business schools.

However, **emerging opportunities** that may reshape the future of these areas can be identified; the remote work revolution, a rising demand for authentic, place-based experiences, a broader societal shift toward sustainability, and improved digital infrastructure even in remote locations.

There are several **key success factors** for building resilient local economies: strong **community engagement**, the **multi-functionality** of hubs, **place-based innovation**, **network building**, **social impact orientation**, and **sustainable operational models**.

In the example of **rural Italy**, there are both **critical issues** (like aging populations, infrastructure decay, and economic stagnation) and **hidden potential** (such as rich cultural and natural heritage, a strong sense of local identity, and untapped opportunities for quality living and sustainable tourism).

These insights can be translated into action following the “From Idea to Impact” method. An example is how to approach the development of new hubs:

- Identify a specific local challenge
- Design a creative or community-based solution
- Map key stakeholders and existing resources
- Outline the first three concrete steps to move toward implementation.



### *Outcome:*

Peripheral regions can become spaces of innovation—if supported by the right tools, networks, and policies.

# WORKSHOP SUMMARY

## Threats of de-democratisation for social renewal

KEY POINTS  
FROM THE  
POSITION PAPER:  
ALL

### Background and Objectives

Since 2010 Hungary has become a prime example of democratic backsliding in the EU. Transformations by Viktor Orbán's governments included the excessive centralisation of administrative and political power and the new authoritarian state's systematic occupation of the social fabric through the harassment of NGOs that did not align with the governments' (neo)conservative political agenda and discourse.

The workshop aimed to examine the key developments in Hungary's de-democratization and reflect on their underlying political and social drivers. In the second part of the session, participants discussed concrete strategies for resilience and action based on the experiences of Impact Hub Budapest, a community of social innovators working to empower change even under difficult political conditions.

### Workshop leaders:

Beatrix Bedö, Judit Keller, Réka Muhari

### Part I: Pathways of Democratic Decline

The first part of the workshop provided an overview of the Hungarian government's strategies to centralize power and suppress opposition:

- Concentration of political control and dismantling of institutional checks and balances
- Restrictions on freedom of expression & the press
- Legal and financial harassment of NGOs and grassroots movements
- Framing of civil society actors as foreign agents or ideological enemies

Key contributing factors were also identified, including social inequality, political disillusionment, and the strategic use of nationalist rhetoric to foster division and fear.

### Part II: Civil Society Responses – The Case of Impact Hub Budapest

Despite growing pressure, organizations like Impact Hub Budapest continue to operate and build change-making capacity across Hungary, including in rural areas. Their work highlights the critical role of civil society in preserving democratic values and social cohesion.

Participants shared examples of practical initiatives that support youth and women's empowerment, promote inclusive community building, and create spaces for social innovation.

### Beatrix Bedö

The director of the Foundation for Sustainable Enterprises and the CEO, Co-Founder of Impact Hub Budapest. Experienced in leading project based social teams, launching companies, stating risk areas and overviewing the operation of various organizations. She is the lead mentor and trainer in the Foundation of Impact Hub Budapest for several incubations, acceleration programs since 2015.

### Judit Keller

PhD, sociologist, Senior Research Fellow at the HUN-REN Centre for Economic and Regional Studies in Budapest and project leader at the Zentrum für Soziale Innovation (ZSI) in Vienna. Her research focuses on social integration, policies related to marginalisation, territorial cohesion amidst state transformation in Central and Eastern Europe.

## Discussion Outcomes:

### Fostering economic skills

is directly linked to strengthening change-making capacities. When individuals, especially youth and women, gain the ability to generate income or build projects, they also become more active and confident contributors to social and political life.

### Economic participation

equips people with the tools and confidence needed for democratic engagement.

### Diversifying funding sources

– including international, private, and community-based streams – helps civil society organizations remain independent and resilient in the face of political pressure.

### Strengthening networks and building collective resilience

are crucial for sustaining civil society in repressive environments.

Ultimately, we must treat *democratic and economic participation* not as separate spheres, but as interconnected building blocks for long-term societal transformation.

### Conclusion

The Hungarian case shows how fragile democratic institutions can be when civil society is weakened and political power becomes concentrated. Yet it also demonstrates the enduring potential of local, grassroots, and community-based initiatives. By investing in economic empowerment, strengthening networks, and securing diverse resources, civil society can continue to foster participation and resilience even in restrictive systems. Moving forward, it is essential to support such efforts through cross-border collaboration, flexible funding, and long-term strategic partnership.

### Réka Muhari

Facilitator, trainer, and educational developer, I focus on intention-based communication to support meaningful change. I'm passionate about improving education and helping entrepreneurs share their stories. I integrate permaculture principles into my work with changemakers to make each day better and more impactful.

