



**INNER PATHWAYS STUDY**

**YOU CAN ONLY GIVE**

**WHAT YOU HAVE**

**A STUDY ON REGENERATIVE PRACTICES AND CULTURE  
IN SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM.**

**BASED ON THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH  
CONDUCTED WITHIN THE INNER PATHWAYS TOWARD  
SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT**



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# INNER PATHWAYS TOWARD SUSTAINABILITY MANIFESTO

## WHO?

### ABOUT US

We are a group of trainers, facilitators and educators specialising in non-formal education methods, with diverse backgrounds a few of which include community leadership, activism and research. We represent seven organisations from six European countries. There is a great variety of skill and experience in our team that is enriched by many theoretical inspirations.

What unites us is a common vision for a better world, a sustainable future where humanity can thrive in harmony with all Life. We believe that a transition to such a future is possible and that an inner transformation is a key component. Our individual journeys have been shaped and guided by practices, tools and experiences that we share with you within the Inner Pathways project. These have become our anchors and passions, often leading to significant lifestyle changes or supporting concrete actions towards a more regenerative future.

# WHY?

## A VISION FOR A SUSTAINABLE AND REGENERATIVE WORLD

We came together at this pivotal moment in human history, driven by the recognition of a profound transformation that is needed in the world today. We are deeply concerned with the overexploitation of the Earth's resources, climate change, social injustice, pollution and loss of biodiversity. We join those voices in the world today that call for a shift towards building a society that sustains all life, respecting the intricate natural balance on which we depend for our survival.

We feel encouraged to witness the increasing awareness of global environmental, social and political challenges, with more and more people around the world rising up, speaking up and taking action. From the smallest changes in daily routines to the big transformative work restructuring the very fabric of our societies, we stand with those who believe that we still have a window of opportunity to act and restore the natural balance on our planet.

# WHAT?

## THE INNER PATHWAYS APPROACH

We believe that as educators and facilitators we have important gifts to contribute to this global transformation. Our approach is that of INNER PATHWAYS: a belief that a shift in awareness is necessary to power and support the transition towards a regenerative future. Such shift moves us away from engaging in behaviours based on self-interest and the overexploitation of natural resources, a sense of separateness, alienation and competitive individualism. Instead, this shift in awareness brings us back to a sense of interconnectedness with all life, which in turn promotes cooperation, care and respect. We believe that from this change in awareness, sustainable, lasting solutions will grow organically, with a ripple-like effect. We find from our own experience, that the inner change finds manifestation in the outer world with profound effects beyond the individual wellbeing – healing relationships, workplaces and communities. We trust that it has the power to eventually bring about peace and harmony on a global level.

# HOW?

## THE PROCESS OF RECONNECTING

Our approach is based on practices that aim to reconnect people to themselves, to their natural environment and to each other, bringing a realisation that we are an inseparable part of the natural world, deeply connected to other beings. This process of reconnecting relies on continuous re-sourcing, re-charging and re-generating. It is not something that can be done just once or accepted as “truth” on a purely intellectual level. Instead, the awareness of the interconnectedness of all life is a continuous process of remembering, deepening our sense of connection, strengthening our inner power and replenishing our energy to act. It relies on tapping into the intelligence that lies beyond our thinking minds and includes the wholeness of human experience. It is an embodied process that leads us to a profound lifestyle change.

We recognize that there is not a single path for everyone to follow. As the old proverb says: “There are hundreds of paths up the mountain, all leading to the same place, so it doesn’t matter which path you take.” We hope that our project will provide inspiration and useful practices for your further journey.





# **YOU CAN ONLY GIVE WHAT YOU HAVE**

**A STUDY ON REGENERATIVE PRACTICE  
AND CULTURE IN SOCIAL AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM**

# INTRODUCTION

This Study is the result of a research conducted during the Inner Pathways Online Learning Journey held between April-June, 2020 with 30 participants, most of them educators in the field of learning for sustainability, in the framework of the Inner Pathways To Sustainability project. The programme was originally planned to happen as a residential course in Hungary, in May, 2020, followed by a three-month online process.

When the COVID-19 pandemic broke out in March 2020, the team re-structured the course and offered a three-month long online version. The programme included fortnightly online meetings based on the Theory U and a diverse methodology, with resources offered by email in between the meetings. Thirty people, which included educators, leaders and community organisers, took part from Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Italy and the UK. The learning journey was aimed at supporting participants to explore both their inner pathway, plus a shift towards a healthy sustainable response to the current state of the

world; strengthening their capacity to face it with peace, resilience, creative power and meaningful action.

There are few studies available about the concrete and tangible impact of non-formal learning interventions in the field of adult learning for sustainability, and we believe that the academic and non-formal pedagogical worlds have much to inspire one another. Therefore, this study aimed at forming a bridge between the academic/scientific methods and non-formal learning methods, as they are similar in their core, yet different in their aims. And also, by providing deeper insight from the minds and hearts of the participants, we hope that this publication can serve as an inspiration for educators and community organisers who want to deepen their understanding about the intersection between inner development and action for sustainability; related theories, practices and processes.

The study is structured in different parts, in the next one, Research

Methodology, we will discuss how we conducted the research and its theoretical background in a bit more depth. The section Results is separated into three main categories: Regenerative Cultures, Regenerative Practices and Actions for the New World, followed by Conclusions and final reflections. Each category has a myriad of subthemes embedded in

it and we invite the reader to explore them in whichever order feels right.

We provide you here with a collection of inspiring themes that emerged in the surveys using the participants' voices and we hope that it shall serve as an inspiration to your process, whatever stage of the journey you're in.



**OUR ONLINE LEARNING JOURNEY  
CURRICULUM IS AVAILABLE AT THE  
TEACHABLE PLATFORM:**

<https://inner-pathways.teachable.com/p/inner-pathways-learning-journey>

# RESEARCH

# METHODOLOGY

*HOW DO REGENERATIVE PRACTICES AND  
REGENERATIVE CULTURES SUPPORT THE INNER  
SUSTAINABILITY AND OUTWARD ACTIONS  
OF ACTIVISTS, COMMUNITY LEADERS, ADULT  
EDUCATORS?*

Our research inquiry was guided by the above question while our chosen methodology was inspired by the phenomenological approach, which considers individual perception as paramount in our relationship with the world.

Due to the COVID-19 breakout, the planned residential training course was developed into a long-term online learning journey and therefore re-structured our research process from, at first, intending to mix qualitative and quantitative methods to only being able to use quantitative. In the original research plan we wanted to utilize semi-structured interviews, reflective journals, focused group dynamics and abstract methods like for example drawing and drama. Due to the COVID pandemic situation, the training changed into an online journey and we decided to use open questions in the form of questionnaires. We have used plenty of quotes from the participants themselves emphasising the importance of their

own voice, and you will easily spot them as they will be in italic and indented throughout the text.

During the learning journey the 30 participants with four trainers met fortnightly over six sessions. The meetings followed the U journey inspired by the Theory U from Otto Scharmer. Participants had invitations for individual embodiment exercises, small group reflections, group sharing in council, solo walks in Nature and a lot more. We gradually went inwards to find and reach our innermost personal sources of inspiration and action, then gradually moved outwards checking in for the most authentic action that flows to the world.

Originally, we intended to focus on the behavioural change that occurs in participants before, during and after a residential training course. Our main interest was on how personal and/or communal practices (such as the ones we propose in our training activities,

## PHENOMENOLOGY

Phenomenology is a form of qualitative research that focuses on the study of an individual's lived experience. Its "primary objective is the direct investigation and description of phenomena as consciously experienced, without theories about their causal explanation and as free as possible from unexamined preconceptions and presuppositions."

*Source*

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/phenomenology>

podcasts and resource book) can result in outer behavioural/structural changes towards a sustainable lifestyle. During the data analysis we found out that comparing differences in the answers of individual participants to the three questionnaires did not provide us with enough data to observe individual changes. However, the answers revealed informed us about the strong connection of their inward processes, practices and the actions that followed. In other words, the updated version of the training course/learning journey also shifted our focus from the main question to a longer-term study of attitudes, practices and actions that our participants experienced in the context of the global pandemic.

For the collection of data we designed a survey that served also as a reflective learning aid for the participants (see appendix). These questionnaires were created also inspired by the U

Curve model from Otto Scharmer, including the Integral Ecology model by Sean Esbjörn-Hargens and Michael E. Zimmerman, and based on the Four Quadrants of Ken Wilber. The first version of the survey was piloted on the fifteen core members of our project team, reviewed for language and comprehension, and then distributed to our participants of the online Inner Pathways Learning Journey.

The questions on the next page are from the first survey. For Survey 2, a few questions were added to deepen the enquiry into the personal practices of participants, and when and how they started practising. For Survey 3, questions about their actions for sustainability were added. We wanted to know to what extent they were influenced by the lockdown and the learning journey.

To comply with ethical rules, those who participated in the research were informed about the aims and

## THEORY U

The unique approach of the Theory U, developed by Otto Scharmer enables people to act from an inner source of wisdom without downloading existing knowledge and solutions. It proposes activities that support people to stop and listen, to explore that inner space, the very core of us where we want our actions to originate from. The learning methods based on this U curve gives people a chance to be present with a so-called generative listening, cultivating an open mind, open heart and open will.

