



Olivia's journey in ISWI 2023

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Olivia's Journey in ISWI 2023

In this captivating book, join **Olivia**, the wise and adventurous owl, on her extraordinary journey through the ISWI 2023 program.

Over the course of 10 thrilling days, Olivia dives headfirst into a world of knowledge, embracing a multitude of lectures, discussions, workshops, and vibrant cultural events.

From thought-provoking lectures that challenge her perspectives to engaging workshops that ignite her curiosity, Olivia's experiences are nothing short of transformative.

As she soars through the program, Olivia invites you to join her and immerse yourself in an unforgettable adventure of learning, connection, and personal growth. Get ready to be inspired, enlightened, and entertained as you embark on this remarkable journey alongside Olivia and the vibrant community of ISWI 2023.



Hey!

My name is Olivia, I'm the mascot of ISWI 2023 - Mango's sister, the 16th edition of this 30 year old ride. Hop on and join me in this journey through the Initiative Solidarische Welt Ilmenau e.V. week!

Surely a week full of learning, socializing and partying in the beautiful city of Ilmenau; and, of course, lots of thinking about the impact of knowledge, information and data.

So, join me on this journey as we uncover new perspectives, engage in lively debates, and forge unforgettable connections. Get ready for a week that will leave you inspired, enlightened, and hungry for more. ISWI 2023, here we come!



First things first, let's turn on the time machine and zap back to the present moment. I'm ready to dive into a lively conversation with my buddy Niklas Loos, the Finance Responsible from ISWI's Board. He's one of the big names in this exciting adventure, alongside the fabulous Sofia Mikhailova.

Together, Niklas and Sofia are the powerhouses behind ISWI, steering the ship and making sure everything runs smoothly. They're the masterminds behind the scenes, ensuring that this journey is one to remember.

So, let's grab a cup of coffee, sit back, and chat with Niklas about all the thrilling aspects of ISWI.

From the financial wizardry to the intricate planning, he's got all the inside scoop. We'll uncover the secrets, share a few laughs, and get ready to take this adventure to the next level.

Hey Niklas, spill the beans! How does ISWI 2023 stack up against the last one in 2021?

Olivia

Well, Olivia, 2021 was all digital thanks to Mr. COVID-19 and nothing beats a good old-fashioned meet-and-greet!

Niklas

Interesting! Tell me more about this year's theme, "The Impact of Knowledge". What's the big idea?

Olivia

Last Christmas, we got to thinking. We are all students and so we learn stuff every day. But what's the point if we don't use it wisely? So, we thought "The Impact of Knowledge" was a cool topic for this year's theme.

Niklas

So far, which event has been the most exciting for you? Maybe the Intercultural Dancing party?

Olivia

I loved the Intercultural Dance Night! But the food festival, oh boy! Tasted sweets from all around the world, it was awesome.

Niklas

Sweet! How do you manage such a diverse team?

Olivia

Good question, Olivia. We don't really follow the verticalist "boss and employee" thing. We're more about brainstorming and making decisions together.

Niklas

How many folks are on your team? Do you have any big names backing you up?

Olivia

Well, we are around 20 people at the heart of it all. Then, there's the group leaders. Plus, we've got support from the university and FEM for streaming. Also Ilmenau's students clubs which are our go-to for event organization.

Niklas

Neat! Now, let's talk about me, Olivia the Owl. Why'd you pick an owl for your logo?

Olivia

We wanted a critter that screamed "knowledge", and who better than the owl? You're famous for being wise and smart, aren't you?

Niklas

I see, but what about my name? Why "Olivia"?

Olivia

Funny story, we are really into puns so we were thinking "Owl Livia" at first. But then, it transformed into Olivia!

Niklas

Ha, love it! Any parting words for our friends out there? And what about the class of 2025?

Olivia

A big, hearty thank you to everyone who's here. It's a joy to see folks from different corners of the globe, speaking different languages and bringing their unique cultures to the table. To the future class of 2025, we can't wait to meet you!

Niklas

'Youhoo!

Let the journey begin!



Everything started when I saw people coming on Friday morning, carrying huge suitcases throughout the city. It was like a bustling parade of diversity and excitement.

I saw people from alllll over the world, representing more than **70 nationalities**. However it seemed to be full of Algerians! The ISWI Team told me they've got almost 1000 applications, yet after the selection process there were only **184 registered participants**. So if you are reading this **you must be proud** of yourself for making it this far!!

Let's not forget about Online ISWI, a community with more **118 signed up participants and leaders**.

As soon as I flew into the Info-Point, I saw many many ISWI volunteers welcoming the participants with their suitcases. They were guiding them from the station, registering their names, and (streesingly) assigning hosts to everyone. I saw a sweet girl sitting waiting to be hosted and I decided to go speak to her.

Let's look at Diana's journey!



Diana came all the way from Kazakhstan. She took planes, trains, buses, all for the experience of ISWI! It was her first time travelling without her parents, which made her nervous and stressed but also confident to have a great time!

I'm fascinated to see where the participants come from, bringing their culture, food, traditions, music and great vibes.



