

## **A Bike Gang with a Difference**

*Myrielle Winkelmann went to visit an exciting initiative focused on the importance of bicycles and based in our fair city...*

In my opinion, what defines our culture is freedom. It's our most important human right –the right to act, speak and think as you want to as long as it harms no living being. Our freedom ranges from things as inconsequential as choosing a brand of toothpaste to the very building blocks of our community, like being able to choose our religious beliefs or being able to vote.

Yet, your rights as a human being are more than that. It is not only your right to have freedom but also to receive the resources to achieve freedom. It is your right to receive an education. It is your right to have a standard of living in which you are healthy, in which you receive security and the support to receive other necessities.

What all this is meant to achieve is equality.

So what happens when that freedom is taken away from you? When you can't receive an education because the nearest school is too far away? When you can't get treatment for a curable condition because you can't make the trip?

Animosity and hatred burn, feeding off the stark differences between the privileged and those born to disadvantages.

Now imagine how much the situations would change if we added something to the equation. A way to cover ground faster. A life changing tool, and yet most take it for granted. A bicycle.

Suddenly, distances are long but not impossible. A challenge, not a dead end. The world inches closer to equality.

Sometimes, there's nothing between you and your freedom but space.

That's the impact the Faradgang makes.

The Faradgang is a nonprofit charity based in Cologne and Berlin that repairs broken bicycles and gives them to people in need.

The charity was created by passionate people with a fondness for cycling and a determination to help others. Realizing how monumental a bicycle could be, the founders repaired several bikes and brought them to an emergency shelter for immigrants, but almost immediately felt guilty about not having been able to bring more. Since then, dozens of people joined the gang and helped a vision become a reality – a reality that has given hundreds of bikes to people in need.



Most members of the gang work on repairing the bikes almost every afternoon or weekend, getting them to the point where they take less than three hours to fix. The bikes are given away twice a month on the "Schraubersamstage" and "Minischraubersamstage". Because so many people come, the order in which the bikes are repaired is decided with raffle tickets. The Faradgang members then make sure the bike is in good condition and show the people receiving the bikes how to do some minor repairs.

Additionally, the Faradgang organizes some cool events like the biannual "Shorts on Wheels" (basically moving open air cinema), bike challenges and get involved with some seasonal things like summer festivals and Christmas markets.

The genuine energy and positivity surrounding the Faradgang can only be described as contagious – it's no wonder that some of the recipients stick around to help translate and repair bicycles.

Honestly, if people working together to regain their freedom doesn't restore your faith in humanity, nothing will.

If you want to get involved, you can find out to help by visiting the website [faradgang.de](http://faradgang.de). (they accept donations) or by talking to Mr. Cocksworth in S1.17.