*Source*

<https://www.ottoscharmer.com/publications/executive-summaries>

# SURVEY QUESTIONS

## ANSWERED BY THE 30 PARTICIPANTS OF THE ONLINE INNER PATHWAYS LEARNING JOURNEY

1. How would you describe the current state of the world?
2. How do you feel about the state of the world?
3. What state are you in physically, mentally, socially, spiritually?
4. What is there in your life that needs regeneration?
5. What do you need to let go of in you in order to make this regeneration possible?
6. What are the feelings, emotions, thoughts and motivations you act from towards sustainability?
7. What are the 3 things you are grateful for?
8. What practices do you do to maintain your wellness/wellbeing, inner motivation and harmony?
9. What actions do you take in response to the state of the world you described above?
10. What resources support you in acting for sustainability?
11. What are the results of your actions and what do they mean to you?
12. What do you need to let come in order to make your actions more effective?
13. What is the connection between your inner regenerative practices and your actions toward sustainability?

structure of the data-collection, and we gathered their written consent to process personal data. For the purpose of data protection, all answers were anonymized by one team member and only members of the research team, composed of five people, had access to the data. Within this working circle we used a sociocratic work structure with decision-making tools. We worked together using cooperative methods, with weekly/fortnightly zoom meetings and using shared online documents. One member of the team collected the survey answers and shared them with the rest of the crew.

Participants answered the survey questions at three different times: in April, May and June 2020. The team processed and analysed the answers following guidelines used in phenomenological research, with the mentorship of Jana Stará, a trainer, wellness coach and lecturer at

Masaryk University in Brno. After each round of survey distribution, answers were coded by team members, compared and categorized according to topics and themes that emerged from the answers. Out of this wide palette of topics, chapters and themes of this study were selected, with each chapter written to provide a closer look at what was written within and between the lines of answers. In the editing phase we processed the texts written by different members of the team and structured it as found here in the present study table of content.

Authors include Ági Berecz, Jana Stará, Krisztina Pásztor, Gyula Szabó and Paola Bortini. Debora Stenta, Fernanda Paiva and Rob Dreaming, Inner Pathways team members supported the authors with editing and proofreading the text. Sara Galeotti contributed as graphic designer for the final publication.

## THE INTEGRAL ECOLOGY FRAMEWORK

The Integral Ecology framework provides us with a way of uniting multiple approaches to environmental studies. The multiple perspectives include the terrain of the subjective personal experience, and the terrain of the inter-subjective dimension of communities and cultures. This way learning includes aesthetic experience, psychological dynamics, religious meaning, ethical issues, cultural values, communication and much more of the subjective reality of oneself and one's community.

*Source*

[https://www.academia.edu/4820481/AN\\_OVERVIEW\\_OF\\_INTEGRAL\\_ECOLOGY\\_A\\_Comprehensive\\_Approach\\_to\\_Todays\\_Complex\\_Planetary\\_Issues](https://www.academia.edu/4820481/AN_OVERVIEW_OF_INTEGRAL_ECOLOGY_A_Comprehensive_Approach_to_Todays_Complex_Planetary_Issues)



# RESULTS



# 1

# REGENERATIVE CULTURES

*“REGENERATION IS THE ABILITY OF A CULTURE TO  
NURTURE AND RENEW HEALTHY ECOSYSTEMS,  
WHICH IS THE SOURCE OF WELLBEING”*

*DANIEL WAHL*

In this section we capture what participants express about a possible future, a shift to a different value system and way of living, what we decided to call “regenerative cultures”. Borrowing the definition from Daniel Christian Wahl, regeneration is; *‘the ability of a culture to nurture and renew healthy ecosystems, which is the source of wellbeing’*.

The survey suggests that regenerative culture is a mindset that helps navigating one’s life in relation to what is happening around; therefore, aspects that many see as negative are perceived as positive or as learning possibilities - the world under pandemic seen as opportunity for something new to be born.

# 1.1

## THE PRESENT STATE OF THE WORLD

The participants of the Inner Pathways Learning Journey provided the survey data between April and June 2020, during the months of the global COVID-19 pandemic. This event created a high level of awareness of the complex system of ecological, economic, social, political and spiritual crises humanity is facing and the urgency of changes and

actions needed to tackle them. All the participants put a special attention on the unusual situation, even though the lockdown and the restrictions were applied differently in time and severity across the participating countries.

Here we look at the wider context, the macro-level, as perceived and described by the participants.

### PANDEMIC

During the time of the surveys, the COVID-19 pandemic is seen as a challenge to society and the world; a challenge that is also an opportunity, a chance for a better world, and that this human crisis is beneficial for the rest of nature.

The lockdown brings a sense of stillness, a longer break that was necessary in the world as a time for reflection, and a “chance to think about how I want to live and work”, as if it were an incubation phase of the new era.

“Humans are trapped in their own houses, fear of death is present in everyone... at the same time Earth is breathing, has cleaner air, animals are enjoying the absence of humans”.

“It’s still. Not calm, but the fast movement of the world has been stopped. It seems to me that the world is in a bit of a paralysed state right now”.

For some, at the same time, the pandemic was a shock and a mirror of how deep the inner and outer crisis we are facing are:

“Extremely chaotic, full of information in which it is impossible to orient, with many people spreading fear and panic which leads to unnecessary negative actions and emotions”.

The exceptional state of the world is seen as the magnifying glass of an underlying situation that was already present and that is now, no longer possible to ignore. “Humanity is facing a deep crisis not only because of Coronavirus”. The chaos and instability are seen as “logical” consequences of prior actions and policies:

“Habitats, ecosystems as well as societies have got degraded as the consequences/under the pressures of unsustainable production, consumption and cultural patterns. Degradation is indicated by all those environmental and social patterns we face”.

Some of them see the exceptionality as a very strong signal that is not yet comprehended by the majority of the population and is therefore

polarising and fragmenting reality. This generates in the masses, negative energies and emotions like fear, anxiety and confusion:

“I perceive a lot of chaos and fear that are shaking many of us from our roots”.

The challenging period of the pandemic brings learning, and for some it is seen as a period of healing collective traumas:

“We need lessons from this time... we need to be in such a big gap for remembering it for all of our future ways”.

Some feel that the world has all the necessary resources to cope with the present situation in a sort of ‘global spring-like’ awakening and ready for learning a ‘life lesson’:

“Our world is simply perfect as it is... so rich in its infinite and regenerative abundance”.



*Photo: Alžběta Krejčová*

## POLARISATION

The answers from the participants talk about a world that seems to be out of control and balance for many reasons. The world is seen as insecure and fragmented, complex, in a fluid, ever-changing state. The crisis is seen as a catalyst for polarisation and radicalisation as the world as we know is crumbling... Nevertheless, there is hope that the global systems will change and that a new world is emerging. They observe a growing duality of the current world's narrative – There is human suffering and collapse of ecosystems, and cooperation and awakening at the same time – as if two parallel realities coexisted. On one side there is the progressive, pro-life movement, striving for economic and ecological change, and on the other side the collapsing system seems stuck in

unsustainable practices that still run the mainstream economics and politics:

“Out of balance; in terms of the climate crisis, in terms of global consumption, in terms of ecosystems, in terms of use of land and soils, in terms of the ever-growing gap between rich and poor, in terms of the access to the right of a dignified life for all”

“The world is still quite fragmented and filled with a lot of “not knowing” what will happen. It's a time of awakening, at the same time there are riots, restlessness and a lot of fear-based behaviour. No security anymore”.

## LIMINALITY

There is a current sense of liminality, as if this was a necessary transitional state for a shift to happen globally. It is seen as if the planet was at a crossroads between the potential for establishing a totalitarian regime versus a better world, relinquished from destructive values and

consumerism. Through our shaken world, it seems now impossible to go back to what it was, and what is coming is still not visible. It is a stage in between, a feeling of being in the unknown.

## WE ARE AT A TURNING POINT

The answers of the participants highlight a clear perception of being in the middle of a global transition, a turning point towards a paradigm shift, a tipping point to a new era in which humanity is changing the narrative of its relationship to the Earth. There is an emerging need for more value-based cultures, a need for a global shift in ethical principles:

“The world is now in transition from the EGO society to the ECO community”

“A huge transformation is going on, on an individual as well as on a collective level”

## A NEW WORLD COMING

This shift is seen to be leading to a ‘new world that is coming’:

“There is joy and openness to what is coming. The coming of the new world creates motivation”

Some of the participants feel themselves as being pioneers of this change. And while feeling relieved to have found like-minded people during the course, at the same time, they are also aware of the social “bubble”.

that people are perceiving and acting differently than the average. In order to contribute to the creation of an alternative, positive future, they think that people need to let go of dysfunctional patterns, concepts that create an unsustainable world, and transfer their newly found sense of interconnectedness to create structural changes in society.





*Photo: Doran Amos*

# 1.2. VALUES OF REGENERATIVE CULTURES

By answering the questions about inner motivation for acting for sustainability, participants outline the values inherent in their lives and actions. In this section we are looking at their basic values, which outline basic principles of a life sustaining society. What are these basic values, features, qualities of the new era? While travelling along the learning journey we see a shift from the old

to a new set of values, from old patterns; outworn ways of thinking, fear, directive leadership, constant dissatisfaction with their own actions to compassion, simplicity, a renewed connection to nature and renewed spirituality.

“I am aware that I am also part of the problem”

## COMPASSION AND INTEGRITY

“Love and respect for the whole of Creation”

“Thinking beyond ourselves and the closest circles, our own nation...”

