

# **C**hallenge





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# Editorial

Dear readers

Welcome to our magazine, Challenge! Seven weeks ago, we started with this idea: what if we make a magazine about challenges? And here we are now. We have put a lot of effort into this and are very proud of our online magazine.

Why the topic challenge? Well, we face challenges every day in our lives. These challenges could be big or small, but they are there. Taking the bike when it is pouring or daring to say no to a dessert. Removing yourself from an uncomfortable situation. Challenges are everywhere and we cannot escape them.

So does Christian. He was diagnosed with cancer at the age of 25. How do you face such a disease? Toni asked the questions no one else dares to ask. Or a person of colour starting a new business during a pandemic. That is also a challenge. John Agesilas did it. You can learn more about his story in our video we made about him.

Another challenge is standing up for your own opinion. Daring to tell people you are different than the rest. We have met such beautiful people who have dared to do this. And we made beautiful pictures of them. Look at our photo feature in the middle of this magazine.

These are some of the challenges we brought out in the open. And there is more! So, take the challenge and learn more about them in this magazine.

At the end of this editorial, I would like to thank my team. Toni, Iraia, Anne and Chiara: thank you for the cooperation. We had our own challenges to overcome, but look at us now! We have our own magazine!

We now hand our 'baby' over to you. Enjoy the magazine!

*Camille Goris*



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# Who are we?



# The Invincible

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Photo: Pexels

By Antonio Jung

**C**hristian Lang from southern Germany is in the middle of life when the rug got pulled out from under him: Testicular cancer at the age of 25. The cancer had already spread. Actually, it was already too late, doctors told him afterwards. Months of hospitalisation, numerous operations and agonising chemotherapies: Lang beat cancer twice. A story about the psychological challenge of dealing with a deadly disease.

As he looks out on the fields and green forests, Christian Lang imagines what it would be like to be healthy. Exhaustion, diarrhea, nausea: the side effects of chemotherapy went on in his mind. He starts to feel queasy. Now his sister-in-law's grey Seat Alhambra is taking him back all over again to where the torment all began. Shortly before the diagnosis, Lang has moved out of his parents' home, wanting to start an independent life. Then everything becomes different.



It all began with pain during riding the motorcycle. After that he got diagnosed.  
Photo: Christian Lang

# “I felt completely cut down from one day to the next, completely flat. I was just done”

## **Lang belongs to one of many**

Testicular cancer is the most frequent cancer in young men in industrialized countries. It is estimated that Lang is one of 40,000 men living in Germany, who have developed testicular cancer within the past ten years. In the early stages, testicular cancer is practically always cured. Even in advanced stages, there is a good chance of curing. But it is a long way until then.

## **“It felt like torture”**

Lang's cancer had already spread. His lungs were affected by walnut-sized metastases. In October 2014, three months after the diagnosis, Lang and his sister-in-law were on their way to the third cycle of chemotherapy. “Turn around, I don't want to go in there,” Lang says. „You've been through so much already, you can't give up now,“ his sister-in-law insists, convincing him to show up for chemo - despite the nasty side effects. This is how Lang describes the scene seven years later. “The drive back then,“ he remembers, “felt like torture.”

Today, Lang is 33 years old and married. Before the cancer diagnosis, he sawed a whole truckload of wood for his parents and renovated the bathroom for his cousin. Now, in July 2014, he lies helplessly in his hospital and does not know what is happening to him. "I felt completely cut down from one day to the next, completely flat. I was just done," Lang says in a hushed tone. He falls into a hole. The nurses describe him as depressed.

### **The danger of depression**

"In most cases, a cancer diagnosis is a confrontation with big uncertainty," says Lara Hubenschmid, a German psychologist with a Master's degree. The risk of depression is high: "It is assumed that one third of those affected will develop stress-associated mental illnesses such as depression and

anxiety disorders. In younger patients, the number is even higher."

In Lang's case, this depressive state lasts for a week. Then he stops asking himself why it has hit him. He begins to accept the situation. "I then said: 'Hey, this is my disease now. I can't just get rid of it, but I'm fighting for it and I want to stand against it psychologically.'" His faith, but also the great sympathy of his family, friends and acquaintances who write him messages, call and visit him, give him strength. "I then developed an attitude of saying: 'I just don't give cancer a chance and I try to remain optimistic despite everything.'"