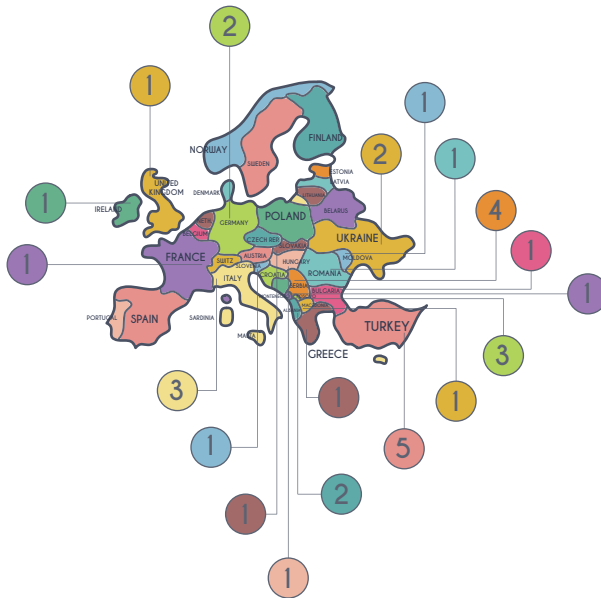
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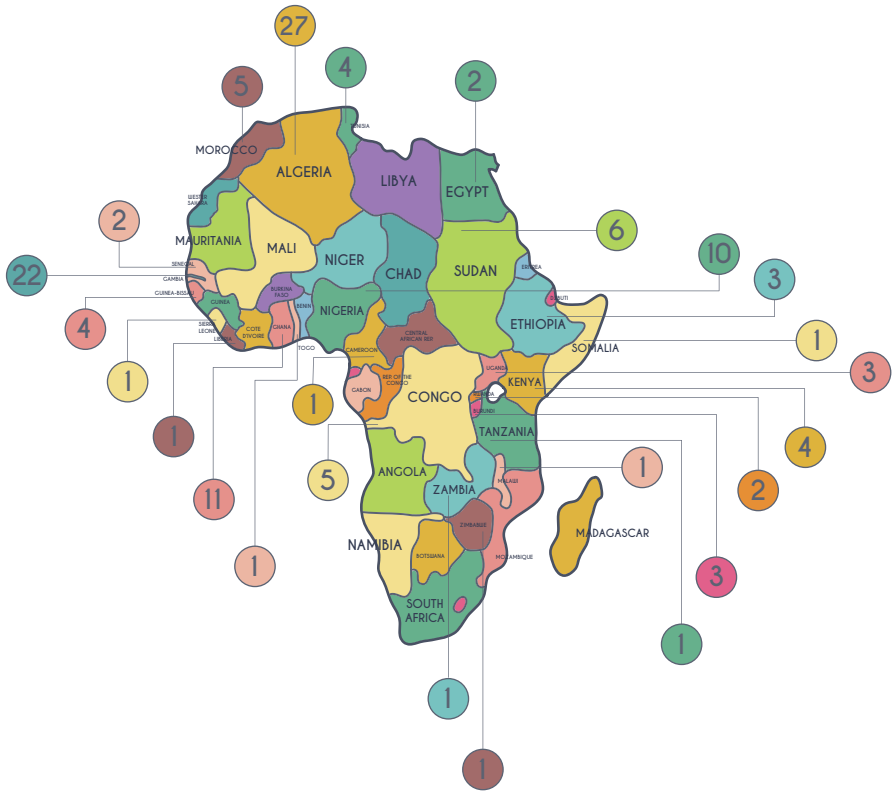
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from **Africa...**



from **Asia...**



Hoot hoot!

You won't believe it, but my fabulous friends have taught me how to say **hello** in countless languages! Prepare to be amazed as I share with you some of these incredible greetings from all corners of the world!



During the whole day, I caught sight of the hosts picking up their participants from Info-Point to provide them a space to get comfortable after their long journeys. Big cheers for the 159 hosts that signed up to become such an essential part of the festival.

Here are some words from Miranda and Hemango about their experience with their hosts:

““ The first day my also argentinian friend and I arrived very late in the evening, so they gave us an empty room in the dorms. As soon as we woke up the next day, we received a message from Natasha, the generous and welcoming Russian ISWI volunteer, telling us she would host us as soon as she had space. We partied, we tried each other's national foods, we learned about culture, she even helped me buy a suitcase when mine broke, she was the best! ””

Miranda

““ My host, Johann, an outdoorsy german gentleman, was the most amicable man ever. He was kind, and made us coffee in the mornings. A non interfering cool guy, one day he took us for a hike! ””

Hemango

After speaking with them, I went flying around curious about what activities were also taking place on that vivid first day of ISWI. I was lucky to see the team leaders meeting. It was their first time getting to know each other in person after their numerous virtual meetings. They were getting essential information and guidance in order to lay out an unforgettable learning experience.

On Saturday morning, I woke up and flew around until I stumbled upon the “**get to know the group leader-participant**”. This was the first activity the participants took part in: meeting their leaders and getting an idea of the objectives of their selected group work.

Right after that, everyone got in their colorful traditional costumes (side note: the chinese group looked stunning) and went out in the streets for the **intercultural carnival** along with a moving dj.

The party went down from Humboldtbaum to Wetzlarer Platz. It was a cheerful moment where the participants were able to connect with locals in the city festival, dance afro and latino bits and overall enjoy the surprisingly sunny weather that dressed Ilmenau. It was as if the city/Ilmenau itself was celebrating the beginning of ISWI !!!!



I also saw as the radio and media team installed their machines and broadcasted the whole thing, cool lads!

Drone shot of Carnival
Credits: Shrikant Dubale



Hey!

Listen to **what the mayor told me** about his first experience with ISWI.

He pondered around how he remembers his excitement when he went to his ISWI in 2003 as a student. Even though the Technische Universität Ilmenau is an international university, he told me he was like “wow!”, very impressed when he saw the international scene at ISWI.

He said that, today, as a mayor, he is also very impressed and enjoying the city festival along with the ISWI carnival.

He briefed me that he hopes that all of the participants and locals enjoy the weekend in Ilmenau, which he is sure they will.

Around midday, Wetzlarer Platz I began smelling something mouthwatering as the **World Food festival** started.

I saw the participants having an absolute blast, making new friends, uniting through flavors and tasting international food still in their traditional costumes.

The Platz had multiple meals and snacks, from North African Harissa, to species from India and sweets from Latin America.

In the evening, the city was filled with music and parties. From techno and house, to 2000s vibes and 80s funky hits, dance music. What a time to embrace collaboration and celebrate diversity!

Media talking about us
Credits: insudthuringen.de



In the quiet sunny Sunday morning before I unfolded my wings I checked **ISWI's instagram account**, @iswi.e.v i, to see what new adventures could I get on to. The social media folks must have worked a lot because that account was filled with fresh new content!



Credits: Yasaman Jalaei,
Niko Kran Samadhi Ghosh

I decided to fly through a couple of the groups, as it was their first day of work. I stumbled upon the **Climate Change Working Group** just as Sherief Emam, a name even us owls know, started the meeting presenting some very interesting questions. Amir Abdelfattah divided the participants into two teams like two flocks of birds going their separate ways. Team 1 had to come up with arguments and policies for putting up solar panels that could power a whole forest of human nests. Team 2, on the other hand, had to defend the old ways of conventional energy sources. Their task was not just to win the argument but to learn from each other and gain understanding about climate change, super!



As the session continued, I admired the ambitious projects proposed by the sub-groups, a mix of engaging surveys, videos, and presentations about the climate change scenario. Their enthusiasm for highlighting regional diversity and individual action against climate change resonated with my owl heart. It's obviously important to me as I am a part of the wildlife these humans are taking energy from! The group seemed concerned as well, especially with the complexity of the chain of action and the future of their next generations.

