

Julia Lama

diary of a

SAFE  PROJECT

Sexuality / Assertiveness / Feminism / Equality

in Wójtowice (Bystrzyckie Mountains)  
Poland

2018

My trip began a day before of the official date. I arrived to Madrid without a rush (lucky for me, because the bus was late) and with a huge throat infection as company.



David warned me about the moment in which I would start asking myself "Why am I doing this?" but even with this sickness on top of myself, I was thrilled to travel.



I got myself into this project because of David. He knew Kinga and he spoke wonders about her work and everything related to her activism in Poland.



( \*Sigh\* tódé, you never  
cease to amaze me... )

I knew I wasn't the safest choice for the training. No youth work. No organization. No activism. But somehow I felt I was supposed to go. It was the perfect timing and state of mind for me to try. Some months ago, the sole thought of traveling alone would have terrified me.

And so. I met Raquel and Clara at the airport. I faced my fears of traveling solo

(in this case, meaning with strangers) and taking a plane (I've been terrified to fly since I traveled from Poland to Madrid in 2015) in just a couple hours.



We arrived in Wrocław and met Alba. That night we had the chance to get to know each other and relish in cheap meals of Polish cuisine.



Next day was a beautiful and sunny Sunday designed to make us freak out because everything was closed. That didn't stop us from going on a quest to find cough pills, tobacco and a toothbrush. On the way we tanned by the river, gossipped about friends and relationships and tried some amazing pierogi like proper tourists do.



Back then  
we didn't know  
that soups were  
going to be so  
present in the training

I remember feeling like a fish out of water in the Spanish team. My three comrades already had experiences with youth work, some kind of activism or education of some sort ... Lucky me, they seemed as anxious to get to the Polish mountains as I was.

During our lovely day in Wrocław, I had the chance to notice Clara's weird choice of words (iHonestamente!), Alba's super cute laughter (she sounds exactly the same as one of my friends) and the introspective gaze of Raquel. Although we were a bunch of strangers (except for Clara and Alba, who already knew each other) it never felt that way.

I was very curious to see how our relationship would develop in the course of a week.



We got to the train station one coffee in one hand and a suitcase in the other. It was funny to be waiting there while looking around for small groups of people with the same disoriented faces that we had. I remember Natalia, Razvan and Daniel staring at us before finally getting closer. Also, as usual, us, the spanish group, were lying on the ground while the other countries patiently waited standing on their feet.

Then, Anna Jurek appeared. There she was with her friendly smile even though she was about to find out that both the portuguese and turkish team had experienced some problems with their flights.

The following page shows my first impressions of the people I met at the train station (no kidding, I actually wrote comments to the future)



down some quick get amused in

1, 2, 3... GO!

CYPRUS



Yegane  
Cute cute cute ♡

Hava  
Looks very friendly 😊

Aycan  
Younger/Happier Lewis Trondheim



Billo

Crazy. She carries an extremely small penguin suitcase. Why does she remind me of Amy Poehler?

ROMANIA



Daniel

Razvan Natalia

OMG! Is there going to be men? They act like they already know each other...

POLAND



Jurek

Hippy. Nervous smile. Good vibes.

Sexy. HAS A DOG ♡



Krzys



Olga

Polish Lena Dunham but nicer. I already like her.



Our first night in **Wataszka** was entirely dedicated to get to know each other. We ate together, played to some kind of random-facts-bingo and tried to memorize a bunch of different names and faces (Krzys, Ayca and Yegane promised to be a challenge)

I don't remember much from my first impressions then but I was excited to meet Kinga and Weronika in person. Jurek and Olga were starting to grow on me, I found myself hooked to Ayca's voice and I noticed that more than one thought that my lock of grey hair was intentional.

Then we were sent to our shared rooms and I found out that I was the only spanish girl apart from the rest of the team... which was... great! I had no excuses for speaking spanish. Also, I already liked my roomies. Olga, Yegane and I were sharing the room but we were still missing two girls.



