

Art of Arguments

“A democracy in which there is no argument is not a democracy.” – Helmut Schmidt

Democracy is a practice, not a given. It requires constant engagement, disagreement, and negotiation. And it needs to be something that doesn't just happen in parliament, but with all of us. This is where **Art of Arguments** steps in.

The Project Idea

Over the last year at Die Bäckerei we have been hosting an event format we call [‘Transformations Streit’](#) (transformation argument). The format is about hosting large group debates around burning questions of the socio-ecological transformation. The aim is to enable **real encounters** between people—beyond social media filters and political bubbles - and create a platform for practicing democracy. Transformations Streit fosters spaces where people with diverse perspectives engage in structured yet open-ended disputes, experiencing the energy of live debate, the challenge of defending a viewpoint, and the reality of facing an actual person with a different opinion.

Throughout hosting Transformations Streit events we have learned a few crucial things. We have learned that it is almost impossible to mobilize a really diverse audience to come to an independent culture centre. And we have learned that arguments are often limited to the intellectual sphere - meaning they are limited to people with a certain educational level and limited to spoken language.

Now we want to go past these limitations. That is why we want to **move into public space** (not just city space, but rural areas too.) and use art to de-intellectualize public debates. Our core development questions are:

1. How can we host large scale participatory debates in public space?
2. How can we reach and attract a diverse audience?
3. And how can this work both in urban and rural context?

And we want to use art as a tool to **make public debate accessible to a wider audience** and **transform it into an embodied experience** rather than a purely intellectual exercise.

Here our questions are:

1. How can we reduce the dependency on educational level (making debate accessible to all)?
2. And how can we transform debate into a physical, sensory, and emotional experience (making debate embodied)?

Outcomes and Impact

Through participation, people will:

- **Experience what it takes to form and articulate an opinion** on a complex issue.
- **Practice listening to opposing views, challenging assumptions, and adapting their perspective.**
- **Engage with people from different backgrounds**, gaining new insights into their realities and concerns.
- **Deepen their understanding of socio-ecological transformation** and its complexities.
- **Realize that disagreement does not have to mean division**—that democracy thrives when people can honor each other as humans, even when their opinions differ.

At a societal level, the project aims to:

- **Strengthen active citizenship** by equipping people with the skills to engage in public discourse.
- **Rebuild trust in democratic dialogue** by demonstrating that arguments, when structured respectfully, can lead to greater understanding rather than division.
- **Create sustainable formats for practicing democracy**, offering a replicable model for other regions.

Who We Are Looking For

To bring **Art of Arguments** to life, we are seeking partners who:

- **Have experience in creating spaces for public dialogue**—whether through civic engagement, academic debate, or community discourse.
- **Work actively on societal issues** and can help formulate key questions for discussion.
- **Use art as a means of dialogue and engagement**, making complex topics more tangible.
- **Have access to diverse audiences**—citizens, scientists, politicians, activists—and can foster meaningful cross-group participation.

If you are interested in co-developing a platform where people can practice democracy through real encounters and structured argumentation, we invite you to join us.

Let's create spaces where disagreement strengthens democracy, rather than weakens it.

Next Steps

This project is envisioned as a **collaborative development process**, with key aspects to be designed together with partners. The first step is to **build a strong transnational partnership**, after which we will develop the following areas collectively:

1. **Find Key Partners**
 - We seek organizations with expertise in **public dialogue, participatory art, and democratic engagement** across Europe.
2. **Develop the Concept for Art Integration**
 - Define **how artistic interventions will enhance public debate** and create engaging, accessible discussion spaces.
3. **Strengthen the European Added Value**
 - Ensure the project **addresses a shared European challenge** and develops solutions that are transferable across cultural and national contexts.
4. **Create a Diversity & Inclusion Strategy**
 - Design formats that **actively engage diverse societal groups**, ensuring broad accessibility and participation.
5. **Plan for Scalability & Long-Term Impact**
 - Develop a **sustainable model** that can be **replicated and expanded beyond the project's timeframe** through toolkits, training programs, and partnerships.