### **Lang declares war on cancer**

In psychology, the term resilience is used to describe the psychological resistance of people in crises. People with high resilience manage to maintain or quickly regain their mental health despite crises. At the Leibniz Institute for Resilience Research in Mainz, Hubenschmid is investigating which factors promote resilience in young cancer patients.

**"Positive thinking  
can increase  
well-being, but  
unfortunately  
does not cure  
cancer"**



"In most cases, a cancer diagnosis is a confrontation with big uncertainty"

Photo: Christian Lang



Lying in his hospital bed, Lang remembers his youthful holidays on the farm. How he learned to vanquish the inner temptation, how he pulled calves out of their mothers' wombs. Or how he lied in bed completely exhausted and was fully challenged again early in the morning the next day. "That helped me to say: 'I want to declare war on cancer, no matter what comes and how it comes'," says Lang.

### **Does mental healthiness affect cure?**

Hubenschmid says once you have accepted the illness, it is about activating your own resources that promote resilience. "When have I been at points in my life where I experienced similar things? What characteristics helped me back then? Can I fall back on something there?", she gives examples. In research, this is referred to resilience factors that strengthen resilience. These include, amongst others, social support for the patient, realistic optimism and the activation of positive emotions. "Lang has applied many of these," says Hubenschmid.

Hubenschmid says which factors work best always depends on the individual person though. She emphasises: "Positive thinking can increase well-being, but unfortunately does not cure cancer." Nevertheless, there is an indirect effect: "If I am not feeling well and I have psychological stress, then the probability that I will feel worse physically is higher. That's why it's important to look at the mental health of patients," Hubenschmid emphasises. She criticises that promoting the resilience of cancer patients often plays a subordinate role.

### **God as psychiatrist**

Lang says: "I had God himself as a psychiatrist." But the cancer comes back, Lang has to go through high-dose chemo and a dangerous brain surgery. Still, he remains optimistic holding on to the little things: a phone call, an improved blood count, an encouraging visit: "Even in the darkest hours, there was a ray of hope that I tried to cling to," says Lang. In April 2016, doctors removed the last metastases. Since then, he has been spared trips to chemotherapy. The cancer has not come back.



"Even in the darkest hours, there was a ray of hope that I tried to cling to."  
Photo: Christian Lang

# THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

One of the biggest challenges in the world, is to have a world where everybody can live happily. To accomplish this, the United Nations (UN) made the SDG's.

## WHAT ARE THE SDG'S?

The Sustainable Development Goals are goals set by the UN in 2015. The goals have to be achieved by 2030, as the United Nations Assembly decided. There are 17 goals, whom cover a wide range of topics.

## THE GOALS



### #1 NO MORE POVERTY

With the first goal, the UN wants to end poverty in the whole world.



### #2 ZERO HUNGER IN THE WORLD

No more hunger in the world. This also means food security for everyone, improved nutrition and promotion of sustainable agriculture.



### #3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

The UN wants to ensure everybody of all ages has a good health.



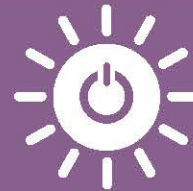
### #4 QUALITY EDUCATION

There should be inclusive and quality education. This includes also promotion for lifelong learning opportunities.



### #5 GENDER EQUALITY

Everybody is treated equally. There is no difference between boys and girls. This includes also empowerment for girls and women.



### #7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

The whole world has access to sustainable, reliable and modern energy. For example, this could be green energy. We have to make sure this kind of energy is also affordable for everyone.



### #6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

Everybody has access to clean water and sanitation.



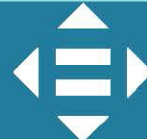
### #8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.



### #9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.



### #10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

The UN wants less inequality. This means inequality within and among countries.



### #11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

This goal focuses on the cities. In the big cities, life should be inclusive, safe and sustainable.



### #12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

Consumption and production of goods should be responsible as can be. This means it should be sustainable.



### #13 CLIMATE ACTION

We should take urgent action against the climate change and its consequences.



### #14 LIFE BELOW WATER

Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.



### #15 LIFE ON LAND

This means protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, among other things.



### #16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development; provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.



### #17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.



THE GLOBAL GOALS

# 7 WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE SDG'S



## EDUCATE YOURSELF

Learn more about the Sustainable Development Goals. Know what they stand for and what they mean. With that in mind, you're more conscious about what you do.

## VOLUNTEER

You can also help, without spending any money. With volunteering, you can help achieve a goal, or even more goals at the same time.