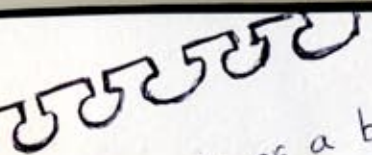
Common space with  
Razvan · Natalia and Ferhat





Common space with  
Razvan · Natalia and Ferhat





Chronicle of a bumpy night:

1. Julia goes to the bathroom an average of 4 times in 3 hours. Thank you, bladder.
2. An unknown person arrives in the middle of the night. Thank god she sees in the dark.
3. The unknown person talks in her sleep.
4. The cyriot girl needs the bathroom light on.
5. What's Olga doing with her feet? Wait a minute... \*flashlight\* ... oh, okay, it was a mouse.
6. Julia sleeps about two hours and a half.

Julia wake up!!



Yegane decides it's her mission to wake me up at 6 a.m

Jurek / Kinga  
celebrating great causes!



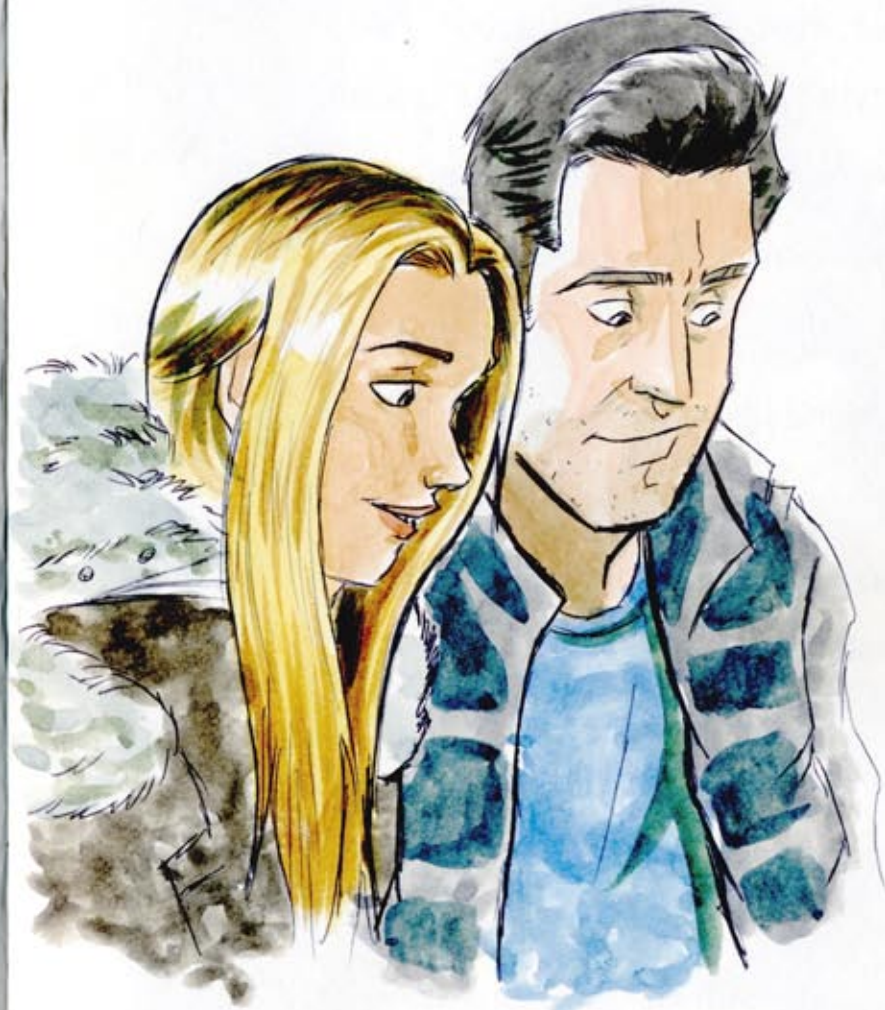


Seda / Orhan  
Orhan :)

During our first day of training I was unable to write something meaningful. I was so overwhelmed with thoughts and emotions I just couldn't focus. My room, the class, it didn't matter where I went, I was overstimulated. I wanted to draw, to write, to talk, to engage... but the only thing I managed to do well was to smile a lot and send some over-the-top audio messages to friends and family.