Let's hear what one of the participants had to say about the Group Work:

“ Hello! I'm Musa from Egypt originally. I come from Turkey right now for the ISWI program. I'm participating in the group of Climate Change which is very essential and very sensitive for our future generations, therefore it's a good experience to meet each other and share experiences. ”





Engaged in these deep discussions I decided to fly towards the **Peacebuilding and Philosophy and Ethics Co-Joined Group Work**. The collaboration between the "Peacebuilding" and "Philosophy and Ethics" groups was an epic mash-up of knowledge and ethical dilemmas. I was surprised by their effective use of respectful dialogue to discuss local conflicts that have a global impact such as the Ukraine-Russia War, LGBTQ+ Rights issue in Guatemala, conflicts in South Sudan, etc. Given the state of my existence as an owl, I didn't know about this "Socratic Method" they were using. So, they explained to me that the Socratic method is a form of cooperative argumentative dialogue between individuals, based on asking and answering questions to stimulate critical thinking and to draw out ideas and underlying presuppositions.

And that was just the beginning! We took on the challenge of a Model United Nations simulation. Becoming diplomats, we navigated the twists and turns of the Libyan conflict.

Diplomacy was in the air as we engaged in debates and negotiations. And to add even more excitement, we dove into scenario-based peacebuilding. We put our problem-solving skills to the test, brainstorming innovative ways to bring peace to the world. As true philosophers, we pondered the ethics of knowledge. How should we handle information? What impact does it have?

Minds were stretched, perspectives clashed, and critical thinking soared high!

After the Group Works ended, I flew to see the participants having the delicious **meals** at Mensa.



Afternoon to groove, no? I headed towards the **Music Group Work** which had turned into a global jam session. Imagine this: cool beautiful souls from 7 different countries all vibing on the same beat. The best part? Most of them had been strangers just a couple days ago! and now, they're practically a band!

Their fingers were dancing over guitar strings, keys, and drum pads, playing all sorts of tunes. They were even cooking up a special medley for a grand performance - I was waiting for that show! And the best part? They captured their jam session on video! The gang was so jazzed up, they decided to stick around late just to practice and get every note perfect. Talk about dedication!

This proves that knowledge and melody can build bridges, not walls. Music doesn't care where you're from or what language you speak. What a hoot to see music breaking down barriers and bringing everyone together under a common goal.

I needed to maintain all the vibes up after all the groove from the Music Group Work, so I had to fly and fly until I found the **Dance and Theatre Group Work**.

I looved their vibrant flurry of action. Try imagining twelve artistic souls from eleven different countries gathering into a whirl of colors, sounds, and movements!

I saw them as they mirrored each other's movements in an improvisation exercise that felt like a beautifully choreographed game of follow-the-leader. This boosted their self-confidence and brought them closer, creating a silent symphony of movements and emotions.



They turned into their inner selves too, connecting with their deepest emotions through meditation and dance in nature. From body percussion to traditional dances of their home countries, every exercise added a unique note to their dance symphony.

And what's a dance without music, right? They teamed up with the Music Group Work for a day, their performance lighting up the stage with live music. Following this rhythmic rendezvous, they pondered over intriguing questions like "Where does the connection between dancing and knowledge lie?" and "Could dance exist without music?"

Following dinner, I joined the thought-provoking discussions on the **Panel “The Burden and Responsibility of Investigative Journalist”** with the investigative journalists Sylke Gruhnwald and Elena Loginova along with the researcher Prof. Dr. Jessica Kunert. It was a very interactive panel, as they used Menti.com to get answers and thoughts from the audience.

The first speaker, Sylke Gruhnwald, talked about her work as an investigative reporter based in Switzerland. She pondered around the often association of neutrality and objectivity in journalism and claimed that it was a much utopian idea to achieve in reality.

The second speaker Elena Loginova, also an investigative journalist but from Ukraine, is involved with the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting project (OCCRP) and talked about the importance of fact checking.

The last speaker, Prof Dr. Jessica Kunert, from the University of Mainz brought her research discussion on the problems faced by especially female investigative journalists, the ways in which technology helps them.



After those remarkable discussions, in order to rest my owl brain from all those complex human concepts, right after the panel, I decided to spread my wings and dive right into the fun of the **Intercultural Game Night**.

Firstly, I was given a cultural bingo card that had me asking the participants for the most random sorts of information to be able to fill it. Trust me, it was crazy fun! Secondly, there was the strategy games room. I pondered around games like Love Letters, Wizard, and others. I was busy as a bee. Or should I say, busy as an owl! I then flopped into the takeaway games room.

Some folks were laughing over a game of Wavelength and on the other I caught an eye at the crafty folks, and I watched, amazed, as paper and glue turned into beautiful creations. Whoosh! I zoomed into the dexterity games area. Jungle Speed was a riot, and the fast-moving games like Ubongo had everyone on their toes (including me and my wings!)

The talking games room was next, and it was noisy! The games had everyone whispering and guessing. If laughter could be measured, this room was off the charts! In the "get to know" games room everyone was swapping stories, laughing, and playing games like Two Truths & One Lie. Next, I swooped into the video games room: everywhere I looked, folks were hunched over screens, having a blast with games like Gartic Phone and GeoGuessr.

The social deduction games room was a mystery-filled adventure, and I couldn't miss the Werewolf Mafia. Language activities had everyone chattering away in Spanish, Hindi, Bengali, Persian, and Arabic. It was like a United Nations meeting, but with way more of a vibe! Finally, I fluttered over to giant games. Imagine a bunch of humans playing Twister and Ludo, all tangled up and laughing. In a nutshell, the intercultural game night was like a giant playground for all. We had games, laughter, new friends, and tons of fun.

Next day, as the sun started to appear in the horizon of our familiar Ilmenau, I opened my eyes along with the slack app to see the programme for the day. Luckily, without a miss, the ISWI Team had uploaded Monday's plan the day before.

It was a day full of activities! Second work day for the groups and the highly anticipated Intercultural Dance Night.

I decided to tune on the **ISWI Radio**, broadcasted by none other than Ilmenau's finest, Radio hsf!



First, there was the classic morning show: news from all corners of the globe came flying in. Next up, the cultural shows took center stage. My feathers were ruffled with excitement as I listened to the World Food Festival segment. Then it was time for the Sound and Culture show broadcasting music for all over the world.

Throughout it all, there was music, music, and more music. Beats from every corner of the world kept me company as I took in the festival. Also, the ISWI Talk show brought on all sorts of interesting guests. It felt like I had a bird's-eye view of the whole shindig, all from the comfort of my own nest.

Of course! Let's not forget the QR code for the podcasts that the radio broadcasted!