Some examples: tutoring children, helping in an animal shelter or working in a soup kitchen.



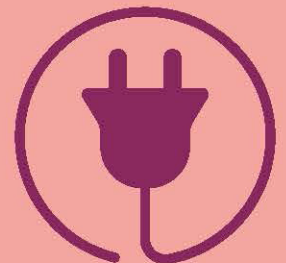
## SUPPORT PROJECTS

There are many projects all over the world who help to achieve the goals. Not all of these projects get funding, so they need money. You can always donate to these projects. But, do a good research before you donate!

## USE GREEN ENERGY

Green energy is the new future. Windmills, water turbines and solar panels are great ways to implement green energy in your life.

Sometimes, it's even cheaper!



## RECYCLE

Another things that is easy to implement in your life! Sorting your garbage is a small but important step into making a better world! Look up how your country, village or city recycles and participate!

## VOTE

Always make sure you are registered to vote. By voting, you make clear what you stand for and what you believe in. Do a good research before voting and make sure you agree with everything a party or person stands for.



## SPREAD THE MESSAGE

By now, you know a lot more about the SDGs and what you can do. Now it's time to spread the message! Because only if everybody helps, there can be a change!

“I heard almost every day that  
I wouldn’t become anything”

By Chiara Toorop



**D**iscrimination and racism, it still exists in today's society. Research shows that more than a quarter of the Dutch people have experienced a form of discrimination. This happens mostly among citizens with an ethnic background. Discrimination also happens in schools. From elementary to university and everything in between. Numbers show that the cases of discrimination in schools have increased. For Tamara Makraou (23), this is not a new phenomenon.

### The next generation

Tamara Makraou is a teaching assistant intern at a high school: ABC Noorderlicht in Amsterdam Noord. She studies at the Hogeschool van Amsterdam and is currently doing a minor in working in the education system. She started this minor because she wants to make a difference in the system. Tamara experienced a harder time in her school career, and she wants to prevent this with the new generation. Studies, from the



Tamara Makraou has experienced racism at school  
Photo: Anne Vandepitte

**“I was very energetic in elementary school and on top of that I am not 100 percent Dutch”**

Social and Cultural Planning agency, show that discrimination in schools was 15% in 2018. Compared to statistics of 2013, which was 8%, this number has almost doubled.

### Not motivating

For Tamara discrimination started at a young age. In elementary school Tamara was treated differently. “I was very energetic in elementary school and on top of that I am not 100 percent Dutch.” Tamara says the teacher in her elementary school had a bias because her father has a Moroccan background. “The teachers only focused on my energy and based their advice on this.” Tamara was often told that she couldn't do it. “When I was in elementary school, I heard almost every day that if I continued like this, I wouldn't become anything.”

## Biases

Tamara says she thinks the teachers had a big bias. “I think it was a combination of two things. My father has a Moroccan background because of this they are already scared you will fall behind. The fact that I was very energetic amplified their bias.” This is also proven in research. Students with a different background experience more discrimination than students with a Dutch background. Other cases of discrimination include reports of a bias based on age and gender.

## Educating schools

In The Netherlands there are a few organisations who have discrimination high on their agenda. One of those organisations is KIS, Kennisplatform, integratie en samenleving. The KIS is made to research how the Dutch community can be stable, with room for differences. Hanneke Felten, expert on discrimination at the KIS institute, says the



Photo: Pixabay

**“Teachers always see energetic kids as a burden, but there are a few who believe in every kid”**

institute knows a lot about the different ways to decrease discrimination in the education system. “We don’t directly inform schools, but we have a lot of partners who are directly in contact with schools,” says Hanneke.

## Safe social environment

One of the organisations the KIS works the most with is Stichting School en Veiligheid. The foundation is here to give schools a helping hand in making it a safe space for everybody going to school. School en Veiligheid focuses on giving information through courses, their website, and conferences. They want to inform the schools about having, and maintaining, a safe social environment for everybody. Besides that, they want to make them aware of what to do if the social environment isn’t safe in their own school.

## Abuse of power

Tamara says that she had a different experience

with every teacher. “I had a teacher in high school who gave me the opportunity to go to a higher level of education than the teachers in my elementary school gave me.” She says she is very thankful for this teacher because it gave her a new chance. “There are always teachers who will see energetic kids as a burden, but there are a few teachers who believe in every kid they teach.” Tamara says that she had a lot of teachers who abused their power. “When I did MBO I had one teacher who told me he would get me kicked off the study if I didn’t do things the way he wanted to.”