I was ecstatic. The beauty of the place and its surroundings, the dogs, the exciting mixture of languages and cultures... It was as if everything had been designed to bring a calm sense of joy and stillness. I wrote down:

"I feel like I'm living in a bubble. I've been invited to go on vacation, far away from the real world. When the bubble breaks, I'll have to go back to a place in which nobody knows what they're missing"





Now that time has passed and I've been able to collect my thoughts, I can tell that those things we did during our first day were the seeds to create the perfect safe space. I was amazed by the fact that it took us about two or three hours to establish the rules and guidelines for our daily coexistence. We were grownups! Did we really need a hand gesture to express support? But then... When have I ever seen a group of adults debating personal boundaries or the need to have a quiet space?

Never before had I seen myself in a place where someone asked for a round of pronouns. Nor been in a formative experience in which I was encouraged to participate and share or even refrain myself from doing anything at all. And what's even more shocking... I'd never felt so calm and confident while being so inexperienced.



Leon



Kito



Iggy





Kito



Leon



Iggy



The second day of training passed quickly before my eyes. I tried to be more vocal and proactive even though I still felt like an imposter being surrounded by as many inspiring individuals. I was in awe with people like Aycan, Isa, Tefide or Hanna and the confidence they displayed during their interventions.

That day we talked about stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination. It was so great to see Kinga deconstruct the cycle to teach us. I ended up in a group with Olga, Jurek, Natalia and Razvan designing the stereotypical portrait of a roma teenage girl: an offense towards everybody's sensitivities. It was curious though how we managed to encourage positive prejudices in certain cases. I saw myself facing some of those just a couple of days later while hearing stories about jealous lesbian women using violence... (be careful, dear cypriots)



Isa



We also reflected on relations of power. Very interesting topic. We had to rearrange the elements of a scene (people included) to set which was the most powerful one. That exercise had it all: it was fun and clever at the same time. You could extrapolate a lot of ideas from the play and find them present in your day to day life.

That night I did manage to write and draw. The room was full with the arrival of Cansu and Carla and I finally had the talk with Yegane and asked to be released from her morning warnings.

On our third day in Wataszka, Kinga showed us the power of Wen Do. Until that day I had been thinking that we were going to learn some kind of martial art to use for self-defence but Kinga was more focused on the empowering tools of the workshop. I already knew a little about nonverbal communication and body language, but I had learnt to trust on our conversations and group dynamics and I was eager to see what would come out of the exercises.



Ricardo  
& Shane

I skipped Carla because I thought she didn't want to be drawn! But she did <sup>it</sup> They're watching Jonathan Pie.



In one of the exercises, we had to work in pairs and stop the other from going closer by using body language / words and no physical contact. While other couples were intimidated, I ended up with Yegane, wondering if maybe we were too comfortable to take it seriously.



Then we worked in bigger groups. We formed a circle in which we were supposed to send an assertive message to our closer partner. Needless to say,



the reactions were very unexpected. There were tears ... from laughter, at least in my group. I'm sorry for the mess.

Concepts, ideas and things to investigate further.

- "The beautiful gender" (dicho en polaco)
- "El timón holandés" (dicho en español)
- Augusto Boal - Teatro / Theatre for the oppressed
- Ted Talk - The danger of a single story
- The Abigail story - exercise from Ricardo
- Equity ≠ Equality
- The relation between being said that your future is in your hands and having depression. Blog.
- El orden de las cosas (shortfilm)
- The gender pay gap (youtube)
- Jonathun Pie
- Callate y dejarnos bailar (music)
- All the world is waiting
- Halloumi or Hellim
- Carne cruda (podcast)
- The art of stillness (podcast) / Ted books
- Assigned Male (FB webcomic)
- Hej na wygonie konie pasla Kasienka konie



- Martinde amba beat fuckthesystem
- Vias verdes
- Ni una menos - Chocolate remix
- Fuego - Bomba Estéreo
- Pass this on - The Knife
- Prostituto - Deize Tigrona feat. Jalco
- Turning Point - Sabb
- Love love - Take that
- Escape - Jaroslav Beck
- Amor pa mi - Sergent García
- Naturally - Rondé
- What a Bam Bam - Amara la Negra



⊛ Noviembre! (Film) ♡ To my lovely tree

"La Peta asustada" "El orden de las cosas"  
 "La Peta asustada", 2007.

↙ Yegane

\* My favorite film (the called) \*.