Finally out of my nest, I followed the fun and loud **Photography Group Work** as they strolled around campus with their cool cameras.

I was introduced to a whole new world of capturing reality through a lens. Participants from South America, North Africa, Europe, and Asia, all chirping away about something called visual storytelling.

The group arranged a discussion round accompanied by a presentation on the basics of photography. To my surprise, the subject was as intricate as the patterns of my own feathers. The first part of this discussion navigated through the more technical aspects of the art - things like hardware specifics, including aperture, shutter speed, and ISO.

Following that, we delved into the artistic aspects of photography, covering vital techniques like composition, lighting, and framing. The most magical part? They weren't just taking pictures, they were creating memories. Each photo was a story to be told at the closing ceremony, talk about added value!



After learning how to greet in many languages, I couldn't help but feel intrigued: Could I become the first multilingual owl? To figure it out, I decided to spread my wings and join the **Language Group Work**.

This Group Work had participants from nine different nationalities and a combined knowledge of ten languages. It was incredible to witness the exchange of languages and cultures, as everyone taught and learned each other's mother tongues.

One of the group discussions revolved around the topic, "Is English the language of the world?" It was a thought-provoking conversation that explored the influence and implications of English as a global language.



As the session progressed, we narrowed down the final topic for our group presentation: "Connecting languages and cultures to preserve identity: A socio-linguistic approach for inclusion." But the discussions didn't stop there.

We also engaged in a lively debate on the issue of "AI replacement of human translators." It was a hot topic that sparked passionate arguments from both sides. To add a touch of fun and friendly competition, we had a Language Olympics to test our languages skills and knowledge which was awesome, right?

The Language group provided a platform for us to explore the intricacies of language, culture, and identity. It was a journey of learning and discovery that left me inspired to continue my quest to become the multilingual owl I aspired to be!

Invested in this day full of new knowledge I hovered over the **Politics Group Work**. I found them kicking off with some icebreaking chatter, getting to know each other before diving right into their work. They watched some informative videos that got their brains buzzing and then started discussing which issues they should focus on. Right from the start, it was all about learning, laughing, and lively debates!



Soon they got down to business, brainstorming their vision for the final presentation. They had their sights set on a Model UN (MUN) format for their presentation. The topic was “Responsibility of the largest polluters towards the most affected”, and they took on the challenging task of navigating global affairs, diplomacy, and blocs, all while holding formal and informal caucuses. The group leaders took on the roles of chairpersons, while the participants turned into delegates, representing their countries on this crucial topic. The room was full of ideas from Algeria, Brazil, China, Egypt, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Hungary, India, Italy, Kazakhstan, Turkey, and the UK.

Also, the Group chased the heavy stuff with a **treasure hunt**, a team-building exercise that was like a fun side quest in their main mission.

In the end, everyone walked away not just with newfound knowledge but also lifelong friendships, or a global network, if you will. It was like they were ready to swoop down and change the world together!

And how could politics function without having a conversation about the economy? For this reason, after hanging out with the **Politics Group Work**, I spotted the Economy Group Work huddled by a sparkling lake.

First, I fly near the Group Leader to sit and chat about what were the plans for the day.

Mohab: "Today we are planning to have a debate about Digital Transformation of the Economy. After that, we are having a Team Building activity where we will give each other some cards to provoke discussions related to economy".

Seemed like a joyful ride! Of course, I got on board.

Participants were sharing tales from their home countries, stirring up the lake with their big ideas about GDP and such. It was a giant puzzle of how different countries dealt with their dough.



In the midst of these intense discussions, they took a fun turn with games like the human knot. They twisted and turned into complex shapes, learning to talk it out, untangle their knots, and work together as one. The game brought chuckles and cheer to their circle, adding a strong thread of camaraderie and a buoyant atmosphere to their gathering.

All in all, the group was a riot of laughter, vibrant discussions, and team spirit. They were on an unforgettable journey, fueled by debates, fun games, and a healthy dose of knowledge. As an owl, I must say, they knew how to have a real hoot!



When I heard about the **Treasure Hunt** at the ISWI festival, I got really excited! The group leaders split us into six groups, each one ready to get all Sherlock Holmes and everything. The clues were riddles, which made it even more fun. Gen Z going on as well, as we could use Google to find out where to go next. Who said old owls can't learn new tricks! Every new place had a little game, it was like a game of tag, but with more thinking and less running.

Judges were watching us the whole time, making sure we played fair. It was a tough competition, but everyone was happy and having a good time. It wasn't just about winning; it was about the fun we had along the way!

Finally, three winners were chosen, looking all proud of themselves. Conan from India, who helped organize the treasure hunt, said, "It was fun for us to plan the treasure hunts and see how excited everyone was." I couldn't have said it better myself, Conan!

After all that hard work I put my owl brain into learning about human activities and institutions, I was more than ready to put my wings into dance mode in the Intercultural Dance Night. The campus was filled with music and dance from all over the world, and I couldn't keep myself from going from place to place, trying to take in all those awesome moves my human folks were doing.



Intercultural dance night
Credits: Umar Khalid

My feathers ruffled with excitement as I moved to the vibrant beats of Kpop and Jpop, mirroring the crowd's rhythmic energy, adding my owl-twist to the mix.

Bachata, Salsa, Reggaeton and Zouk's rhythms caught my attention, leading me into a soothing, feather-ruffling sway following Carla's moves. Basking in the tropical vibes, I was delighted by how naturally I flowed with the music. After the warm sway, the sophisticated waltz and ballroom dance provided a refreshing contrast.

My next stop was the world of hip hop, the raw urban beats stirring something new within me. Embracing the rhythmic waves of Afrobeat, I spread my wings wide, feeling the music vibrate through me. I performed acrobatic twirls in the air, inspired by the Acro Yoga stunts beneath me. I noticed a cheerleading squad, their energy resonating with mine, adding to the infectious atmosphere of the festival. Bollywood's colorful charm drew me in next, the crowd moving as one, driven by the pulsating beats.

Intercultural Dance Night led to a wild night on campus, I found myself hopping **from club to club**, enjoying the music and sipping on beers. But as the night went on, I realized I had lost my way. Panic set in, but then I remembered the Info-Point number. I quickly dialed their number, and to my surprise, they answered immediately even though it was 3 am! They were there, available 24/7 to help with any needs or emergencies. Their cheerful voices reassured me that I would be taken care of.