### **Old-fashioned**

When Tamara was in high school she didn’t experience discrimination. Now that she is

back as an intern, this hasn’t changed. “The teachers don’t discriminate at all.” Tamara says that there are a few older teachers who are old-fashioned. “Those teachers really believe in their own biases.” She overheard a conversation between two of her colleagues. “I heard the male teacher say to one of the female teachers that she should come help with baking the cakes because he, as a man, didn’t understand anything. He added that the boys in his class also wouldn’t understand.” Tamara says that in the end the boys liked baking the cake more than the girls in the class. “This shows that his prejudice and his old beliefs were not true at all.”





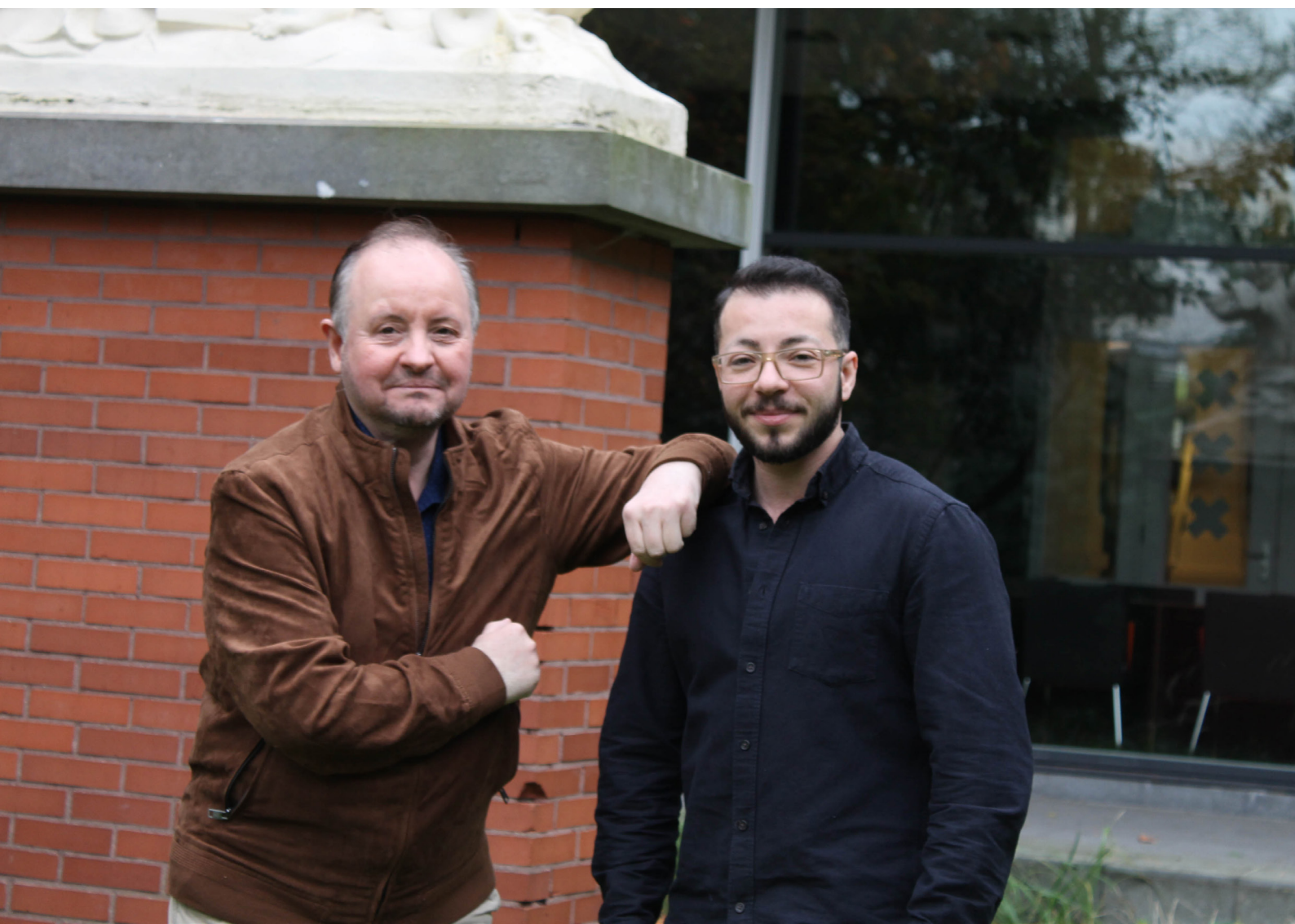
# TransAmsterdam

By Iraia Vieira





TransAmsterdam is a trans pride organisation which was established in 2014. Since 2018 the group is not only focusing on trans pride, but also on trans culture, art and lifestyle. The main goals of TransAmsterdam are empowering trans artists, give them the opportunity to show their work in a comfortable, safe, creative and artistic community. Mahdad and Yvo Manuel Vas Dias are two leaders of the organisation TransAmsterdam.







Yvo Manuel Vas Dias is a trans man, buddhist with a Jews background and one of the promoters of TransAmsterdam. He is 61 years old and has always been involved in the LGBTQ+ movement. Supporting young trans people is very important for him, so they can be who they want to be without any pressure. He wants to offer a safe place for trans people like he had with his closest friends and family.



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Mahdad is a trans man and sportsman. Five years ago he moved from Iran, because it was difficult to start the transition in his country. The government decides when and how to do the transition. In that way it is very hard to get their new identity.



In The Netherlands the law is different. There was no pressure and he could do his transition the way he wanted to do it. Step by step.



A close-up photograph of a bartender's hand holding a martini glass filled with a red cocktail, garnished with a slice of orange. The bartender is wearing a dark jacket. In the background, a Heineken beer tap is visible, with the brand name and logo clearly shown. The setting appears to be a bar or a restaurant.

TransAmsterdam is an active organisation. People in the community often organise activities. Each Friday they meet at the Manor Hotel where they organise the Trans and Friends Inclusion Café. That is not the only thing they do. Not only that, they are also organising some workshops for trans people in the Trans Art School. There is a wide variety of workshops. You can choose between kickboxing, film making, drag queen and king courses...



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# Why do you drink (Nothing)?