## WORKSHOP RESULTS

# Living and working together in the countryside

### Starting point and objective:

The workshop “Community Living and Working in Rural Areas” addressed the question of how community-oriented living and working models can be successfully implemented in rural areas. More and more people are moving from big cities to rural regions or consciously deciding to stay there – with the desire not only to live together, but also to do business together and be culturally active.

The central starting point was the realization that residential use often forms the economic backbone of such projects. It creates financial stability and enables other uses such as education, culture, or collaborative work – but can also be the subject of conflicts of interest, especially when choosing the property, the legal form, or in exchanges with authorities.

### Workshop leader:

Roman Grabolle, Dezentrale – Netz für gemeinschaftliches Wohnen in Sachsen.

KEY POINTS  
FROM THE  
POSITION PAPER:  
USE VACANCY  
AS A STARTING  
POINT AND REASON  
FOR ACTION

### Roman Grabolle

has been providing freelance consulting services for cooperative and public welfare-oriented housing and cultural projects since 2010. Since 2017, he has been part of the Leipzig office community “Dienstleistungskombinat MIR,” which, among other things, runs the program “Dezentrale – Netz für gemeinschaftliches Wohnen in Sachsen” (Network for Communal Living in Saxony). It offers advice and information for housing projects, owners, and municipalities in the districts of the Free State.

[www.dezentrale-sachsen.de](http://www.dezentrale-sachsen.de)



## Developed approaches to solutions:

The workshop made it clear that there needs to be greater **awareness of communal living**—both among the general public and in local government. Alternative forms of living and their significance for local educational and cultural work are still too rarely recognized as an opportunity.

### Strengthen administrative understanding:

Promote education and cooperation with local stakeholders.

### Transfer of expertise and support:

Projects require targeted support through moderation, project development, and the transfer of legal and organizational fundamentals.

### Establish local advisory structures:

On-site services help to transform ideas into viable projects.

### Promoting start-up processes:

Specific support programs and low-threshold assistance can help community initiatives become reality more quickly.

### Conclusion:

The workshop made it clear that communal living and working can be a catalyst for social, economic, and cultural revitalization in rural areas—if the right conditions are created.



# OPEN EXCHANGE

## Networking for places of inspiration

### Starting point and objective

Impulse locations are creative, community-supported projects that transform vacant buildings in rural areas into places for social interaction, learning, and working. They serve as practical laboratories for social change, are often locations for social enterprises, and thus make an important contribution to rural development. At the same time, setting them up involves numerous challenges – organizational, financial, and structural. The aim of the workshop was to strengthen the exchange of experiences among initiators of such

places of inspiration and to work out together how networking can contribute to the long-term success of these places. The question of what further support structures are required was also addressed.

**Workshop leader:**  
*Anne Kruse, Netzwerk Zukunftsorte e.V.*

KEY POINTS  
FROM THE  
POSITION PAPER:  
BUILDING AND  
STRENGTHENING  
PLACES FOR SOCIAL  
INNOVATION

### Anne Kruse

The Netzwerk Zukunftsorte was founded in 2020 to connect and support creative minds in rural areas and to create more open spaces. Today, we are a vibrant community of initiatives, associations, experts, politicians, and administrators.



## Discussion Results:

### Networking is essential:

Exchanging ideas with other centers of innovation enables us to learn from each other, avoid mistakes, and develop solutions together. Networking builds trust, strengthens motivation, and shows that we are not alone in facing challenges.

### Cross-network collaboration opens up new opportunities:

Collaboration beyond existing networks—for example, with other regions, sectors, or even at the international level—can provide new impetus, reveal synergies, and initiate innovative partnerships.

### Openness to new ideas is key:

Centers of innovation thrive on creative approaches and a continuous learning process. Remaining open to other perspectives, new methods, or unusual partners strengthens one's own development and promotes innovation.

### Conclusion:

The workshop made it clear that networking is not a “nice-to-have” but a central foundation for the success of places of inspiration. It enables collective learning, mutual support, and the joint development of a vision for vibrant, community-oriented spaces in rural areas. For networking to be effective, it requires suitable formats, resources, and platforms—as well as the openness to constantly rethink and redesign.



## WORKSHOP RESULTS

# Rethinking economics – Introduction to the Common Good Balance Sheet

### Starting point and objective

What if economic success were no longer measured solely in terms of profit, but rather in terms of a company's contribution to the common good? This is precisely where the Economy for the Common Good (ECG) comes in. It offers an alternative economic model based on values such as human dignity, solidarity, ecological sustainability, social justice, and democratic participation. The common good balance sheet is a key tool for organizational development, practical implementation, and evaluation.