Please watch ~~an~~ Anne with an "e" i  
 (Canadian tv series)

↘ and that is  
 advice from  
 Olga with  
 an "a"

- La sociedad del cansancio

- Paul Preciado - El Manifiesto Contrasexual  
 (libro)

- Anne Bogart: A Director Prepares (Teatro)

- Artivism en España. Ilustración

- Q4Q Question for question when you don't  
 want to answer

- Stragafodas

- Octopodi (short film)

↙ Aycan

- Mighty bush (tv series)



After our Wen Do sessions, it was time to eat and leave the place! I haven't mentioned it before, but during our stay in Poland we were embraced by a sunny weather that made everyone more than happy to go outside.

We went on a two and a half hour hike through the forest, taking photos, walking dogs, getting exhausted and feeling insignificant surrounded by that dense sea of trees. I think Kinga made some enemies while guiding us along one of her shortcuts; Flauva hugged many trees and shared her therapy with Raquel and more than one person was encouraged to get to the shelter on the top of the hill by being promised a glass of beer.

Something changed this day, at least for me. I was more focused and grounded and still enjoying like a little kid. We were no longer strangers, you could tell that there were friendships starting to develop and everyone felt comfortable and safe.

Krzys





Back home, Isa delighted us with a narrated game in which a pair of sexist killers (Hey there, Clara!) threatened to destroy our safe space. Aycan found a long-lasting friend in Daniel, our local hero. Jurek threw a party in the afterlife and Weronika lost her serious facade to claim justice for every innocent feminist that was killed that night.

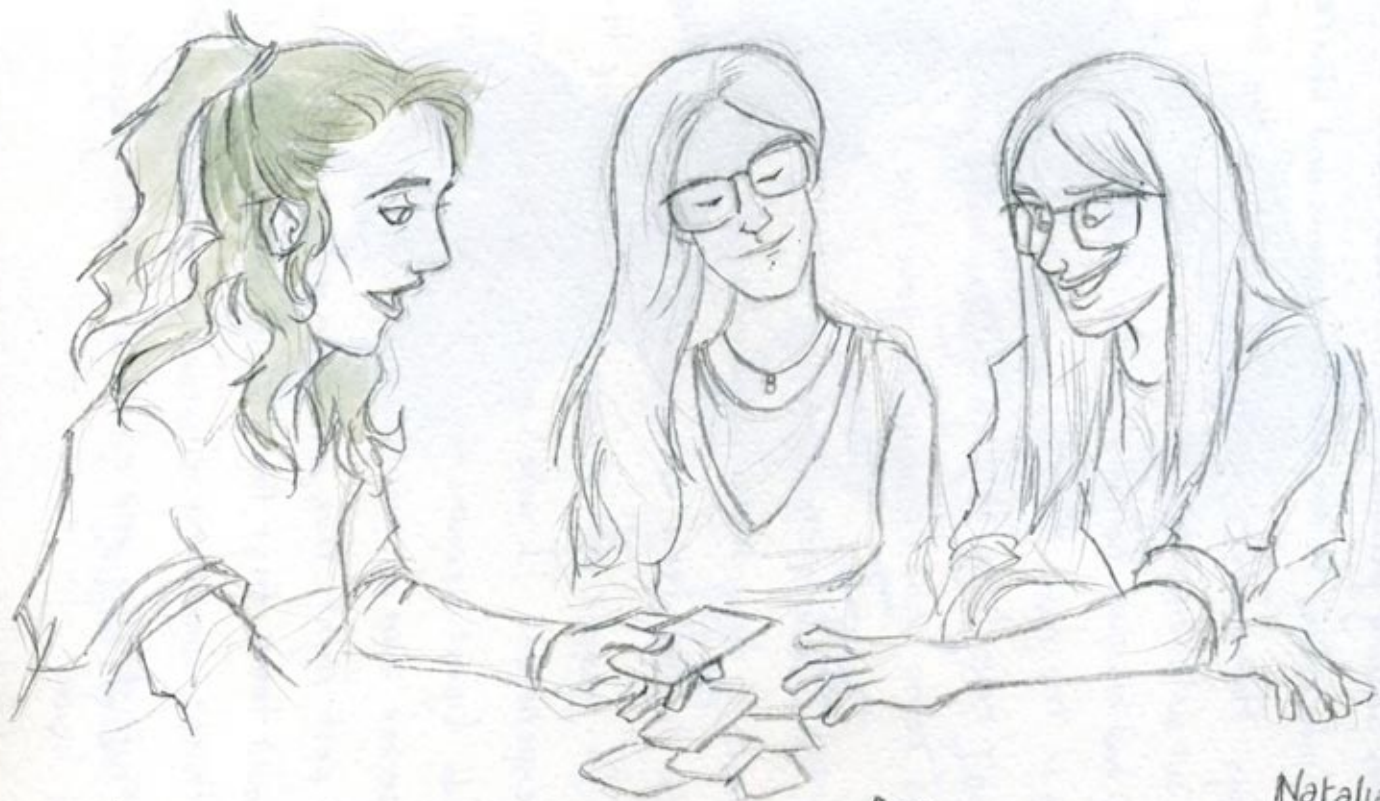
On the next day, we were still feeling playful and Isa and Ana prepared another game for everyone to play in our spare time throughout the week (it only lasted one day 😊) Everyone received a paper with the name of the person we were supposed to kill with a kiss (and without witnesses). Of course, this was the beginning of a growing paranoia that made everyone afraid of being left alone. I managed to kill Aycan and Clara but just when I was doing my best, I was mercilessly killed by Ana. Oh, the irony of the safe project.