By Antonio Jung

*Why it is a challenge to party sober and why we should try anyway.*

Waking up. Where am I? I'm lying upside down in bed, having slept in a thick fleece jacket despite the warm late summer night. Headache. Courageous look in WhatsApp. Having sent boozy memos again. Reconstructing pieces of the evening. How many drinking games did we play at the party?

I don't drink at parties because I like alcohol. I like the effect. Alcohol makes me more confident. Chatting up girls has never been so easy. Feel the beat! Finally, I can dance without feeling uncomfortable and being watched. Party time! Switch off. Being drunk, you forget everything negative. Everything that weighs you down becomes small and doesn't count. You want to maintain the "completely doesn't matter" feeling, don't have to take care of anything, don't have anything to worry about.

I am German and here it is completely normal to get drunk at parties. Germany is one of the countries with very high alcohol consumption worldwide. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the average German over the age of 15 drinks 13 litres of pure alcohol a year. That is 530 bottles of beer or 170 bottles of wine. Getting drunk at parties? For us young people, that's as self-evident as subscribing to Netflix.

But the older I got, the more I began to question getting drunk. What does it say



Photo: Antonio Jung

about me that I have to fill myself up with a drug of masses in order to be different?

When everyone around you is getting drunk, it's much braver not to drink. To go against, instead of with the flow. To mingle with the wild bunch of lunatics. To stay true to your own values. To be able to be loose even without alcohol. To dance, to have fun. Of course, that doesn't happen overnight. But not drinking means getting to know yourself better. To work on ourselves. Without alcohol, we have to learn to deal with our feelings and weaknesses.

Of course, you can't compare a party being sober to a party being drunk. But sometimes you have to be sober at a party to realise how weird drunk people can be - and that can be quite funny as well.

So there are many reasons not to drink. Coming home in the same state and still having had fun is a fulfilling feeling. Just like waking up the next morning without a hangover. On the right side of the bed.

# Starting a business in the Corona crisis

Starting a company is a challenge in itself but imagine opening a new business in a pandemic. This is exactly what John Agesilas did. He founded “Foundation”, a dance and education school which teaches the new generation about hip-hop. With Foundation John wants to keep the dance culture alive among the next generation.. Preparing them for what’s coming and teaching the youth how to cope with the challenge of “life”.

Whenever there is a challenge, there is also an opportunity to face it, to demonstrate and develop our will and determination.  
- Dalai Lama