From the participants' words, the new era is characterized by values such as a renewed connection to Nature, to other humans, to Self (spirituality) and to self (own personality). These

values are seen as the connection between the inner and outer world. Based on these values, actions come from compassion, authenticity, integrity, love, respect, gratitude and responsibility. Being connected is one of the key elements. This authenticity is a source of inspiration for others, and pioneers of change may support others through inspiration instead of shaming them for old, unsustainable habits.

# SIMPLICITY

*Simplicity* is seen as a basic value leading to sustainability. Simplicity means to let go of material goods that are “too much”, and to live with a minimal ecological footprint.

“We all are in some way destroying our planet just by living here and I want to keep my share at minimum”.

The lifestyle for some can mean to live with “zero waste”, not to use chemicals, living in the countryside to construct an eco-house and to look for ways to live more regenerative lives. Lifestyle changes towards less ecological impact are paired up with personal regeneration.

Actions towards sustainability can be built on people’s personal practices.

By living simply, some of the participants can feel the fulfilment and joy of acting for a better future, live and help others to live sustainable lifestyles. People during the lockdown lived more sustainably and consumed less:

“I haven’t used a car in 2 months! Just walking. Also reduced the amount of things I bought just the most necessary... food mainly”.

## VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY

Voluntary simplicity is a lifestyle choice that minimizes the needless consumption of material goods and the pursuit of wealth for its own sake. It is sometimes referred to as “simple living,” “the simple life,” or “[downshifting](#).” People embrace voluntary simplicity to create less complicated and more meaningful lives for themselves and their families, and to reduce the negative impact that unnecessary consumption can have on the environment.

Source

[www.investopedia.com/terms/v/voluntary-simplicity.asp](http://www.investopedia.com/terms/v/voluntary-simplicity.asp)

# A RENEWED CONNECTION TO NATURE

"It was surprising for me in the Inner Pathways that I can actually use my motivation towards sustainability - love for nature and being in nature - as a motor of inner regeneration. Although the time I spent outdoors was always highly regenerative, it is a great discovery that it can be used in this way also consciously and it can be used directly for personal growth, finding answers, inspiration"

Nature is the source, nature is an extension of the self, and nature is divine. In this sense spirituality for some people means a deep connection with nature and the belief in the unity with the world around them. Nature-based spirituality is sensed as:

"interconnectedness, love, brotherhood and sisterhood with all creation"

## A WIDER UNDERSTANDING OF NATURE

There is a strong wish for reconnection with Nature. Be it by going out and spending time in natural environments, or regular walks outdoors, or living in harmony with nature. Answers mentioned a wider understanding of this connection by living a harmless lifestyle, enjoying the abundant and healthy food coming

from nature and shifting in the relationship, where we connect with nature instead of exploiting it.

"It is NOT up to us to "use the nature for our purposes", but rather be in connectivity with Nature"

## NATURE CONNECTION PRACTICES

Participants also mentioned a deep connection with nature, feeling passionate about nature and its beauty, loving all forms of life. Nature

is understood as our mother and our home. Connection to nature, Earth and people is a source of motivation to some and a source of spirituality

to many. Gratitude is also felt by many for being able to spend time outside in natural environments. Cultivating new ways of being with nature includes a connection to the land where one lives, taking care of the land, doing practical activities in the garden, planting trees, engaging in permaculture farming.

"I am working on the regeneration of our river with some friends. My first resource is my deep passion for Nature"

A garden can be a gateway to connecting with the larger world and nature's cycles, which serves people in their growing need for wilderness:

"When I am outside and do visible things in the garden, I ... connect with the larger cycles"

Nature based practices such as the "sit spot" and personal time in nature is a source and drive for personal growth.

## NATURE AS A TEACHER

"I appreciate seeing how plants and animals have their inner message coded inside them and they follow it in whatever conditions, they do not get distracted, they know what is their work".

People talk about a mentorship of nature, where "nature's rhythm teaches one to become patient".

"It helps me to be more patient because everything has its time"



*Photo: Bara Stemper-Bauerova*

# COMMUNITY AND COOPERATION

## IN NEED OF EACH OTHER

The need for a community, for building supportive communities and living in communities is overly emphasized in most of the answers from the participants. Some of the people already live in intentional communities, where people live together by their own choice, based on common shared values and purposes, regenerative principles and relationships. These new communities emerge from a need for being connected, to strengthen cooperation and get active on a local level. To use social support as

a resource is to provide inspiration for each other and to engage in dialogue with like-minded people on a daily basis. Building resilient communities is an overarching theme and as such, people living in one of those communities expressed their gratitude for the experience of not being alone.

“Social networking is changing the society a lot, including a never before experienced sense of connection”

## INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES

Purpose-driven communities often require patience, trust, acceptance, acting with compassion towards

oneself and others, respect and attention to relationships.

## INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES

At a time when too many of us feel isolated and alone, intentional communities offer more sustainable and just ways of living together. Intentional Community includes ecovillages, cohousing, residential land trusts, communes, co-ops, and housing cooperatives.

*Source*

<https://www.ic.org>

“For me there is no sustainability if there is no respect and attention to relationships”

Other values highlighted by the participants are equality as well as the importance of building self-sustainable networks for the local economy.

## COOPERATION

“I feel excited about all of the opportunities to develop our sense of togetherness and common responsibility”

At the heart of living in a community there is a perceived need for cooperation, the feeling of being connected to others, true connection, being supported and being able to act in line with a sense of solidarity and shared responsibility.

## DEEPER LISTENING

Intentional communities use intentional communication with those present, sharing and listening being at focus. Councils, sharing circles where people dedicate a certain length of time to sharing from the heart, building trust and equal, heartfelt relationships:

“People come closer and share from the heart... This to me means that there is much hope in personal and collective transformation”

With the lockdown, people observed a tendency for connections going online and increasingly became aware of its limitations.



# A NEW WAY OF BEING IN THE WORLD

## DRIVEN BY A PURPOSE

Participants living their lives driven by a strong sense of responsibility towards ecological, social sustainability, often see themselves as pioneers, visionary midwives helping to give birth to a new society, fostering the transition with their actions and inner change. Participants base their actions on their positive motivation and values, and often have a clarity of purpose and of their personal role in the change, and the feeling of being useful, as one of them claimed: "I am essential". They become aware of their own power that comes from a change of perspective and the realisation that they can choose the way they live, that their action is needed and that their personal choices do make a difference:

"I became more aware that all that what we are doing DOES matter and gets resonance"

Participants express a new way of being to be shared with the world through meaningful work and social contacts:

"Being more out in the world, more visible and outspoken. Daring more and risking more. Offering the medicine I have"

"I feel "cool" as I am enjoying myself in practices of global warming mitigation, ecosystem protection, social justice and global well-being"

## A NEW MINDSET

A shift in perspective may mean a mindset of 'having enough'. Participants are driven by a sense

of responsibility, action for the next generations, a growing wish to change the present global systems:

“Others feel more aware and more connected with themselves and Life. This means I have contributed and brings me a sense of purpose”

Many of the answers show that participants feel ready to engage with the world in positive action, feeling it is time to show up, stepping out of their comfort zone with courage, self-belief and stamina:

“I feel more and more courage to speak my words”

## PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Some see the shift as a transformation from sheer survival to living with an open heart, and a shift from mind to heart, leaning on intuition and self-trust:

“I need to allow my intuition in the face of uncertainty”

Participants reveal a deep process of inner development, accepting their vulnerability and taking responsibility for their own lives, needing to let go of control and trying to make others feel good.

One's profession becomes a meaningful, creative action from the heart:

“I am in a process of redefining my mission and place in the world “

For some, professions related to sustainability are a choice, and for others self-employment and working independently are the right space for action.

“Turning inwards and using my vulnerability as a powerful tool”

Answers mention the acceptance of our own faults uncovering the “myth of perfection” that is so prevailing in our society:

“Bravery to try out things without fear of making faults or not being perfect”

## SUPPORTING PRACTICES

A sense of meaningful contribution is supported in the participants by inner practices that nourish and sustain their commitment, level of energies, and help maintaining a stronger sense of self:

“Living in a sustainable way is itself an inner regenerative practice”

There is an increased understanding and acceptance of the need for self-care:

“True personal well-being can bring well-being for the planet”

This need for self-care results in different daily practices, from simply sleeping enough hours and cooking good food to developing regular pauses, in order to allow the self to stop and slow down. Participants feel that actions mirror their inner state. To slow down and live a slower life where there is time for self-care can be done by setting boundaries as a response to pressure:

“Change from I can't to I can”

## RENEWED SPIRITUALITY

### A NEW KIND OF SPIRITUALITY

The need for a strong spiritual life is present in most of the answers. They talk about a new kind of spirituality, a type that helps to restore the feeling of connection with the rest of the Earth:

“I am grateful for the Earth and her continual support, teaching and inspiration”

A central understanding of this new spirituality is interconnectedness of all things, the experience of feeling like:

“I am one with the world”

This connection to the web of life is expressed in a variety of ways, part of the circle of life, a sense of belonging to the creation:

"We are cells that make up the whole"

And it is embodied through various practices the participants mention:

"Devotional practices, rituals, making altars and offering prayers"

"I practice meditation to come back to the simplicity of being alive"

"Practicing meditation leads naturally to find more inner space, more abundance inside and in simple things"

## STILLNESS AND ACTION

While spiritual practice is rooted in some contemplative discipline, the participants also comprehend the need for stillness and responsible action where such action can strengthen the feeling of unity:

"I try to act ethically in a way that is loving to myself, others and the Earth, and to hold this gently rather than idealistically"

Gratitude becomes a gateway to this spirituality, gratitude to nature:

"I owe my whole life and existence to the wider web of life"

to ritual and prayer, to spending time in nature and engaging in the transformative power of art.