When I arrived at the Info-Point, they greeted me with warmth and kindness. They made sure I was okay and guided me safely back home. But they didn't stop there. They asked if I was still hungry, and before I knew it, I was feasting on delicious watermelon and homemade delights prepared by the mama of one of the Organization Team, lovely queen.

They were the unsung S-heroes, always there to lend a helping hand and ensure our well-being. It was a night I would never forget, not just for the wild partying, but for the incredible kindness and support I received from the Info-Point Team.



A new and miraculously sunny day in Ilmenau, I had to get back to the Group Works.

I decided to head down into **Media Group Work**. The group was a beautiful patchwork quilt of participants from all over the world - Kazakhstan, Thailand, Turkey, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Italy, and Bangladesh - creating a wonderfully vibrant atmosphere that hummed with intercultural exchange.

With my owl super sonic sense, I found out that they had spent their days hooting about the enormous impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on media production and consumption. The debate was as thrilling and just as deep as all the other Group Works I visited. They also swooped into action, planning a fascinating "test" involving students from TU Ilmenau and ISWI participants. Here's where it gets fun! They presented the students with two pictures - one a product of human creativity, and the other a masterpiece by an AI.

The challenge was to pick out the AI-generated image - a little game of spot the difference with a high-tech twist! The results were as surprising as finding a squirrel in your nest, and they've decided to showcase this exciting venture in a catchy Vox Pop video format. The Media group, with their unique blend of AI, media, and a dash of fun, truly knows how to put on a show!

Next and on the same topic, I got my feathers into the **Technology, Transparency and Privacy Group Work**. The merged folks flew through ideas trying to gauge the pros and cons of Technological Security and Artificial Intelligence. They say knowledge comes with responsibility, so I was ready to embrace it. We also delved into the intriguing life cycle of technological products, from the creation of apps to the development of websites. We asked ourselves, what does it mean to be responsible in the realm of technology? How can we ensure its sustainability, not just for us but for future generations?



In this group, we took a unique approach. We dove deep into the idea of responsibility towards technology, examining it through a country-wise lens. It was a fascinating exploration of how different nations tackle the challenges of technology and its impact on society. Together, we navigated the complex world of technology, embracing the responsibility that comes with it and ensuring a sustainable and innovative future. Let's show the world that even an owl can handle the challenges of the digital realm with wit and wisdom.

Whoosh! With the rush of excitement for the digital world, I flew and landed into the Internet Group Work lively discussions. Their chatter was all about the tangled web of concerns that folks have about surfing the internet.



They poked around various topics, asking each participant to chirp in about the situation in their own countries. Quite the hoot to learn how some governments put up digital fences just to maintain a shiny image! Next, we watched "The Social Dilemma," a documentary that showed us how we've all become unwitting lab rats in the vast experiment of social media. Each click, each like, each share, just turning the wheels of someone else's profit-making machine. Crazy. Also, one of the group members also showcased his work on preserving the heritage site of Mohenjo Daro belonging to the Indus Valley Civilization through Artificial Intelligence and portraying it through Virtual Reality.

With the excitement of this media and internet related Group Work I decided to open my computer to see how the online groups were doing so dived into the digital adventure online ISWI offers. I found out the online session was making things look alive, which was very advantageous for those who couldn't join the festival in Ilmenau. My feathers were ruffled with excitement when I realized so many face-to-face group works had an online version: Gender Equality, Climate Change, Education, Media and Politics.

I hopped on the **Education Online Group Work**, with a crew of seven bright sparks from around the globe. The room was buzzing with debates about making education a fun-filled adventure with social media and nifty online tools. As we say in the owl kingdom, every bird flies in its own way!. Our speaker invited us to share our expectations and opinions, spun diagrams and flowcharts like they were yarn, explaining things as clear as a midsummer's day.

Overall, I saw Webex rooms full of interaction, concept boards, colorful posts-its and games, reflection and critical thinking on the topics discussed. Wild, isn't it?



In the evening my owl ears had a blast as I attended the **Open Air Concert** on campus. We were blessed with three amazing bands taking the stage: VeraJoy a jazz/pop to start things up, a little bit of punk and rap by Tramfresser, and lastly the vivid Skyline Green. So, there was Jazz that swept you off your feet, pop that made you pop your feathers, and reggae that rolled in like a warm summer breeze. Not to mention, the funk that made you feel like a disco owl, salsa that sizzled like a worm on a hot sidewalk, and rap that was sharper than an eagle's eye.

And let me tell you, these weren't just any regular old birds singing in a tree. Their tunes had a groove that could make even a woodpecker stop in its tracks and start tapping its toes.

With a little bit of rain and a bit of cold weather, the firstly quiet and restful audience ended up becoming a full dance party under the starlit night sky. And the best part? While bobbing and weaving to the music, it was easy to meet other festival-goers. Between the beats and melodies, friendships were formed, laughter shared, and memories made.

The day after the concert was a whole different vibe. The participants got some rest from the Group Works and its tireless activities and discussions to immerse themselves in Lectures, Panels, Workshops and a must-see Science Show.

Firstly, I have to admit that **Keynotes Lectures and Discussions at Dies Academicus** could sometimes be a bit boring for me. However, my curiosity to know what's happening around the festival led me to stumble upon Sofia at the info point. She was buried under piles of papers, and when I asked her about the discussions, she paused, looked at me, and then began to share the highlights.

She told me that the discussions focused on the intriguing intersection of artificial intelligence and ethics. The keynote speaker, Prof. Ute Schmid from the University of Bamberg, delved into the theoretical aspects of AI. She explored ethical considerations, future challenges, and provided a general overview of the field.

But that wasn't all. Sophia eagerly informed me that Dr. Daniel L. Chen from the University of Toulouse took the audience on a more detailed journey. He opened up the discussion on the current perspective of AI in the Western world and how it might work in other countries. The conversation must have been quite thought-provoking and eye-opening.

I found it very related to the topic of the festival, after all, as the ISWI folks said, "with great knowledge comes great responsibility".

Next, it was time for the workshops. It was a great opportunity to get new skills and extend my owl knowledge. Participants could participate in two of them, but me, the rebellious owl, had a bit of everyone. There were so many! Just to tell you some of the topics, I flew around “Engineers without Borders”, “Dialogue”, “Music”, “Lego building”, “Photography”, “Greenpeace”, “Organizing the conference”, “German Language” and “Radio Workshop”.

As an owl myself, I was mesmerized by the Virtual Reality and Cultural Heritage Workshop, these humans are onto something with all of this technology! And it is also great that they are merging their history with the crazy technological machines! If only we could make it happen with the history of owls.

