

Afterword—and a Glance Ahead

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So, this is it, the journey of the first three years of the Global Campus Online. As somebody who witnessed all the meetings, I'm quite proud of what we achieved. In the beginning, there was just a vision to provide a room where like-minded people from all over the world could meet and discuss topics of global relevance and their implications for local communities. Starting in the middle of the coronavirus crisis, we benefited from technological advances in online meetings and from quick learnings from users worldwide to enable international exchange. Like everybody else, we were keen to develop a constructive and creative environment to support fruitful exchanges and foster inspiring, personal encounters across national boundaries. Our goal was and still is that people get a sense of belonging as global citizens since we all live on this one planet called Earth. Guided by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and their interconnectedness with every aspect of human life, the range of topics for discussion was limitless, always guided by our participants' interests. As we were and still are open to everybody, our network includes people of different ages, genders, professions, and nationalities.

From my perspective, I gained a lot of insight into communities worldwide. It was, and still is, truly inspiring to see people being active in their communities, working to achieve a better life for everyone in their surroundings.

I was skeptical about the possibility of really building human connections in an online setting, but the situation gave me the mindset to really try. After the restrictions were lifted, there were requests from the

network to connect in person as well, but due to limited resources, that remains a silent wish. However, the experience from the Global Campus Online meetings shows a different picture. I can recount small meetings with just a handful of participants where a real sense of understanding and of relating to each other was perceptible, where people from different sides of the world and completely different professional contexts found common ground in their everyday lives and personal perceptions of the topics at hand. Where people who didn't know each other before and probably would never have met decided to work together and cooperate. Those moments are the dearest to me and drive my continuous work for this Global Campus Online.

This is what we continuously want to work on. To provide a safe space online, easy to access, easy to be a part of, easy to connect with people, and discuss topics of relevance to people's lives. We want to facilitate experiences of connection and relation among people of all kinds to foster the sense that we are all global citizens and are responsible for the planet we all live on. And to send the message that, together, we can really achieve a better future for all.

Please do let yourself get inspired by those projects assembled in this book, and feel free to start something in your community, no matter how small. Because it is possible to change the big picture by changing a small piece, and we have already collected many pieces, maybe you and your initiative will be part of the Global Campus Online in the future. We are looking forward to hearing from you! It is as simple as writing an email to: gloco@aau.at. A visit to our website would also be appreciated: <https://www.aau.at/en/unesco-chair-global-citizenship-education/gloco/>.