The forms of spiritual practice are individual, varying from meditation



Photo: Alžběta Krejčová

# 1.3

## THE INNER STATE OF PARTICIPANTS

### MYSELF IN THE WORLD, NOW

What was the impact of the current state of the world on the emotions, the inner state and the well-being of the participants? And, consequently, what kinds of actions can derive from that?

The way participants described the current state of the world in which they find themselves is closely related to the emotions that were expressed by them.

### MIXED FEELINGS

Participants informed us about their opposing perspectives on the present crisis, as well as their contradictory emotions, both negative and positive. They reported feeling worried and apprehensive about the future:

“I feel overwhelmed by it, or simply aghast by its sheer insanity”

And at the same time enjoying the sense of ‘paused world’, aware of the privileges they have in their lives:

“felt comfortable in my small lockdown bubble”

With some of them reporting feelings of grief, frustration, fear, anger and hope at the same time. The present crisis seems to increase the ability of human beings holding contradictory feelings. This contradiction is seen in the motivations for a better future, as people act both from feelings of love and interconnectedness, and at the same time, from sadness and anger when seeing the destruction:

“On one hand I am happy to see that some voices of “pioneers for change” got some serious attention, while at the same time looking at some “leaders by vote” still getting attention from thousands. And that makes me feel sad, sometimes angry”

The spectrum of emotions is really wide, ranging from anger and a sense of powerlessness to gratitude and hope, through ambivalence and uncertainty:

"I feel so grateful, I feel we have been offered an incredible opportunity for going inside ourselves, guided by our fears, we are going to the core of Life"

"I feel awesome! I love that I don't have to run anywhere, do things that I felt like not sure if I wanted to do. I truly enjoy myself, my own company and company of some other people that are close to me"

"Anxious, angry, isolated and powerless on the one hand, optimistic, life-hungry, patient, capable of acting on the other hand"; "I personally feel challenged by the transformation that is required to us in order to adapt and survive but at the same time scared of not knowing what this could trigger"

Some widened their reflection and included the entire humanity trying to give meaning to it:

"I feel overall hopeful and on a daily basis I feel sad, puzzled, amazed, humbled, angry, concerned, touched, inspired and excited too. I feel a sense of possibility being available to humanity right now"

However, a sense of hope prevailed in their descriptions of the current state of the world:

"After overcoming the initial "what's going on and what should I do" phase when I felt worried, I am letting things flow and somehow I feel quite calm and curious how things will turn out"

## ACTIONS

Even in a time where limited action was imposed by the lockdown restrictions, participants were active because of choices made previously. They had been able to create their own reference communities - living in an intentional community in the countryside or having a like-minded circle of friends - and this was a steady anchor for most of them.

The contingent situation was taken as a way to reaffirm the choices made previously:

"Let it be. Before the Quarantine-period I thought I really should do something, but now I simply think: let it be! Everything is already happening. People are understanding what is the difference between country and city. Between a flat and a farm. Between a condominium and a country community. Between an orangery, a vegetable garden, a fruit forest and a supermarket"

Or it was taken as an opportunity to expand and reach out to people in new ways and to enlarge the contexts of actions and being:

"Due to the pandemic I am designing my online courses/seminars"

"I have collected a practical folder containing information (aimed at young people) called Self-care in Corona times and sent it to about 30 people, many were happy about that. I do posts on FB... related to self-care and I tried to get a green light to do my "Qi gong" course for seniors online"

Or as an opportunity to create a stronger relation with oneself and for learning:

"At the moment I work more on my inner state than on the outer... to be able to respond even better after this Covid crisis"

"As this state of the world is new I feel that my duty is to stay in peace and don't be afraid. I hope I can inspire others to do the same"





*Photo: Alžběta Krejčová*

# MY WORLD, BEFORE THE COURSE

What were the immediate contexts in which the participants lived before the start of the Inner Pathways learning journey? And how did they come to be in it?

The participants were living in both urban and rural settings in Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Latvia and the UK, having different professions not all related to the topic of the course.

The type of world described here is referring to the conceptual framework and the lifestyle that was consciously chosen by the participants as their “world”, as a place from which they wanted to live and act; the place here described is not only physical, even though the majority live in close contact with the natural environment, and only few in cities.

## TURNING POINT

The choice to be more “sustainable” or “to walk towards a sustainable lifestyle” for some came in a very precise moment in time, with the contact of a very special person or experience. In that moment they almost literally “stepped on the path” and the memory is still very clear and present, seen as a turning point, a big change from the system and lifestyle of which they were part before:

“In a conscious manner a clear decision was made in 2002 under the influence of a university professor and in a time when I was looking where and how to start an indeed meaningful and useful work life. An important step on this road was a deep ecology workshop in 2003”

“In Kyrgyzstan, about 10 years ago, when I lived there with nomadic shepherds in the mountains in yurts for some months”

“When I decided not to have a car on my own when I was 18 years old, even though I had just accomplished my driver’s license”

“When as a kid I discovered I was allergic to medicines and processed food”

"In 2005 I connected with some permaculture farmers, then started to learn the interconnection of all things and assume responsibility for my actions"

"I started my journey 4 years ago when I decided to move up in the mountains in order to live harmoniously in nature and take the journey of self-sufficiency"

"More consciously when I moved to the Findhorn Community, 10 years ago"

"When I started travelling and spending more time alone in nature. That opened my eyes to unnecessary overconsumption and abusing and destroying of nature and therefore lowering the quality of people's lives and their disconnection from nature"

"I consciously departed my journey when I decided to study mindfulness. In a way this decision happened when my dad died and I promised myself to focus on the really important things in life"

## ALMOST FOREVER, SLOW TRANSITION

For others the awareness and choice to belong to a wider community of people that is connected with nature came almost naturally, since childhood or as a sequence of experiences that built on each other and brought them to the place where they are now and to a lifestyle that expresses the world they belong to:

"Already in my childhood. My mother shares stories about me picking up waste and my love of animals brought me to a dog shelter and made me vegetarian. I got my first dog that became my best friend at the age of 2"

"I would say a long time ago - sustainability has always been important to me. But the journey never was so intense like it was in the last weeks"

"Unconsciously already as a child... These things are growing very slowly in me, it is a journey. It is a very gentle climb, and sometimes more of a spiral. It is very hard to find some point"

"There is no one moment I could call back. Since elementary school I was dreaming and planning in what houses I would live in and what car I would have, and there was always in mind what could be some middle ground between my wishes or style and better for the environment".

"From childhood, growing up part-time in my grandparents' farm, and having limited resources"

"In my childhood, gardening and working on a vineyard with my parents, and walking a lot on the fields and spending time in the forest"

## PERSONAL SUSTAINABILITY

The lockdown created many challenges to the team preparing the Inner Pathways course and also to our participants, yet in parallel it created an unexpected space for self-observation, development and regeneration. In this section we look at several aspects emerging from the participants' reflections related to the individual well-being and the notion of self-sustainability that is intrinsically related to the outer forms

of sustainability. This is how they express what self-sustainability means to them, what the essence of it is for them:

"I have to trust myself, to take care of myself, to give and share the good things I have. Even if they are only my thoughts. It's important to guard my peace. Only then I can make wise decisions and actions"



*Photo: Gabriele Dürler*

"My motives turned much towards my own "sustainability" and the fact that "I can "do" sustainable things for the others ONLY WHEN I feel all right with my life and what happens in there. So I am trying to fix my (working) life in order to act sustainably for/with the others"

"If I am in balance, I can live a sustainable life – because I do not need to buy or do things in order to repress my inner discomfort. Then I am able to use my energies to meaningful actions, and to help others"

"Generally I care more about the world than about myself. This in the long term is not sustainable, so I should find the balance and become more authentic". Respondents described a growing sense of self with terms such as inner space, "the place within me, that is sensing, what is right", inner peace or inner ecology. Some specified it by connection to intuition or connection to heart: "Connecting more from a deeper place. Following my inner guidance and intuition and heart in a new way"

## SELF-DEVELOPMENT

The given time for which we were in touch with our participants, while working on the tasks of our training course, served as an offer to develop a relationship to oneself. Often cited topics were self-trust and self-belief as key to making an empowered choice:

"[I need] faith in myself, trust in my intuition, courage to show myself and to speak out"

"to let the courage come, to let things happen, to open my windows and feel more free"

"trust in my instincts to choose what to do and what not to do, the belief in myself and that there's no wrong or right"

This process lead some of them to stepping out of their comfort zone

or becoming a leader in a wider community:

"My own journey has given me the trust in myself and courage to change, do uncomfortable stuff and become more aware, more deeply feeling. And now I can honestly invite others to take the step. This is what I have been wishing for"

"[My motivation is] the inner search for the "best" there is in me - for the integrity of my being"

Integrity showed up as one of the inner principles that guided participants through the numbers of options and decisions of daily practice:

"I do not feel it would be fair to preach different "cool" practices to others but skip my own work. Integrity is very important for me. So working on myself is part of my actions toward sustainability"

## SELF-COMPASSION

Hand in hand with more trust came the topic of compassion towards oneself and others:

"I try to act towards sustainability first with compassion for myself and for others. That I am not perfect and I can not be perfect and not make mistakes. Also other people have their own shit going on, own struggles and they are doing the best they can"

"[I believe] that the base for great sustainable changes start with each person and changes in each individual. And good changes within a person start with compassion, self acceptance and love"

"I need to be more mindful and stable in terms of attention as well as actions of care. Everything I try to do for sustainability can be fruitful only if I act in a way with more respect toward capabilities and limitations both of my own and of the environment".

