

CREATING A CONFERENCE THAT MATTERS

The participants of the International Youth Initiative Program (YIP) are currently organizing a Youth Conference called "360° Exploring Community", which will be happening in Ytterjärna, Sweden, from the 11th until the 17th of July. This article is one of the YIP-participants' look on the process.

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In the spring of 2005 I was in Dornach to attend the Connect Conference, which brought hundreds of twelfth-graders together to think and talk about diverse subjects. Although the week at the Goetheanum was inspiring, the only practical outcome seemed nothing but sheer fun at first. It took me a year or so to realize that the conference had been much more. It brought me to YIP, for example. Connect sparked something, which is now starting to materialize.

Less than four years later, I am involved in organizing a Youth Conference myself. The process so far has been a remarkable experience. Choosing our main theme, *'Exploring Community'*, was not an easy process. The influence of our weekly courses had broadened our fields of interest, and only after several meetings did we agree on the theme.

Ytterjärna seemed an obvious choice of location, given its unique history and understanding of community. Let it be clear though, that we will not only look at communities like Järna - or not only at community as a living together of people, for that matter. *'Exploring Community'* means looking at what community means, is, and can be, now and in the future. It means exploring community-based solutions, locally and globally. It also means creating community, during the conference: a space where individuals can freely express themselves and where new ideas can be played with.

Like YIP, our conference is built to work on multiple levels: it puts out a strong statement that creative change is around the corner, hence the hands-on workshops and the action day. It is part of a worldwide joint collaboration of cultivating awareness in people. This is, of course, based on the basic belief that while we are working on a better world, millions are doing the same. And, it is a place to enjoy simply being at. Because, like contributor Claudio Mauricio puts it: *if it isn't fun, it isn't sustainable.*

Only through the combination of strategies can we tackle the challenges ahead and create those things we want to see emerging.. There is a fierce urgency of now, a need for radical change, but also a more long-term based and broader change. I believe that it is this part of the spectrum of change that fits initiatives grown from Anthroposophy the most.

We started out in October by spending a lot of time on the purpose question: what do we want as an outcome of this conference? Our question of purpose is connected to the very basics human intention. Designing and doing is the result of it. So when coming July 500 people are flooding Ytterjärna, I will now and then look around at everyone having fun; and think about how, at the same time, we designed a conference that matters.

for more information about the Conference, and for registrations, please visit www.360theconference.se or mail to info@360theconference.se

For more information about the Youth Initiative Program, go to www.YIP.se