Playing Uno





Playing Uno



Aycan

Ana

Natalia



Our fourth day was very, very, VERY intense. We worked on trios sharing personal stories about abuse. It was really interesting to see the connections and shared feelings. Hawva and I were almost telling the same story but with different characters, countries and jobs. Krays had his own horror story too, just as every single person in the room. It's the sad part of all of this... you don't have to go through a traumatic experience to feel some kind of abuse in your life.

After the sharing exercise, Kinga asked for some volunteers to do a drama performance in which we'd be able to apply the knowledge gained from the Wen-Do sessions and change the outcome of those bad experiences. I acted mine with the help of Ricardo (great screams, man!) I didn't plan an unexpected turn of events for my story, I just did what felt right, true and fair for my past self. You could think that the exercise was a bit silly but there's something inherently empowering in the idea of recreating an event and making your voice heard.





After lunch, I went on a short trip with Jurek and Havva in the search of tons and tons of alcohol to spice up our intercultural evening. We took the car, put on some music (*Amor pa' h, amor pa' mi* ♪ ↓ ♪) and filled some boxes with beer, cider and vodka (of course). This short break remains as one of my happiest memories from the training: sun, loud music, beautiful sights, adorable people, the wind in our faces and the expectation of a party at night.

Back in Wataszka, the sunny weather called for a class outside the house. We discussed sexual education while showing the obvious fails of the education systems in our countries. Very self-explanatory and depressing. Poor Weronika had to endure our confusion and silliness during a long quiz in which only one thing was clear:

THERE  
ARE  
6  
BODY  
FLUIDS



THAT  
SPREAD  
HIV!

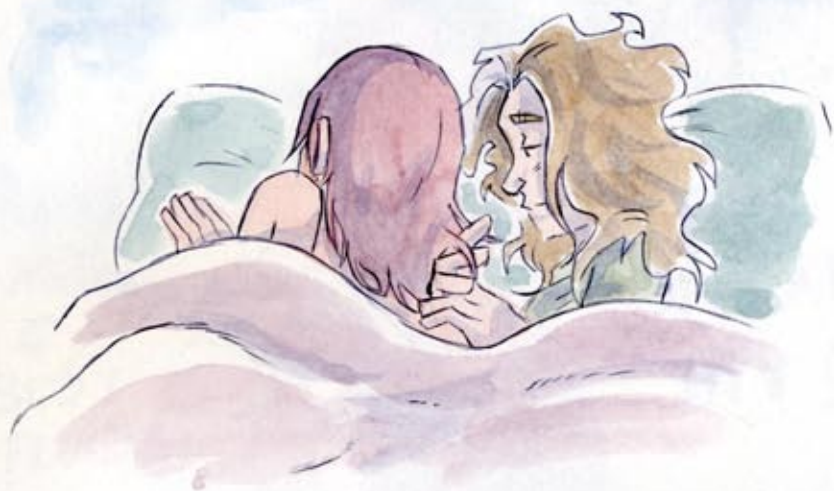


Aycon



Then, the night came. Tons of delicious meals, a beautiful bonfire, a guitar, alcohol and lots of happy people eager to sing, dance and... do the horizontal dance 🍷 (banging! doing the d! makin loooooove! \*with Aycan's voice) It was an amazing night. I'll never forget the rythms of the portuguese team, Kinga's incredible chanting, Ana's rendition to Silvia Perez Cruz, the late success of Bebe's Malo or that sudden kiss (hey there, roomie).

