

Second part, 20.5.-9.6.2009

There we are, traveling in the USA. It is an enormous country, in size, diversity, in beauty, in madness, in loneliness and in fear.



Nostalgic train cruise

The train we took to Chicago was a beautiful experience with a panorama car, but still, in the end we had to recover from the train ride, which sometimes was unbelievable rough. At times it was almost impossible to walk in the train and we had to hold fast to our seats. After this experience, riding a bus seemed very smooth.

As we had time for a holiday, we left the train spontaneously at White Sulphur Springs in Virginia and close to the Smokey Mountains. All seemed promising. It looked as if there were hot springs to bathe in and hiking possibilities.

White Sulphur Springs is dominated by a very posh hotel called "Greenbrier". It owns the springs and a huge territory. Room prices start at 3-400\$. We chose a cheaper Motel in town for 50\$ and explored our possibilities. First thing we found out is that in order to shop we had to walk about 2km to the shopping mall outside the town.

We stopped by a Ranger Station to find out about the near by park and hiking possibilities. What we found out is that we do need a car to be able to reach the park and hike. It was too far to walk and there is zero public transport. "We are such a car country" was the Rangers comment.



The Greenbrier



Surprised and disappointed we left and slept on it. Next day we went to Greenbrier, walked around in a luxurious park with a golf course, tennis courts and vast landscapes. There we did find hiking paths long enough to satisfy our need to move! All on the private property and maintained by Greenbrier. An oasis of freedom within the capitalist paradigm.

We even found a river that went through the golf course, we swam in. It was great!



Cars and houses for sale!

The US in surprising numbers

We are finding out more and more facts about this amazing country and some of them, taken from newspapers and our travel guide, we want to share.



Some facts:

- Greater Los Angeles area has 90.000 homeless people
- USA new car and small truck sales dropped from 16.000.000 new cars a year to "only" 400.000 now (with 307.000.000 citizens) (- while every family had already one car for the father, one for the mother, an RV for holidays, a motorcycle for good weather and a new car for the children once they turn 16).
- every USA credit card holder has 10.500 \$ dept; most have several credit cards ...
- even college students received credit cards without any regular income
- in the USA a credit card gives you credit, that you do not have to pay back fast. Interest rates are high
- Companies paid into a pension fund every year for their employees. Now in times of economic crisis. Pension funds are cancelled and employees are left without pension and just a check for the amount accrued.



Again and again I am struck by the order and obedience patterns in daily life. In the restaurants you will have to wait until you are seated. Your possibilities to choose the table are limited then. If you dare to sit down without waiting you will be in trouble and are disturbing the system. In trains the conductor receives you before you enter the train through the sometimes only door opened (you are never allowed to open the door yourself!). Then a person brings you to your seat and that is where you are expected to sit. If you change without asking the seat person and he/she finds

out, you will have to go back to the seat first assigned to you. You cannot buy a ticket on the train, unless you reserved before online or by phone. Then you are led in the train into the dining car, where a conductor waits for you to collect your money and give you the ticket. The list could go on and on. We were seated in the train for dinner for the first shift, but rather wanted to eat later. We found a couple who wanted to be on the first shift, but it was full. We proposed to them to take our places and we would come later. They only agreed to it after we asked the waiter if we were allowed to do it this way.



Everywhere you see people pay even 1 Dollar amounts with some credit card - every super market issues their own credit card. We were in a cafe where you pay when you order on the counter and always we seemed to be the only ones using cash. Others were informed that they had to pay 5% more, if they wanted to pay by card. Always their answer was: I do not have cash.

In ads from supermarkets you read constantly that you can take this TV or that traktor for free for one year without rates and interest. After this year you will have to pay.

In between news from Santa Cruz reached us that they had more inspired meetings in a group of about 25 and were eager to continue growing and learning. It felt so good to leave a trace of people longing for connection and community, who practice Forum and other means for communication and healing.

Via Charlottesville we continued to a retreat near Earthhaven Ecovillage, where Suchi took care of us with her big heart and hospitality.

Earthhaven Ecovillage, North Carolina



Earthhaven was started in 1994. One criteria for the location was that it was no more than 1h away by car from Asheville, which is a beautiful, alternative town in NC. From the beginning they wanted to cultivate and use the big property of forest in a sustainable way, with a small footprint. They are off-grid, have their own energy, water, waste water system and want to become self-sufficient to a high degree. Susan said: "We are all refugees of that culture out there!"

They use little money for their life and also mostly have little. This state is kind of chronic in regards of the communal buildings. Houses are built in neighbourhoods by the people themselves or by professional builders. All kinds of ecological



materials were used to build them. New members need to build or buy in to one of the existing houses. Houses are private property which proved difficult at times. Since some years they have conflicts in the community between an agricultural fraction and a spiritual/social fraction wanting to create a guesthouse and seminar business.



A hepatitis case some time ago was a hard blow for this idea. All their common kitchen and seminar business were shut down and so far not allowed to re-open.

We did a weekend workshop there and re-inspired the participating about 20 people to meet again on a deeper level of personal healing and sharing. It seems to have been a good starting point for something good to happen and to become magnetic enough to have others feel attracted to join. For us it was another fulfilling experience of the magic of Forum, our intuition and live at work.



From Earthhaven we drove by bus via Arlington and Philadelphia, where we had evenings with ZEGG presentations and some exercises, to New York. We were guests of our friends at Ganas.

Ganas, urban community - Staten Island



Ganas is an urban community, as old as us. Also they were founded in 1978, had a social process, an inspired visionary and leader with all its pros and cons and then explored grassroots decision making. Their thinking was of how they can serve their neighbours and do something they can use.

Consequently they started three second hand businesses in Staten Island, where they bought some houses close to each other. One selling used cloths, one furniture and utensils, one books and a company to move stuff from houses. They refurbish the furniture themselves. The book store meanwhile has transformed into a book cafe with evening (social-artistic-political) events.



They always wanted to live lightly and have a small footprint. Consequently their costs for living are low and so they can sell their things cheaply. They basically want to be non-profit. They want to earn as much as they need for their modest living and the houses. They have a income sharing core group, who is the owner of the houses and businesses. Right now they are around 12 core-members. Community guests are always

welcome and free of charge.



Every morning (Tuesday to Saturday) they have a two hour morning meeting during breakfast. Everything from organizational things to social issues are adressed there. As they come from "feedback learning" they work out differences by mutual direct feedback.



We had a Saturday evening and whole day Sunday Forum training with them which revealed a lot of longing for – again – deeper connection between them. As they are used to “mirror” each other and to look deeper beyond the ripples on the surface, the Forum worked smoothly and warmly in a supportive atmosphere.



During our work and our stay the idea was born to do an annual training for Forum and Awareness training in 2010 with three meetings of around 6 full days. We would then come to a group on the East-Coast (NY) as well to the West-Coast, probably Santa Cruz. We liked the idea very much and will work on more details and find out if it is really feasible.



Movement

The idea to have the honour and opportunity to help give birth to a growing community movement in the US, based on transparency in relationships, power and communication, is very intriguing. Some seeds were put in the ground with the foundation of the Network of a New Culture 14 years ago. The founders came back from a ZEGG Summercamp inspired to start the network and US Summercamps. Since then it has grown and people involved have learned a lot. Now seems the time to nourish it some more to unfold to a second phase of inner growth (maybe also outer?). And we feel honoured to be invited to be part in it.

Thank You all!

Ina and Achim
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