## BARRIERS

On the other hand, as limits to self-compassion and development, participants mentioned individual self-limiting beliefs, worries of being judged, pleasing others, not taking responsibility for their own life, need for letting go of egoistic perspectives:

“[I need to let go] my old way of thinking based on judgements. My inner core wounds need healing”

“[I need to let go] judgements about myself and others. The fear of not being enough when trying something new where I don't know the outcome or how others will judge it”

“[I need to let go of the idea that I need others to be happy. I am learning to be happy by myself as a foundation to be able to love others”

“[I need to regenerate] my inner feeling and separate my ego thoughts from deeper understanding. And give myself permission to need something and receive those things”

## SELF-CARE AND PERSONAL NEEDS

A large number of responses articulated the need for self-care, for time spent with themselves, for listening to their own needs, for taking a break or developing a routine and personal practice:

“I am used to being self-sufficient, especially emotionally, and it was recently when I felt the need to be supported and cared for that helped me see my vulnerability and my lack of practice on asking for help when it was really needed”

There were clear calls for balance and personal regeneration:

“Maybe I'm more balanced [as result of personal actions]. More able to trust my feelings and thoughts. Changes are slow but I'm grateful for every small step I grow. Results give me hope and perseverance”





Photo: Alžběta Krejčová

## CONNECTION BEYOND SELF

Strengthened by regular self-care practices a compassionate person was then seen as naturally able to connect with the wider context of community and environment and was better able to serve them or take care of them:

"I take good care of myself to be able to take care of what happens around me (not only in the nearest surroundings but on the whole planet)"

"I am in a very good state. Taking care of myself. And when I do, I feel the world better. And it feels great to feel joy and to feel sad, and heavy. I feel connected"

"I believe in the ripple effects of life. I notice that when I act with the attitude "love for all life" I feel more peace, joy, and love inside me. Only when I am connected to myself, I can connect to others"

2

# REGENERATIVE PRACTICES

*"WE CAN ONLY GIVE WHAT WE HAVE"*

*- RESEARCH PARTICIPANT*

# DIVERSITY OF PRACTICES

Participants use a large variety of practices in their everyday life to regenerate themselves. In our research more than forty different practices were mentioned. Some of the participants continued with their usual practices as

before, while others renewed their regenerative tools following the tools offered by the course.

We placed the practices of the participants into five categories. The categories are:

## BODY

These are mostly physical practices – physical exercises, activities which are about keeping us active, fit, healthy and with our energy flowing.

## MIND

Practices regarding thinking - mindfulness, all the activities we do consciously to regenerate our mind and our thoughts.

## SOCIAL

Practices of being connected to others. Being, acting in or working for a community, organizational participation or group membership.

## NATURE

Practices connected to Nature. We all are Nature so time spent with it - moving, acting, working or just being - can help us to recover, connect, be well, find meaning and vitality.

## SPIRITUAL

Spiritual practices are about enhancing our sense of connection with something larger than ourselves. It is a discipline of regular actions or activities performed to cultivate spiritual development or to create spiritual experiences.

Inner Pathways provides a collection of learning methodologies and tools that promote regenerative cultures. Borrowing the definition from Daniel Christian Wahl, regeneration is; *'the ability of a culture to nurture and renew healthy ecosystems, which is the source of wellbeing'*.

## KEY FINDINGS

There were significant changes in the personal practices our participants followed during the course. Mind practices were noticeably decreasing. Social practices increased significantly by the end of the learning journey; they actually became the most popular, whereas at the beginning they were the least mentioned. This change may be due to the release of the pandemic safety measures by the end of the course. Both Body and Nature practices had their peak at survey two during the times of strict lockdowns in some of the participating countries, halfway through their participation on the learning journey, while Spiritual practices were constant. Body practices ended as the least mentioned from being the second most popular before the journey. All the practices that are in use are widely and consciously used among participants to regenerate themselves.

The most common ones are:

1. Being in Nature
2. Meditation
3. Yoga
4. Walking and connecting with others.

Practices and experiences from the course, like the Way of Council, sit spot, mindful practices and sharing with others, were built into their everyday life. At a certain point of the learning journey there were some popular practices: spending time in nature and mindful activities at survey two; Council, connecting others, sharing and eating in community at survey three. Meanwhile, some practices which were present before the learning journey were not mentioned anymore, such as singing, playing music. On the other hand, some practices have a consistent presence in the participants' lives, such as meditation, gardening,

## COUNCIL

Council is an ancient way and modern practice whose roots are within the natural world, spanning diverse cultures and religions. This practice elicits an experience of true community, recognizing that each voice needs to be heard, that every person has a gift, a story to share, a piece of the whole.

*Source*

<https://waysofcouncil.net>

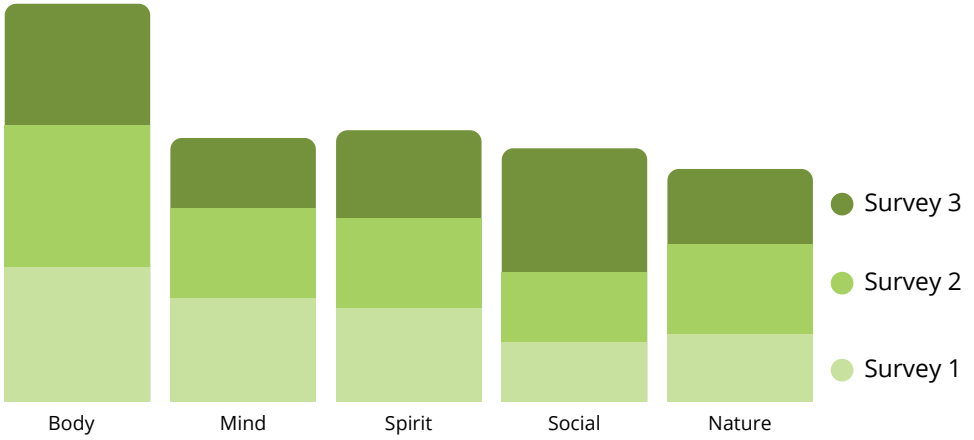
dancing, cooking, and qigong. One interesting change: walking was quite a popular practice in the first two rounds and then, suddenly, almost disappeared by the end. We feel that this might have something to do with their 'toolkit' increasing as they progressed with the learning journey, and also, as the weather got warmer people probably felt more drawn to doing other activities than before.

## SIT SPOT

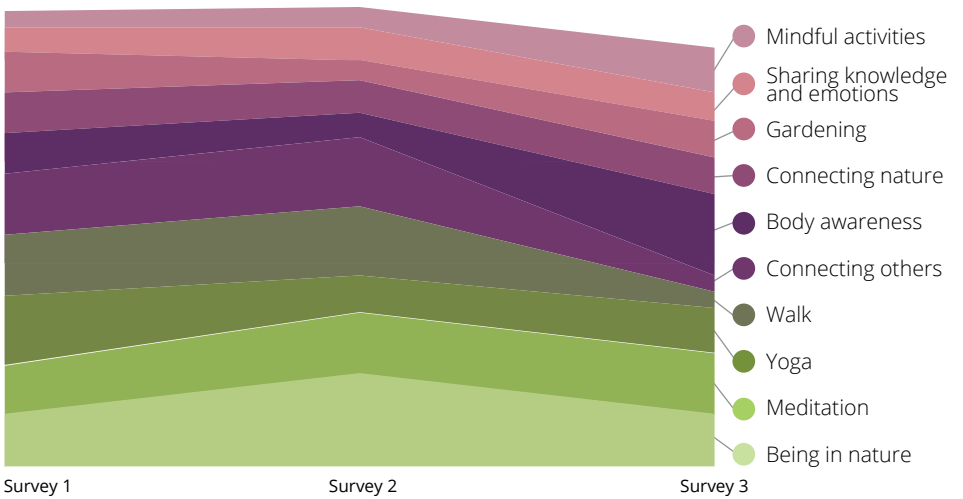
The sit spot is a nature connection practice that will guide you to build an intimate relationship with the natural world, it is a core routine of deep nature connection. It is a practice of adapting to a place on the landscape, getting to know it really well by regularly spending time there, and tuning our senses with the plants, animals and other natural elements. The sit spot is an observation routine.

*Source*

<https://innerpathways.eu/podcast/sitspot/>



*Practices mentioned in survey 1, 2 and 3*



*Top ten practices mentioned in Survey 1, 2 and 3*

# ACT

According to the participants, self-regenerative practices can serve as an inner foundation to be able to act as a trainer, facilitator, community leader and change maker in the field of sustainability.