The workshop was aimed at people from social initiatives, cultural organizations, companies, and other structures oriented toward the common good. The goal was to offer a low-threshold introduction to the concept of the ECG, to inspire participants with concrete practical examples, and to encourage them to reflect on their own actions.

**Workshop leader:** *Jan Koltermann*



*Jan Koltermann*

Jan Koltermann is a certified ECG speaker, consultant, auditor, and learning provider. He accompanies transformation processes with heart and attitude.

KEY POINTS  
FROM THE  
POSITION PAPER:  
STRENGTHENING  
ENTREPRENEURIAL  
THINKING AND  
ACTION WITH A  
FOCUS ON THE  
COMMON GOOD

## Contents and discussion results:

### *Introduction to the ECG and the Common Good Balance Sheet:*

The ECG is a transformation project that aims to create a fairer and more sustainable economic system – one that serves society. The Common Good Balance Sheet makes it possible to systematically record the impact of an organization on various stakeholder groups (e.g., employees, suppliers, customers, society, the environment). Success is measured not only in economic terms, but above all in terms of social impact.

### *Key findings and insights:*

Courage is key: Organizations need the courage to take the first steps – even without perfect conditions. Many examples show that simply starting the reflection process can make a big difference. Incentive systems should be created to reward actions that are oriented toward the common good – both at the corporate and political levels.

The ECG is a system built by committed people – every organization and every individual can become part of this movement and actively help shape it. Integrating sustainability and the common good into the DNA of a company opens up new potential, creates technical and social innovations, and strengthens credibility – including with funders and investors, who are increasingly looking for value orientation.

### *Practical applicability:*

The ECG is suitable for all types of organizations: from associations and foundations to companies. Mentors and networks provide support during the initial phase and offer practical guidance. The central question is: “How do I live our values—and how do they affect our various stakeholders?”

### *Conclusion:*

The Economy for the Common Good offers a holistic framework for a different way of thinking about economics—one that puts people, the environment, and society at the center. The Common Good Balance Sheet is not only a measuring instrument, but above all a tool for change and further development. The workshop showed that a focus on the common good begins with attitude—and the courage to break new ground. Now is the time to get started.



# WORKSHOP RESULTS

## *Financing social innovations*

### *Starting point and objective*

Social innovations make a significant contribution to solving societal challenges – whether in the areas of education, integration, climate, or care. However, despite their high social value, many projects and companies lack sufficient funding: capital for piloting new ideas and resources for scaling proven models remain difficult to access

in Germany – both for non-profit and commercial organizations that serve the common good.

The aim of the workshop was to analyze current financing barriers and discuss concrete courses of action to open better growth opportunities for social innovations.

**Workshop leader:** *Christoph Rohde*

### *Christoph Rohde*

heads up transaction management at FASE and has been active in the fields of social entrepreneurship and impact investments for more than 10 years.

FASE mobilizes capital for impact companies to scale their social impact. With a strong network, innovative financing models, and comprehensive expertise, they connect entrepreneurs with investors. In more than 100 transactions, FASE has mobilized over EUR 85 million for greater impact and is the co-initiator of the European Social Innovation and Impact Fund (ESIIF).



KEY POINTS  
FROM THE  
POSITION PAPER:  
STRENGTHENING  
ENTREPRENEURIAL  
THINKING AND ACTION  
WITH A FOCUS ON THE  
COMMON GOOD

## *Discussion Results:*

### *Making social returns visible:*

- Financing models must take greater account of social impact.
- Investors should look not only at the economic return, but also at the social benefits of their investment—for example, through impact investing or social bonds.
- A shift in thinking is needed toward linking financial and social returns in order to gain more engagement from private and institutional circles.

### *Promoting economic thinking:*

- Many public welfare organizations need support in business model thinking—in other words, in how they can make their impact sustainable and financially viable.
- NGOs should be invited and empowered to think entrepreneurially without losing sight of their values and goals.
- This is not about maximizing profits, but about structures that combine economic stability and social impact.

### *Tap into new sources of financing:*

- Individuals can be potential investors—for example, through crowd investing, direct investments, or public welfare-oriented funds.
- It is important to build trust and create transparency in order to enable such investments.
- Funding and financing programs should be adapted to better support hybrid forms of organization (between non-profit and entrepreneurial).

### *Conclusion:*

Social innovation requires not only good ideas, but also appropriate financing models that reward social impact. The workshop made it clear that a rethink on all sides—among funding institutions, organizations, and investors—is necessary to give social entrepreneurship in Germany the financial foundation it needs. It is crucial to combine economic thinking with social action to enable long-term, sustainable solutions to key issues of the future.





# THE CREW Kultur Hanse

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