Let's say it was a night to remember. My whole expenence during the training was so fulfilling at so many levels. I'm so grateful. And I still can smell the ashes in my hair when I think of that night.



\* Playing Ederlezi in my head \*



PAPISON  
(PIMPEK)



Fifth and last day of the training. I don't think anyone wanted it to end. After a couple of days being blessed in actual mindfulness. I started to feel as distracted and agitated as at the beginning of the week.


In case this sketchbook is not enough evidence, you should know that I can be the most nostalgic being ever. I have the ability to miss people, places and situations I'm already enjoying. I was trying to live in the present but my feeling love to take over me and I ended up with those big puppy eyes while smiling with longing and gratitude.


On our last day, we reflected on our late hopes, expectations and fears about the training. We gathered in our reflection groups (which I now notice that I hadn't mentioned earlier) and worked on how to raise awareness towards sexual education. The reflection groups were randomly arranged by Kingu and Weronika since the very beginning and were supposed to meet every day after class to exchange thoughts and ideas.





Shane, Havva and Yegane formed my reflection group. I don't know about the rest, but we were something, for sure. Now I regret not having more videos of our meetings. Shane would retreat into his diary for long periods of time while I tried to get something serious from the comedic duo that Havva and Yegane were.

We discussed sex, lesbianism, traveling, theatre... and every once in a while I had to shout Bora! Bora! \* and force Yegane to speak english on her own (You knew a lot more that you showed! ) Anyway, Shane and I were lucky to have Havva there to translate from time to time.

Of course we celebrated our last reflection group meeting outside. We tan, we made a poster and had some coffee. The perfect way to say goodbye. I was glad to be partnered with those three... it was a mess sometimes but it was oh, so worthy. 

\* We'd say Bora! Bora! everytime someone needed to be spoken in english.



" Y entonces aquel día, Julia descubrió que su mechón no sería igual de blanco "

Clara.



That afternoon, we had our last group evaluation. We exchanged beautiful words in the sun and promised to use all the knowledge and contacts from that experience to make the world a better place. It's exciting to write this down because I know that there already are several projects on the way. Poland did wonders to us and the SAFE project was a success. I hope Kinga, Weronika and Anna feel the same.

The training planted the seeds for future collaborations but it also helped people in very intimate and personal ways. I loved watching Seda face her fear of dogs, Jurck and Anna learn turkish; I loved how Raquel opened up and changed from the mid evaluation. Or the way Daniel became a hero and spoke more and more english everyday.

I spent the rest of my spare time running around, taking photos, celebrating everyone, talking to my roommates and feeling grateful. Speaking of roomies, we finally managed to get Cansu out of the room. Just in time for another

bonfire. This one quieter than the previous one, even though there was music (greatest hits!) and even some alcohol that Aycan managed to mix with fruits.

That night, I talked a lot with Aycan. You know the feeling when you want to meet someone and you already feel like you would get along? I felt that on the first days of the training but somehow we managed to miss a lot of chances to talk until that night. I'm glad we made up for it.

Later, I came back to our room. Carla, Yegane and Olga were still awake. We talked and watched photos from the previous days. I snuggled with Yegane and slept like a baby.





On the morning after... hilarity ensues. Our room was like the scene of a sitcom and I was already feeling nostalgic. I had breakfast with Yegane and Cansu between coffee and Bora! Bora! and prepared to leave.

The bus came to pick us up at nine a.m. We took our last photos, said goodbye to our beloved trainers as well as to Sylwia and her family and we left Wataszka. Our two and half our trip to Wrocław was accompanied by sun, heat, a couple of songs and some snoring.