"The spiritual practices (...) keeping myself open to feel and be with what arises, keep my inner guidance clear so that I can move from inspired action"

"I need to renew myself to be able to act sustainably. I feel that I can't help others if the most important issues of my private life are not healthy"

"When I am in balance myself, I have the feeling that I can influence more strongly what happens to me and around me"

"I need to be strong, healthy, calm, kind and smart, to be able to spread it all around"

"Mindfulness and peace of mind needs to be cultivated in order to be effective in the actions"

"... recharge first and then share with others"

"The inner fuels the outer, I feel it is this simple. The inner work sustains me, nourishes me, inspires me, connects me and keeps looking at things with fresh eyes"

"Being balanced inside gives me energy to keep up on the outside"

"I can only engage with the outside, interact, be open and patient when I am calm and comforted inside"

"Only when I am in harmony with my inner self and take it into account can my actions become indeed meaningful and successful"



## CONNECT

Practices are also tools for being connected:

"The time in nature and how good I feel in it is preventing me from destroying it and inspiring me to protect it"

"Nature reminds me that we are all connected, although we often feel separate"

## BE

Practices help us to live a meaningful life on Earth:

"... practising meditation leads naturally to find more inner space, more abundance inside and in simple things. It leads to living slowly, doing less and breathing more, to enjoy every moment, so your life naturally changes towards sustainability!"

"The inner practices help to remind and deepen my sense of the "taste" of sustainability, and the outer actions are where I experiment and see what deepens this taste in my everyday life"

The importance of self-regenerative practices was well known among our participants as they regularly use some of it in their everyday life. Also, the connection between the inner and outer sustainability was obvious for most of them. However, it was interesting to see that inner practices - renewing oneself, being in balance with oneself, the need for being healthy - were more highlighted in the survey filled out before the course, whereas during the learning journey nature connection was more emphasized as a well-being enhancing tool.



*Photo: Giulia Maria Miscioscia*

# CONNECTION BETWEEN INNER AND OUTER

In the introduction to our training course, we were calling for those in search for the proper response to the current ecological-social-political-economic state of the world (without knowing about the approaching lockdown). For some it was a surprise that our proposed learning journey didn't go straight into planning a public campaign to save some land or to support growing local businesses.

Our journey directed their attention inwards, to their own state of being in the world, reflecting on the current news about the COVID crisis, cleaning the inner space, discovering what is inside them in terms of feelings, motivations, and their potential gifts. Only in the second half of our journey,

we joined our shared efforts and talked about actions to regenerate ourselves, our communities and our planet.

In our survey, there was a clear question investigating the relationship between the Inner and the Outer. The learning journey gave participants time to discover their own answers, yet since the very first survey, only a few were not able to formulate a description of it. In other words, people joining our journey were already aware of the connection between inner state and outward action. One of the possible reasons is that most of them had already had their personal practices in place and had experience with perceiving their inner world.

## DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONAL STRENGTHS

“Mindfulness and peace of mind needs to be cultivated in order to be effective in the actions. [...] I can only engage with the outside, interact, be open and patient when I am calm and comforted inside”

Both, practices and nature, help developing personal strengths that function as resources for further activities and support one's

satisfaction and motivation:

“When I am in balance myself, I have the feeling that I can influence more strongly what happens to me and around me. I like to have a lot of energy and infect others with my enthusiasm”

## LESSONS FROM PRACTICES

“The inner work sustains me, nourishes me, inspires me, connects me and keeps looking at things with fresh eyes”

When participants developed a substantial or regular personal practice and had a deeper understanding of it, such practice then functioned as a guiding principle for their personal lifestyle as they represented a set of values that can be applied across various areas of life:

“My inner regenerative practices help me to see the truth, which we can find in ourselves and in nature. It helps me to be more patient because everything has its time. And once I can see the truth I can no longer participate in the false narratives in our society... or at least it starts to feel wrong and disturbing to be part of that which is just a step from taking an action towards change”

## INNER AND OUTER IN ALIGNMENT

“There is a deep and continuous connection, it is like a mirror, developing together, step by step”

Inner practices are thus in alignment with ‘outer’ or outward actions. From the shared perspective of our participants they are inseparable, one stems from another and if one feels stuck in one of the areas, the other will also be affected by it:

“Even small changes have a ripple effect and the more I connect to myself in my inner work, the better I can act and connect towards others. Nature reminds me that we are all connected, although we often feel separate”

“The presence that is given by the personal practices is the space that allows all the actions to be conceived”

The inner state was perceived as a factor that resources the outward action:

"The inner fuels the outer, I feel it is this simple. [...] It's the fuel for my actions, the navigator and the steering wheel to get me into the direction I want to go"

## **BOTH WAYS AND BURNOUT**

At the same time, they described the two-way characteristic in the relationship between inner practice and outward action. Our inner state is influenced by the outer happenings and as such they determine our actions:

"I need to renew myself to be able to act sustainably. I feel that I can't help others if the most important issues of my private life are not healthy. But of course, the balance is important. Sustainable actions can make inner regeneration more effective"

"It does not make sense to act for outer sustainability while exhausting myself internally. However, I feel that I still have a great deal to explore and to learn about how my sincere wish to show up and support outwardly can power and deepen the meaning of my inner practice, and vice versa"

This nicely illustrates the topic of inner sustainability, when inner practices can serve also as a key to prevent burnout:

"If lacking appropriate regenerative practices or neglecting their consistent practice one can easily lose orientation and hope. In such cases actions can become inappropriate and hence unsuccessful, while in the worst case one can even burn out and find her/himself in a situation when action is simply not possible"

"As within so without"

As the wise proverb above describes it, the inner determines the quality of the outward actions:

“The weaker and more down I feel, the less connected and giving I can be. So recharge first and then share with others. That is why I love nature - it does not suck you out, it does not expect anything. It is there, here for all and welcomes you anytime with open arms, without conditions...”

If there is a mess and lack of balance inside, it is reflected also on the decisions, behaviours and actions one exerts:

“We can only give what we have. The connection [between inner and outer] is integrity. Without personal regeneration and sustainability, the actions that are meant well and aiming toward sustainability, can even turn out to be counterproductive - for self, for others, for whole systems”

## SHARING THE INNER WITH THE OUTER

When describing the inner state as a resource for the outward action, participants in their answers often described the will to share their inner cultivated qualities and practices with the outer world, both in their work or way of living and relating to others:

“I rely on my inner work to be able to show up outside. It is the foundation that sustains my energy and motivation and requires discipline and nurturing to keep it balanced. I won't be able to take action if my inner practice was flawed”

“I do what I love and use it naturally to try and enrich people around me :) I think it is a lot about searching and self-work for me and I try to offer it then to people who ask for it. So it is pretty natural symbiosis at this point. I inhale something, I work with it and then I give it out, sometimes in a more processed form, which might be easier to grasp”

## ACTIONS: OUTER AND PERSONAL

Interestingly, there were two levels where the quality of inner and outer connections reflected. For some participants this influenced their personal lifestyle and way of personal relating to other people and the world around:

"They are intrinsically connected: if I have time to do all my inner regenerative practices it is because I decided to live more in harmony with nature and without stress for jobs or other constrictions in the city. Living in a sustainable way it is itself an inner regenerative practice!!"

"My personal travel experience and yoga are teaching me about what is important in life and about principles of good and sustainable living (non-violence, no overconsumption...) which directly reflect in my actions - not eating meat, living with little possessions, seeing importance in having a clean nature..."

For others this connection went further on to professional activities:

"I want to try out myself and learn to change and grow, to feel how it feels inside to welcome change, challenge yourself and what it might cost. So then when I meet with other people (in seminars, workshops) and give this forward that it is my authentic experience, not just quotes read somewhere. Now I invest mostly in myself to give this forward when the time comes"



Photo: Gabriele Dürler



# 3

## ACTIONS FOR THE NEW WORLD

*“WITHOUT PERSONAL REGENERATION AND SUSTAINABILITY, THE ACTIONS THAT ARE MEANT WELL AND AIMING TOWARD SUSTAINABILITY, CAN EVEN TURN OUT TO BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE - FOR SELF, FOR OTHERS, FOR WHOLE SYSTEMS”*

*- RESEARCH PARTICIPANT*

# INNER AND OUTER

Our aim for this part of the survey was to see what kind of actions participants took in response to the state of the world as they perceived it, how these actions changed throughout the learning journey and what the resources were that they could rely on to act.

During the journey, the participants went through a world-wide crisis that none of us had experienced before. This situation was clearly reflected in the actions they took

## 3.1 INNER ACTIONS

These actions are aimed at the self, the inner world and are related to self-care, personal development and spiritual practices.

during the learning journey and it also influenced the changes of their actions throughout the period of the research. To have a clear idea whether the actions were influenced by the lockdown or the learning journey, we added questions to the third round of the survey about this.

