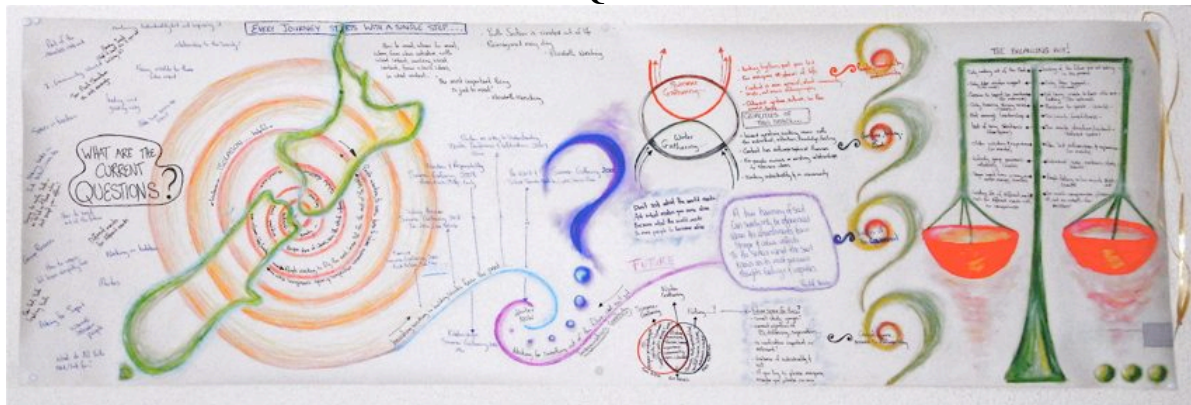


I recently attended 'The Backpackers Workshop', a six week course that took place in October/November '09 in Dornach Switzerland. It was hosted by the Youth Section, and organized and run as a group effort by those who attended. It was a real mixture of life, study, community, research, struggle, intuition, improvisation, courage, trust and triumph. And so, this article is not written in chronological order, or with structure - its aim and purpose is instead to give you an experience of the backpackers course as you read it.

HOW DO I BECOME THE CAPTIN OF MY OWN SHIP? BECOME THE MASTER OF MY OWN SCHOOL OF LEARNING? AND MY OWN WITNESS?

We were a constellation of 22 people with different wants and needs. Some advocated structure for clarity, while others yearned for complete free space to see what arises spontaneously. It was a space for improvisation, inner development, individual study, practical work, communal cooking, peer led workshops, spaces to celebrate together and to learn to create the course as a group. It was a place to ask 'what questions, talents, experiences and motivation do I carry right now with me in my backpack?'

WHAT ARE MY QUESTIONS?



DO I FIND MY QUESTION OR DOES MY QUESTION FIND ME?

The three metre mindmap above was concerned with my current questions regarding the Youth Section in NZ and the conclusion was about BALANCE: between peer led activities & mentor recognition/support; between strong individuality & collaboration of the group; outer & inner work; working from the innovation of the past balanced with working creatively for the future; not only hearing the strong voices, and still with no pressure to speak; too much directional leadership versus lack of strength as a leader; pleasing a lot of people a little versus meeting all the needs of a smaller number in a better way.



Some questions that spoke to me, among many were; how do I move from judgment to trust? What makes me feel closer to myself? For me, what brings identity through initiative? What is the red thread leading me through life? What am I passionate about and what gives me energy? What is it I really want to do? Not I wish I had, but I wish I had the will to.... how do I listen to intuition? How do I recognize what is coming toward me because of what I am attracting? What do I have to give, and what is being asked of me now? How do we sing along to the greater song? What is needed most in our time by our generation? How do I become independent and strong and still leave the other free? How do we really *see* and support each other?

What did we do? We shared ideas and ideals, had many amazing conversations, started a study group working with threefolding and supporting Nicknor Perlas, did creative writing, biography work, we made music, art, walked to France, cooked every day for 30 people. As a group we built an amazing fire place behind the student accommodation. Some went to Belgium for a Connectivity meeting, some to Sweden for an initiative meeting, others to chosen parts of the world. All of this was the Backpackers.

OUR TASK IS TO BECAOME WHO WE ARE



Heavy storm clouds are brooding
Obscuring the sun. The intensity of heat and light
Is burning with inspiration, passion, meaning, life.
The light desperately wants to break through,
To warm the earth, to bring the essence of life
And to illuminate the beauty of what is.
To have far reaching possibilities and effects.....

.....Now a small rift in the clouds has opened
light streams forth, pulsating, joyful, energetic.
How to be ready for the power it has, and to ray it forth in the right way?
How to continue the spread of warmth, and to dissolve
The obscuring clouds so the light can fulfill its potential?

Image and poem by Rosa Henderson

This image is strongly living with me right now, of walking into the world with courage – feeling the fear and doing it anyway – committing and trusting the world will carry you. And in this, your light will shine through.



I felt a huge amount of support here from individuals, from the Youth Section in particular, and from the wider network which feels so alive, active and welcoming. Support for myself as an individual, as a young person looking for my path, for someone holding responsibility for a space, for current striving with the Youth Section, someone with strengths and weaknesses, highs and lows.

The next steps were a big focus for us around our time of closing of the Backpackers. Some returned home, others adventured onwards, many come to New Zealand for the Summer gathering in January. Me? I travelled in India for 6 weeks, and returned home for the Summer Gathering where I connected with many people, older and younger from all walks of life. This year I will work with those interested in the bigger picture of the Youth Section in NZ and worldwide as well as those wanting to be involved in the creating of the next conference. I am returning to Dornach in April for an important conference called 'Focus', and to work with the YouthSection team for a number of months. The following steps, I have trust, will come.

Shakespeare said '**To be or not to be?**', Socrates said '**To be is to do**', in the backpackers we asked '**What does it mean to just *be*?**'