Back in Wrocław, every country had its own planning to follow. We said goodbye to Olga, Krzys and the romanian and turkish team and left our luggage in a locker at the train station. Then, we followed Jurek, who kindly offered to be our guide and help everyone in their free time around the city. The portuguese and cyprus team was quickly divided and I ended up with Ayca and my spanish mates having drinks while Jurek met his friends. I remember these last moments of

intercultural sharing with lots of gratitude. The weather was perfect, we had plenty of time to visit the city (again!) and see some cool places and chill and I could say goodbye to everyone.

↳ (Liar: I never hugged Weronika back in Wataszka 😭)

We spent the rest of the day with Jurek and his friends and then came back to the train station.

I'm sure the taxi driver that took us to the airport thought that we were crazy. Picture four spanish girls screaming in a car. We had so much to gossip and comment after a week being more or less apart.

Of course we didn't shut up until half of the flight.



↳ Jurek is an angel ♥



And this is it.

Except that it's not. This experience has changed me, and I'd like to think that it gave me tools that are going to come with me for the rest of my life. I carried a list of fears that could have left me unable to move or react. My last year was an emotional nightmare and these past two months have been another particular challenge to face. But then, David told me about this project.

David has a great history with Poland and its people and I've always admired his boldness and drive when it comes to travel, do activism or meet new people. It was about time I did something too. As I said, my list of fears was big but I had nothing to lose. Now I can say that none of my fears came true and all my expectations were satisfied. Also, there were lots of things I wasn't even expecting!

I never expected to enjoy our isolation in nature. I never expected to flow with the methods of

non-formal education. I never expected to reflect as much about myself and others. I never expected to share a bed. I never expected to trust as much in so little time. I never expected to love vegan food as much. I never expected to miss fruit!

To sum up, it was an amazing experience, and I know that it's been so powerful precisely because of the state of mind I was in. I don't think I've ever been more inspired, calm and motivated; much less during a stay abroad.

So thank you everyone.

Thanks to Kinga, Weronika and Anna for this beautiful training. You've given me lots of food for thought and tools to carry with me. You've taught me everything I know about non-formal education and Wen-Do. Now I look to you, because everyone needs good role models.



Thanks to my spanish team for making everything easier. Thank you for being so chill, friendly and inspiring, it was a pleasure to travel with you.

Thanks to my roommates for their amusing sense of humour.

Thanks to Hawva for all those loving hugs ☺

Thanks Yegane, for all your trust and care ♥

Thanks Jurek, for your willingness and patience. We don't deserve you. You were an amazing co-trainer and tour guide. You're the coolest.

And finally thanks to David for enriching my life. I don't know what I'd do without you.

July 2018



partner in sickness

Carlo

Roomies

Cansu



Daniel  
☺



Tefide  
and  
Ferhat  
comedic  
duo





Our lovely  
trainers



Wenika  
Joewiak



Anna Jurek



I looove  
their jeans

Kinga Karp



Raquel



"I've never heard any  
fun story starting with:  
Once I had a salad..."

Shane?  
Can't remember  
who said this but  
♡

Shane



Yegane



Terride



Clara





# OTHER MEANINGFUL

Choosing different tables and people for every meal



Listening to Raquel play the guitar on the quiet zone.

Discussing dream meanings with Isa and Aycan



The first day with fruit

Talking with Yegane about exes, coming out and the life of a single mother.  
(In english !!!)



# MOMENTS



Reading Aycan's book outside the house



Wha... What happened last night?



Confessing to Olga (hilarity ensues)

Isa reading my horoscope

→ not finished either





# - LIST of Fears -

- 1st trip without friends / family
- Traveling by plane after a bad experience (in Poland ☹)
- 24/7 of socialising
- Being fluent in english
- Getting sicker
- Being out of place
- Making David proud

FACING  
ALL  
AT ONCE!



# MORE MEANINGFUL MOMENTS

Kinga singing



The death-kissing game



THIS



SSSHAAAA MEEEE



Jurek guiding us with an invisible umbrella



Dancing?  
with Olga



The musical trip with Hanna and Jurek



a massage



They say saudade is unique to Portuguese, impossible to define in English. Nostalgia gets pretty close, but saudade is more complicated. It's the remnant of gratitude and bliss that something happened, but the simultaneous devastation that it has gone and will never happen again. It mixes the feelings of happy wistfulness and poignant melancholy, anticipation, and hopelessness.

Am I there yet?  
by Mari Andrew



this is what I've been trying  
to say ...

Thank You

2019