

# ZEGG-Forum – a journey through the heart of community

## Growing in the eyes of others

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In 1978 the community started with the idea of laying the foundation for a new culture free of violence, in cooperation with nature and all beings. We decided to challenge many given social concepts of our society. We weren't satisfied with the way our society organizes love, sexuality and relationships as it limited our ability to love. In order to transform nuclear families into something bigger, into a community of committed people we needed a strong process to create trust. This was the beginning of what today we call the ZEGG-Forum. ZEGG means "Centre for Experimental Culture Design" and is an intentional community, an ecovillage and a seminar center near Berlin in Germany.

Meanwhile Forum has spread from our community into the world. Many communities in many countries have learned it from ZEGG's Forum trainers and are using it in their own community building process. In our experience is one of the greatest tools to create group cohesion in a communal setting.

When feelings are hidden, life energy will get stuck. Stuck energies breed fear and violence. We aim for a life where feelings and energies are flowing freely; a life where we don't avoid conflicts, but look at them as opportunities to go deeper. We seek a social environment where that supports us to be present with whatever feeling is in us and to stay fluid with it. Will we be present for the pain that we feel, the anger or the joy and then move on? We can study this way of being in the surprising changes of moods of young children. Forum can offer the fertile social "soil" for building community.

ZEGG-Forum is a deep and intimate process of groups with up to 50 participants. The aim is to reveal what is authentic, alive and true. It creates a space of trust and openness between people where participants experience the permission to be who they are and allow others to witness themselves. In many social circumstances "being observed through the eyes of the other becomes the death of my possibilities". The Forum overcomes this difficulty. In this supportive environment the eyes of the others cease to be the death of my possibilities and serve as generators for healing, growth and empowerment. I can experience that I can be fully protected whilst exposing my deep vulnerability, that my greatest protection is my greatest opening as I am accepted and supported by others.

Forum creates greater mutual understanding through contacting this inner and outer journey. On this journey we will of course also meet our encapsulated pains in the shadow. If we stay present we will be able to feel the feelings involved and move on strengthened.

The process supports all involved to go beyond politeness and beyond the common games of hiding and disguise. A person connected with her or his inner truth, no matter how wounded, is always beautiful and the process will create love. "Seeing deeply is loving" is usually one experience of the Forum.

Ever since we started with Forum more than 30 years ago, it has been developed and refined further. It is a method that can be integrated with many other paths. Forum is evolving and today it incorporates the worldview of Non-violent Communication, the soft exploration of

Deep Ecology, the representative work of Family Constellations, and the spiritual practice of presence and others.

How it works:

People who get involved in the Forum generally take one of three vital roles; the presenter or protagonist, the facilitators and the “mirrors”. The group gathers in a circle. The protagonist enters the middle to share what is inside and what moves him or her. They are invited to use the whole space in the middle, feel free to move around, to speak, act and to connect with her feelings. The presenter then shares about her or his experience of a situation. The only goal is to be or become authentic.

The circle supports the presenter with their full loving awareness and presence. Their role is to perceive and to witness the process. It can be very powerful and touching to witness a presenter going deeper. Often topics touch issues for many in the group and their own processes are triggered. We can learn that our emotional processes are similar and whatever happens in the centre is an example for all around.

Facilitators play a central role. They are “midwives” to assist the authentic process of the presenter. Ideally a person of each gender facilitates the Forum. The facilitators alone guide the process and they may intervene at any moment. They are given the trust of the group to guide the process following their experience and intuition. The purpose of the facilitator is to reveal the personal truth of a person, her power, his highest potential in order that he or she and the group can feel it.

When the presenter has finished, others can step into the middle to share what they perceived. We call this a “mirror”. It means participants offer their perspective of what they have seen. It is a gift for the presenter to learn what others think or feel about her and what they have to say, to supplement, broaden and sharpen the issue he or she brought forward. It is the presenter who carries the responsibility to accept or decline a mirror's insight depending on whether it makes sense to her or him or not. Even the best mirror is just a signpost on our path; it doesn't save us from walking the path on our own.

An effective and skillful Forum will bring out our feared shadows with humor, or in some theatrical and unidentified way so that it can be perceived without judgement. Sometimes the energy shift can be very subtle, as when the facilitator invites the presenter to move faster, or to exaggerate gestures, or to put a sound to the feeling. Trying out different ways of behavior and theatrically acting out emotional processes supports the presenter to detach from his emotional states. He learns that he is more than his changing emotions.

This is part of our continuous journey at ZEGG towards a lively space of fluid relationships, conflicts, feelings and friendships. It is both an inner and an outer work fed by the fertile soil of trust and transparency that Forum creates. Living in community helps as it forms a supportive environment for growth and provides ongoing continuity. We see this as our contribution for the world we want to see - a world that forms from deep within the hearts of the people. Forum is part of the glue that keeps our community alive and together, it lies at the heart of the community.