I flew around until I rested my wings to have some words about with Sajid Raz

“Basically, due to the climate change and the floods these sites were destroyed, so we have recreated them in virtual reality with the help of UNESCO and a team of engineers. This way we maintain and reinforce its memory for many generations.”

Such a cool project!

As an owl, I must admit that science can sometimes be a bit boring for me. Do you feel the same way? Well, let me tell you, the Science Night at ISWI was a real hoot! They promised to make science fun with **Science Slam**, and boy, did they deliver!

Researchers from TU Ilmenau and other universities took the stage to present their scientific discoveries in the most entertaining way possible. Each presentation lasted about 10 minutes, but it felt like a scientific stand-up comedy show. They had us laughing, gasping, and even scratching our feathery heads in wonder.

But the highlight of the night was when Mira Rochyadi-Reetz took the stage. She brought a whole new level of humor by comparing the quality of news between Germany and her home country, Indonesia. I couldn't stop flapping my wings with laughter!

The Science Show with Prof. Peter Scharff, a passionate chemist and the former rector of TU Ilmenau, was another mind-blowing experience. I never thought I would be laughing and clapping my wings at a science event, but the Science Night at ISWI proved that science can be exciting, engaging, and downright hilarious. Who knew scientists could be such entertainers? I guess even us owls can be pleasantly surprised.

As the night came to a close, we had the opportunity to vote for our favorite scientist. It was like being an owl Simon Cowell, critiquing their performances and choosing our favorite. It was a tough decision, but Mira definitely won over our hearts with her wit and charm.

I was so curious about many exciting and explosive experiments that completed the program at the Dies Academicus. The Science Night at ISWI showed me that science can be full of surprises and laughter, making it an unforgettable experience for this owl.



New day, new experiences to chase. It was time to visit some more Group Works!

As an owl venturing into the realm of **Gender Equality**, I joined their Group Work led by a fantastic leader. We dove headfirst into discussions on gender inequalities across different countries. Participants from Nepal, Germany, Peru, Mexico, and more shared their stories and perspectives, making our conversations truly enlightening.

We did so many things, we decided to create a board game that challenged gender stereotypes. We had some serious debates on media objectification and important issues like dowries and domestic violence. We poured our hearts into brainstorming ideas for the final presentation and settled on an epic board game for ISWI week. We dug into acceptance rates for male and female applicants in different programs, collecting data like true detective owls. The energy was infectious, and we knew our presentation would be a real hoot!

In the end, it was a remarkable adventure filled with discovery, collaboration, and empowerment. The passion and dedication of the participants left a lasting impression on me. ISWI provided a platform for meaningful discussions and creative expressions, and I'm proud to have been a part of it.

Now, as a wise owl, maybe I'll consider applying for a PhD in Gender Studies. Who knows what exciting discoveries await me next?

After giving my farewells to the Gender Equality Group Work, I had a moment of thought after finding out there are some other identities to be known, not only two! Crazy, us, the owls, we only have one.

Curious on this topic I went to the **Social Justice and LGBTQIA+** Group Work. Picture this: the Social Justice and LGBTQIA+ groups decided to join forces, and boy, did it make for some mind-blowing discussions. We had people from all corners of the world, representing countries like the US, Serbia, Sri Lanka, India, Montenegro, Albania, Turkey, Mexico, Romania, Germany, and Pakistan. Talk about a global party! We discovered that even with our cultural differences, the struggle for human rights unites us all as well as the drive to change the world for the better.



We had some fantastic guest speakers who brought wisdom to the room. Susan, a lovely lady, was ready to drop some knowledge bombs on human rights, while Maria, an amazing speaker, shared her experiences as a trans woman in Germany. These ladies knew how to enlighten and entertain at the same time! You all made this journey unforgettable! We laughed, we learned, and we made a difference. Cheers to creating a world where acceptance and love triumph!

Last but not least, I had to take a look at the **Law and Justice Group Work**. I knew that justice and wisdom would intertwine in our journey. With each discussion and activity, I silently guided their exploration, for I am the embodiment of wisdom and insight. Together, we explored the fundamental principles of justice and its impact on society. We discussed the significance of data privacy, human rights, and the legal frameworks that govern our lives. With each exchange of knowledge, we sought to create a more just and inclusive world, where fairness and equality prevail.



The group's commitment to uncovering the truth and upholding justice resonated with my very essence. Throughout our journey, I shared my timeless wisdom, reminding them of the importance of fairness and impartiality. I watched as they discovered the connection between my presence as an owl and the concept of justice itself. Both symbolized wisdom, integrity, and the pursuit of equilibrium in a world full of complexities.

Next, it was the **Fishbowl discussion on “How to build a civil society”**. As an owl, the word "fishbowl" used to stress me out because I would immediately imagine my sea friends locked inside. So, when I saw in the program that there was going to be a fishbowl discussion at ISWI, I wasn't sure if I should attend. However, they assured me that it was a method for discussing topics, and this time it would focus on civil society and its significance in social and political issues.

The fishbowl discussion delved into specific topics related to civil society and politics, including human rights, democracy, and social justice. The aim was to encourage commitment and participation on these important matters, with the audience playing a crucial role in engaging with the speakers and questioning the points being discussed. The event took place in a circular setup, creating a comfortable environment for both speakers and participants to share ideas with each other. This inclusive arrangement fostered open and meaningful dialogue. Despite my initial hesitation, I decided to spread my wings and attend the fishbowl discussion. Looking back, it was a valuable experience.

That night, seeking a change of scenery, I fluttered over to the infopoint in search of excitement. To my delight, I discovered that it was **Movie Night** and "Everything Everywhere all at once" was being screened. This highly anticipated film had been on my must-watch list for ages, I knew it would be an insanely enjoyable, hilarious, and absurd experience.

So, armed with my popcorn, I settled into a cozy perch and prepared myself for an unforgettable movie adventure. "Everything Everywhere all at once" took me on a wild ride filled with laughter, surprises, and profound moments. The storytelling was brilliant and moving, transforming ordinary life problems into an exuberantly weird and love-filled journey. The movie's satirical and ridiculous moments added a reverential layer of cleverness, inviting me to reflect on the absurdity of life itself. Lights, camera, action!

In the last days of ISWI my owl brain was filled with memories and new knowledge. I talked to some of my new international friends about the **Keynote Lecture on Scientific Storytelling**. And let me tell you, it sounded like a blast!

Storytelling is an ART, and not only me can be an artist! But let me tell you about this amazing lecture I attended on scientific storytelling by Gabriel Philip Santos. It was like stepping into a whole new world of captivating communication!