The actions participants took in response to the state of the world mainly fell under the following categories:

The answers of the participants revealed that some actions they take are the same as the practices they use to maintain their wellbeing, motivation and harmony, such as meditation, which comes up frequently:

### ACTION

“Meditate alone and with others”



### INNER PRACTICE

- Meditation

### ACTION

“Spiritual and physical practices”



### INNER PRACTICE

- meditation
- prayer
- physical exercises (preferably outdoor)
- gardening

There are some actions that are strongly related to the practices in a way that the action is a summary of

the practices or the practice aims at the inner action they describe:

### **ACTION**

"Taking care of myself"



### **INNER PRACTICE**

- Choosing the work I want to do
- Saying no to things I am not sure of or which do not inspire me
- Breathwork
- Moving my body in different ways
- Dancing, stretching
- Walking long distances
- Swimming
- Saying yes to junk food when I really feel like
- Having conversations with people
- Enjoying silence
- Journaling

### **ACTION**

"Building my own strength and resilience as a person; meaningfully connecting with others; speaking truly, from the heart"



### **INNER PRACTICE**

- Keeping a planner
- Journaling
- Daily yoga practice & meditation
- Awareness practices (walking, breathing, eating etc.)
- Connecting with nature
- Meaningful, truthful conversations
- Conscious eating and consumption

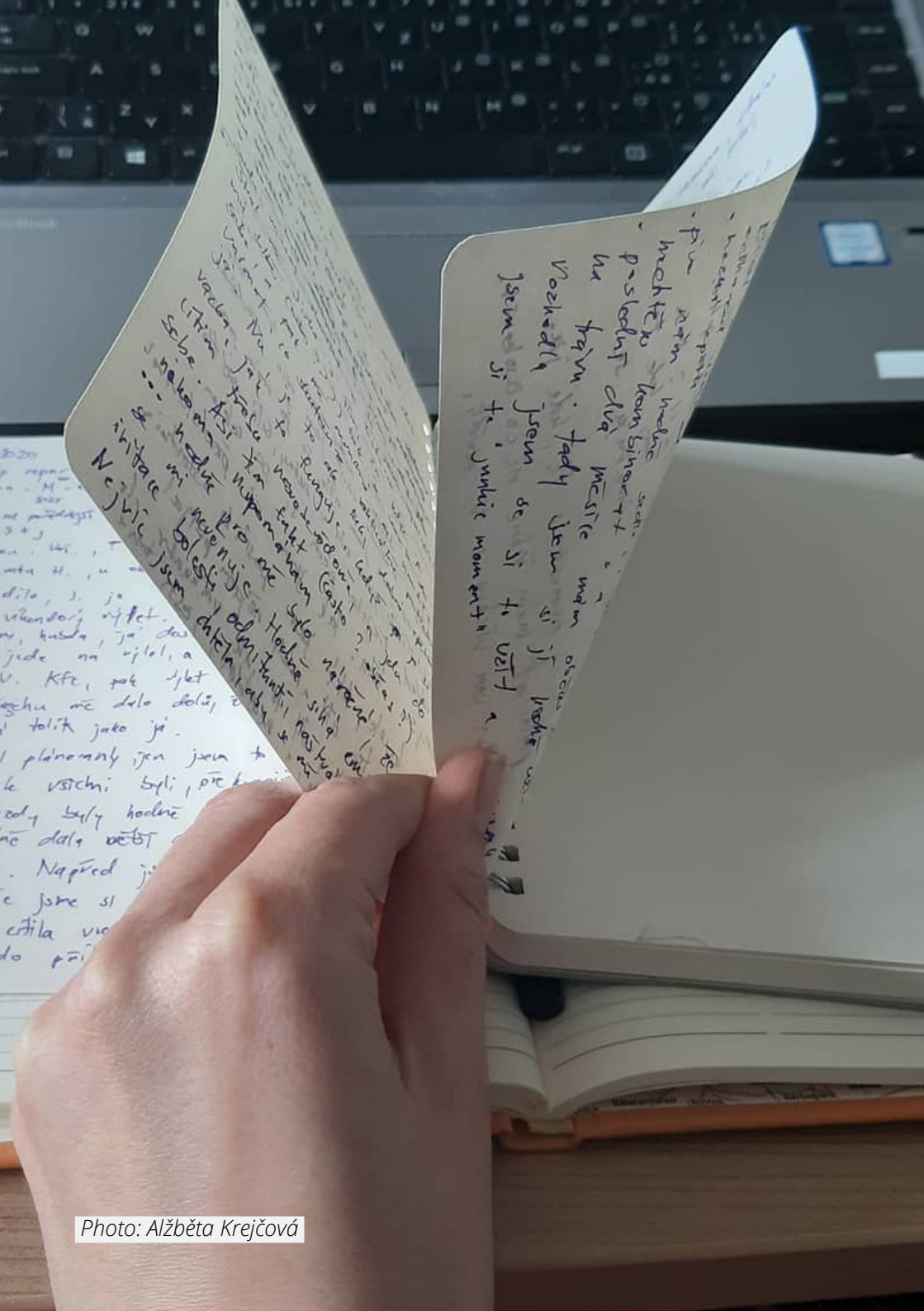


Photo: Alžběta Krejčová

- Fin...  
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Some of the inner actions are about self-care (maintaining peace, good health, feeling connected), with some of them aiming at gathering or strengthening resources to be able to offer support for others or for later action:

"The spiritual practices above - keeping myself open to feel and be with what arises, keep my inner guidance clear so that I can move from inspired action"

"I take good care of myself to be able to take care of what happens around me"

Some participants were at a standpoint, in a preparation phase observing, trying to understand the underlying problems, learning, researching, in order to get ready for action:

"Developing a specialism in ecological design-thinking and personal commitment to how I am affecting the world I live in"

"Waiting, having a pause, trying not to jump into action... observe, reflect"

"informing myself about alternatives of living, watching how the political situation is evolving and thinking how I can take action or make a difference"

"I deepen my capacity to listen and to care so I can respond more skilfully to the situation"

Several participants mentioned that keeping their attitude positive (openness, empathy, trust, calmness, peacefulness) is the way they take action:

"I am not participating in the herd spreading fear and panic and I am trying to talk with people who do"

"I think that guarding my peace already helps the world"

"I try to keep calm in front of this chaos"

## 3.2

# OUTWARD ACTIONS

These actions are aimed at the outside world. We start with the most recurring ones in the participants' answers.

## SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE

Sustainable lifestyle came up as a common way of taking action. Some of the participants used the word sustainable but quite often there is a specific aspect of sustainability mentioned that they are engaged with, both on a personal and on a community level. Both environmental and societal areas of action are represented. The list includes using resources available, conscious consumption (both food and energy), growing food, reducing waste, conscious decisions based on the impact they have, planting trees, supporting the local economy, creating local networks (food exchange), and creating a self-sustainable community. Here is a collection of some of the answers:

"I think we have to live a 'normal life' as much we can using resources that are available"

"I try to shop in second hands, support local producers, save energy, intentionally don't have a car (even though travelling by bus as an adult looks weird), produce less waste, travel sustainably, and try to avoid throw-away products"

"I try to live and raise my children in a more sustainable way (doing and conveying all sorts of everyday green practices)"

"We are building a self-sustainable reality and we create networks with other local projects in order to structure a local economy too"



*Photo: Giulia Maria Miscioscia*

"I decided to live in nature, in the most sustainable way I can (with the objective to improve always more!), with the project to initiate a community based on self-reliance and self-production"

"I participate in the local community. I consciously consume, boycotting certain companies. I reuse, upcycle and recycle"

"Taking care of my land, planting new trees"

## COMMUNITY, COMMUNICATION, RELATIONSHIPS

Community is strongly related to the topic of living sustainably, mainly in the form of strengthening or creating local networks and organising and participating in food exchange. Another aspect of actions related to community is being active in tending to relationships (by cultivating kindness and compassion, engaging in conversation, having meaningful connections, communicating from the heart); caring for the wellbeing of the community and its members (women's circle, participating and supporting the community, organising community events); or creating an intentional community itself.

What stands out is the fact that several people mentioned tending to relationships. They consciously connect with people, make sure that the relationships are meaningful, and

the quality of communication is high, based on kindness, attention, care, support and respect. The expression "from the heart" came up in the reflections often, which is a specific term used during the learning journey.

"I interact with the kids and the elder people of my little community talking and playing with them, finding time to exchange needs and facts of life... I meet up with a circle of women learning how to be sisters and support each other and sing together"



"With the project to initiate a community based on self-reliance and self-production, where relations are based on deep sharings of vision, emotions, motivations, etc. using the most respectful way to communicate and to interact with each other"

"Opening Councils where people can stay together in a simple and deep way, offering different kinds of regeneration spaces and opportunities"

## TEACHING BY EXAMPLE AND MOTIVATING PEOPLE

A few of the participants talked about setting an example and motivating others. The examples they set are mainly connected to professional life, sustainable building, raising their children in a conscious way, reforming education, food production, being politically active, and sharing literature and ideas:

"I am trying to build my home in a way that it can be a nice example for everyone"

"We did it with our kids, now we are home-schooling. Looking forward to building it for other kids"

"I learned a lot since I decided to move to a rural area. Now I can do and share with others many things about transforming food and self-production in general"

## HELPING OTHERS

There are participants whose actions are more direct than setting an example for motivating people. It appeared in the answers that they are keen on offering help to others or their community, mainly in personal development:

"I try to help grow people around me, that is something I love to do and feel very strong pull towards. Very often career-wise, I somehow love discussing it with people, searching for options, what they could do to suit them, what are real options"

“Supporting people (and organisations) on their way of self-discovery, learning and development”

## PROMOTING SUSTAINABILITY

Some of the participants do not only lead a sustainable lifestyle but they also promote sustainability and related topics, they raise awareness by talking to people, writing a blog, poetry, etc.:

“I read, write, translate and raise awareness”

“Talk to people, write a blog about it...”