Santos was all about making science exciting and accessible. He showed us how to use interactive storytelling techniques to engage the audience. It's like adding a dash of magic to the mix. By structuring the information in a story format, science communicators can make those complex concepts easier to grasp and relate to. It's all about connecting with people's hearts and minds.

One big secret? Knowing your audience inside and out. Tailoring the narrative to their interests and level of knowledge is the key to capturing their attention and keeping them hooked. And let's not forget the power of visuals and interactive elements. So, whether you're a scientist, an owl, or anyone with a passion for sharing knowledge, remember that storytelling is a way to bridge the gap between complex ideas and eager minds. Get creative, connect emotionally, and watch as the magic of storytelling brings science to life in the most incredible way"

After the delicious lunch at Mensa, I had a little bit of a cardio session flying around Ilmenau. You know, it is important to keep this wise brain in a built up canvas.

I soared through the city, enjoying the lively atmosphere, when suddenly, I was struck by something flying through the air. To my surprise, it was the camera of **iSWision**, capturing every moment with precision. The Ilmenau Student Television (iSTUFF) was hard at work, broadcasting an informative and entertaining program for all to enjoy.

From live streams of shows, lectures, and concerts, to an extensive collection of videos available online, iSTUFF ensured that no event was missed. They even encouraged me to relive my favorite moments and share them with others, spreading the joy of the ISWI experience far and wide.

Youtube vlogs
Credits: iSTUFF Youtube page



My wings were unfolding, flying around campus and taking a look at what the Group Works were doing. Let me tell you, it made my heart warm with happiness, seeing all the participants interacting as family, after so many days of companionship working hard on their final presentations.

The atmosphere during the **presentations** was electric. Each group showcased their outcomes with enthusiasm, and I was amazed by the diversity of topics and the depth of knowledge shared. It was a celebration of human intellect and creativity, and I couldn't help but feel inspired by the collective brilliance in the room. As the only owl in the room, I brought a unique perspective to the stage, and I was thrilled to see the humans genuinely interested in hearing my insights. With my wings flapping and my hoots echoing, I added a touch of wisdom and whimsy to the event, making it even more memorable. I felt a tremendous sense of pride and accomplishment. It was truly remarkable to witness the culmination of participants' hard work and collaboration.

The final presentations were followed by the **closing ceremony**. And oh boy, what a beautiful event. It was a moment of reflection, where we expressed our appreciation for the journey we had embarked on together. As the event draws to a close, I feel a deep sense of gratitude for being a part of such a vibrant and inclusive community. We overcame challenges and left a lasting impact on the ISWI stage. This experience serves as a reminder that when we unite, incredible things can happen.

Now, let's flap our wings and soar to new adventures, my friends! The journey continues, and together, we'll make this world a better place. Fly high, be proud, and never stop fighting for justice and equality.

Last day of this wonderful journey, it was time for the participants to get a better picture of beautiful Thuringia. As a native owl, I really appreciated **Thuringian Experience Day**, there were so many options to choose from! We could go on a tour through the historic city centers of Weimar or Erfurt, immersing ourselves in the rich German history and culture.

Alternatively, we could visit an Arts exhibition and if we were feeling adventurous, we could embark on a hike through the picturesque Thuringian Forest, surrounded by the breathtaking nature and landscape. Whether it was learning about German history, appreciating art, or immersing ourselves in nature, we were ready for a day of exploration and fun.

It was a day filled with joy, camaraderie, and a sense of wonder as we immersed ourselves in the beauty and culture of Thuringia.

Do you know what was the most exhausting part for me in this journey? It was when it came to an end. The Farewell party was a moment I wanted to avoid. After spending glorious moments with people who had become my second family, I started developing feelings towards them. Can you imagine that? An owl having feelings?

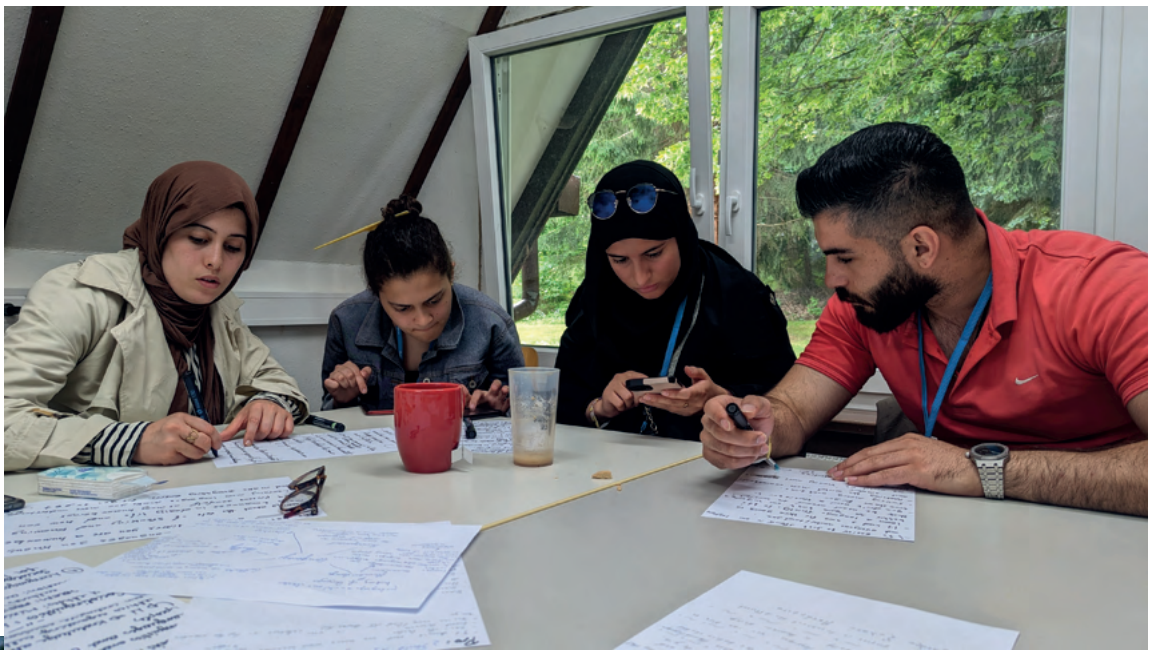
But despite my initial hesitations, I decided to embrace the **Farewell party** and make the most of the last night of ISWI 2023. It was a perfect mixture of live music from Banana Jam, DJs spinning groovy tunes, and a relaxed atmosphere. We laughed, danced, and cherished the final moments together.

Saying goodbye to all the people involved in ISWI was bittersweet. The connections we had formed, the memories we had created, all came rushing back. It was a farewell filled with hugs, laughter, and maybe even a few tears. As an owl, I never thought I could experience such deep emotions, but ISWI had a way of touching my heart.

So, to all the friends I made along this incredible journey, thank you for becoming a part of my life. You have left an indelible mark on my wings, and I will always cherish the moments we shared. Farewell, ISWI 2023, and farewell to the amazing people who made this experience truly unforgettable.

Huge bravo to the Photography Group Work and their tireless journey throughout all the events.

Sadly my colorful feathers weren't captured by their cameras, given that, after all, I am an imaginary owl. But, some real beauties can be seen in the next pages, in this lovely **mosaic** up next:









Well well well that was ISWI 2023, I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did. I will most surely carry the memories of this festival forever and very close to my heart.

It's time to express my **gratitude** to the remarkable ISWI Board. Their passion, dedication, and infectious spirit had brought these experiences to life, creating a world within the festival where everyone could celebrate the power of knowledge, information and data.

To the countless Volunteers and Helpers, my wings extended in heartfelt appreciation. The festival was made possible only through their tireless efforts. Their commitment to ensuring everyone had a phenomenal experience was visible in each beaming face in the campus.

Last but not the least, special thanks to the Group Leaders, the ones who made the main educational activities possible.



As Olivia, the curious owl of ISWI 2023, I am deeply grateful for the immense support and contributions from our **donors and sponsors**. It is thanks to their generosity and belief in our mission that we were able to embark on this impactful journey. Your financial support has provided us with the necessary resources to create a transformative experience for participants from around the world. From organizing engaging workshops and thought-provoking discussions to hosting cultural events and providing essential infrastructure, your contributions have made a significant difference. On behalf of the entire ISWI 2023 community, I want to express my sincere gratitude to each and every donor and sponsor. Your commitment to education, intercultural exchange, and fostering global understanding is truly commendable. Thank you for being an integral part of our journey and for helping us make a positive impact on the world.



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Studierendenrat der TU Ilmenau

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himmelblau



FuLM

Förderung von Forschung und Lehre
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an der Technischen Universität Ilmenau e.V.

Lastly, one thing I noticed is that I found myself being constantly interrogated by the Documentation and Press Team. Everyday, they would ask me so many questions about everything I saw. I just couldn't understand why! But then I found out they were making this booklet and they really needed to document everything so I understood why they were so nosy! Big thumbs up to them!

They were a very diverse team, representing India, Tunisia, Argentina, The Philippines and Sudan. Three whole continents were on the table putting their brains into the structure of this booklet!



I loved chatting with Hemango Akshay Hiwale and Ritu Rathore about the activities that I participated in. They were all around campus documenting every event and Group Work they would stumble upon. I shake my feathers to you my friends! Mustafa Musab and Ronan Lemwel Valdecantos put their hands into work, performing all sorts of tasks, from archival work, to talking to the Board Members, which made the creative process possible.

Finally, our beloved Khadija Maalej, the mind of the team, along with Miranda Gonzalez Wicky and Hemango Akshay Hiwale, I watched them as they tirelessly wrote and wrote in those human machines until they could create a story about the journey of ISWI, and capture the whole moment decently enough to send to Zaineb Trabelsi doing this awesome design far away in Tunisia.

To the Documentation and Press Team, I raise my wings in admiration and gratitude. Your hard work and dedication have immortalized our collective experience, ensuring that the memories of ISWI will forever be cherished. Thank you for capturing the essence of our journey and sharing it with the world. You have truly left a lasting impact, and I salute you all!

Well! That was ISWI 2023!

I hope you don't forget about me, Olivia, your loyal companion in this journey through ISWI 2023. You'll probably see one of my friends in the next edition!

Any ideas of what animal could be the mascot for ISWI 2025?

Lastly, my feathers shimmered with emotion when I received this poem from a Costa Rican participant and friend. After practicing with the latino pals, I finally became a multilingual bird! Outstanding I would say, and that's why the letter is in spanish.

23

¿Qué es Latinoamérica?

Es reír con mis amigos en el tren
es saber encontrar las risas aún cuando
no encontrábamos las direcciones.

Latinoamérica es ofrecer una mano amiga
cuando la situación lo amerita
un par de orejas cuando hay algo que escuchar
y un abrazo cuando no hay donde ir.

Ser latino es saber que un extraño
puede ser un amigo si hay una risa de por medio.
y con ustedes, las risas nunca cesaron.
Al contrario, se multiplicaban, como bien lo hacía
mi conchita y mi currito.

Si bien no puedo llevarlos a cada uno conmigo,
pueden viajar conmigo en un lugar
donde nadie los deportará, mi corazón.
Fuera de mi lugar seguro desde el minuto uno.
ahora no sé cómo recorrer esta
cafetería vacío sin la certeza de que los veré
riendo en alguna mesa.

Siendo escandalosos
Siendo intrépidos
Siendo auténticos
Siendo expresivos en un país donde la neutralidad impera.
Porque al final, eso somos.

¿Qué es Latinoamérica?

Son cada uno de nuestros chistes
Son ustedes
Son vos riendo
Bajo el frío sol de Umenav. cagando y amando.



You, reader, should do something similar! I will leave you the next **pages blank** for you to ask your friends to sign a goodbye note! I wished my wings allowed me to write some words in my friends booklet, so be thankful for the existence of your hands and write them a good-old message!



Last words of gratitude for the people behind ISWI: The Association.

The "Initiative Solidarische Welt Ilmenau e.V." (ISWI e.V.), established in 1992, is an incorporated society and NGO led by students who organise projects as volunteers. Its status is that of a non-profit and benevolent organisation. We set ourselves the goal to fight against social inequality, racism, and intolerance as well as to promote mutual understanding. To reach this aim, we organise projects that raise awareness of recent problems and offer an open platform to get to know each other, exchange views, and work out solutions for these problems. Our main project, the "International Student Week in Ilmenau" (ISWI), has been taking place every two years since 1993 at the Technische Universität Ilmenau.

The Organising Committee would like to thank everyone who has been involved in preparing and realizing ISWI 2023. Special thanks go to our Groupleaders, the hosts, the helpers, the speakers, the artists, and of course to all the participants of ISWI 2023, as well as to the funders, sponsors, and supporters.

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Without all their voluntary commitment the ISWI would not be possible.

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Bipasha
Britideepa
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