“I spend time in nature to deepen my love for the Earth, and communicate that to others through poetry”

## TEACHING, EDUCATION, SHARING, SUSTAINABILITY AS A PROFESSION

(WORKSHOPS, OFFERING INFO ONLINE, ETC.),

For some of the participants acting for sustainability is part of their profession or vocation, they transfer their knowledge and experience through educational programmes, offering workshops, information online or they work for NGOs that aim at promoting social and ecological sustainability, nature protection, sustainable production, political activism, etc.:

“In 2015 I left my job as a manager for a big corporate and I became a permaculture teacher and facilitator to spread the idea that everybody can change direction”

“Teach and share holistic practices to reconnect to nature”

"I organize community events and help others experience the miracles of Nature"; "Recently my voluntary work evolved nearly into a part time job. I'm the member of two work groups (composting & environmental education)"

"... professional work in advocacy & policy-making; including aspects of sustainability in education work I do"



*Photo: Bara Stemper-Bauerova*

# THE CHANGE IN THE ACTIONS DURING THE ARCH OF THE LEARNING JOURNEY

## INNER ACTIONS

In survey one, the majority of the answers focused on maintaining a good inner (emotional, mental) state. It is also embedded in these answers that they were doing this to resist the depleting influence of the current state of the world. The terms that described this process are: keep inner guidance clear, stay peaceful, keep body and mind pure, strengthen inner state, keep a healthy mindset. Since most of the statements about the state of the world refer to the unprecedented times of the pandemic, these sentences seem to be mainly related to the uncertainty, unclarity caused by the global response to the pandemic.

Methods or exact practices are rarely specified and all we can learn from the information the participants shared is that they mainly focused on personal development. A few regenerative practices are mentioned as actions:

"I hold meditations, take part in different workshops, work on personal development topics, family constellations etc. and on a long time I prepare a nature-mindfulness-healing retreat"

"We go out into nature every day..."

"meditate alone and with others"

In survey two, there are almost twice as many references to inner actions and self-care as in the first one. The survey was taken in the middle of the course when the focus had been directed toward inner practices. The awareness of inner preparation for outward action increased in this round and became more varied, the connection between inner and outer became more tangible: self-reflection to contribute to sustainability, learning about alternative ways of living, keeping awareness about the political situation to see where action can be taken, working on self to be able to offer something valuable, find own potential and create a community, inner work to strengthen values and express it outwards. In survey three, answered at the end of the course, new values appeared: openness, consciousness, empathy, trust and respect. Inner work, self-care and

spiritual practices were still present but to a lesser extent. Outward actions were hardly mentioned. These new qualities refer to a more open, relaxed, trustful state. Inner regenerative practices that came up are meditation, yoga and listening (one of the main qualities of council). Throughout the three surveys there

were differences in the answers to *"What actions do you take in response to the state of the world you described above?"* and the answers to *"In what concrete ways did your participation at the Inner Pathways Learning Journey change your actions toward sustainability?"*

**1. CHANGE IN THE QUALITY OF ACTIONS:** participants described that they act from an embodied wisdom or that they are becoming more authentic:

"The sustainability theme is more grounded in me. So naturally it is going through my every action, every decision, being in general"

"I started to try out small rituals and practices which I am involving in my life. This is still happening, I need more time to get back to the inhale, exhale materials. It will help me to have less fears and be more authentic I believe"

**2. THE INNER PATHWAYS LEARNING JOURNEY,** or the methods and practices offered, **WAS DESCRIBED AS A SOURCE OF MOTIVATION AND INSPIRATION** for some of the participants and helped supporting them in feeling empowered:

"I have felt the wish to have a council-like circle of people again to exchange about the state of the world and to start acting"

"I became more aware that all that what we are doing DOES matter and gets resonance"

3. Some participants shared that they don't feel alone but supported by having found peers or a **SENSE OF COMMUNITY** in this group. They also mentioned that it is comforting to feel that there is a sense of **SHARED RESPONSIBILITY** in the journey towards sustainability:

"Encounters with similar thinking created motivation and experience that waking up was taking place around the world"

"I feel the "shared" responsibility. I am not feeling alone"

#### 4. They also reported **FEELING MORE OPEN, HAVING MORE TRUST AND COURAGE AND LESS FEAR:**

"I started to try out small rituals and practices which I am involving in my life [...] It will help me to have less fears..."

"courage to stay in the place of not knowing"

**5. A CHANGE AND INCREASE IN THE QUALITY OF COMMUNICATION** also came up a few times. Participants started to use the term "speak from the heart" (used in the Way of Council, one of the practices introduced during the learning journey) and incorporated council into their lives:

"Initiating new communication methods in the working groups I'm involved in"

"Proposing Councils in my Village"

6. A lot of the participants reported a shift of focus from outward actions and focusing on the practical aspects of sustainability to **SELF-SUSTAINABILITY AND SELF-CARE**. They incorporated inner practices into their lives during the learning journey:

"I focus every day on my personal well-being, recovery. I create time and space for what I'm passionate for. I act less outwards and don't feel the urge to act outwards. Through mindfulness practices I learned how to intentionally make space and time for creativity"

"The focus has been shifted/relocated from the external to the internal more. All the talks, readings, practices helped me to dig deeper as well as to see myself and my life from a different perspective"

"It allowed me to explore and play with my inner world and how it comes alive when engaging with others. I've learnt to appreciate and diversify inner practices more"

7. On the other hand, the focus of some of the participants who had already been engaged with self-care, inner work, and inner practices, shifted **FROM INNER TO OUTER**. For example:

*Question: What actions do you take in response to the state of the world you described above?*

#### **SURVEY ONE:**

"At the moment I work more on my inner state than on the outer..."

#### **SURVEY TWO:**

"... Becoming more aware of the source I act from, allowing myself more stillness, being more aware of my patterns in difficult situations, observing my judgements towards others and letting them go..."

#### **SURVEY THREE:**

"... being kind to people and trying to help where I can... prototyping new projects supporting awareness like the women's retreat"



Question: In what concrete ways did your participation at the Inner Pathways Learning Journey change your actions toward sustainability?

"... my idea about the women's retreat got more and more concrete and now I will prototype it in august"

"I pay even more attention to recycling/reusing than before. Growing my own vegetables - not only flowers :-)) and I think 3x before I buy something/do a needed/not needed check"

8. The Inner Pathways Learning Journey had an influence on the **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT** of some of the participants. It helped them to clarify their vocation and make the first steps towards changing their profession or offered tools they could use in their professional life:

"Giving me new instruments, for facilitating groups, showing me the possibilities of doing online meetings and workshops..."

"It gave me ideas for changing my work into a more sustainable and regenerative one so now I am starting to study more about wilderness and adventure therapies and nature based experiences"

"It motivated me to think about offering other workshops..."

"It has also helped me verbalise in some ways how I want to work and what I can offer as an inner pathway towards sustainability in the work that I do"

9. Participants started to **INCORPORATE INNER PRACTICES INTO THEIR LIVES**, specifically the practices and methods offered during the Learning Journey. Some of them also mentioned that they are planning to revisit the resources

of the exhale sessions. There are participants who are already promoting and offering the practices forward:

“Gave a lot of new information and resources about regenerative cultures, and new practices for everyday life”

“work more on the elimination of my personal divides (ecological, social as well as spiritual), I try to be more mindful and change certain aspects in my life (habits, attitudes as well as job), as well as going on the Path”

“I’ve learnt to appreciate and diversify inner practices more. I’ve practiced speaking from the heart and connecting to others - which has a tremendous effect in my personal and professional life already”

“The running theme of how I engage has kept me engaged. It sits in my heart as an open question. There have been many resources shared which will take some time to integrate”

## RESOURCES FOR ACTION

The participants listed a high number of varied resources that support them in acting for sustainability. The most common resources are the following:

**THEIR COMMUNITY, FAMILY OR ORGANISATION** that supports them by offering patience and a stable background. These are resources of experience and knowledge or a network of like-minded people who create together or inspire action:

“Community of like minds is a big support”



*Photo: Ilze Zvejniece*

A lot of the participants mentioned inspiring people, people they can learn from, colleagues, friends on the same path or other kinds of supportive people. These **INSPIRATIONAL PEOPLE** are activists, a source of knowledge and experience, like-minded peers or teachers on the same path:

“Peers, teachers that share their experience, knowledge and hope”

They often listed **TEACHINGS, INCLUDING SPIRITUAL PRACTICES, GUIDELINES, OR CONCEPTS** as resources:

“Many ancient and modern teachings: community building tools, conscious movement, artistic expression, embodiment tools, nature based wisdom”

**PUBLICATIONS, INFORMATION AND DATA.** These came up in different forms, such as books, online materials, videos, talks, interviews, websites:

“Also listening to inspiring talks and seeing eye-opening videos keeps me on the track”

Some of the participants mentioned **INNER REGENERATIVE PRACTICES**, such as meditation, yoga or mindfulness:

“Practices that reconnect/remind me of my love for the Earth, and of a depth of care for myself, others and living creatures”

And in the second survey the **RESOURCES OFFERED BY THE INNER PATHWAYS LEARNING JOURNEY** are referred to by almost half of the participants:

"I use as a sponge some of the videos, podcasts from the Project webpage and others and I digest them at the moment"

According to some, **FINANCIAL RESOURCES**, a stable background, money being available offer the freedom to act:

"And that I am not lacking money desperately at the moment"

And **TIME** itself also came up as an important resource for being able to act for sustainability (which is not always in abundance):

"Time which I steal :- ) from my family evenings plus personal breaks"

**TECHNOLOGY AND INTERNET** are also considered as great resources:

"I am grateful to technology, too, who allowed us to meet and connect :-)"

**NATURE** came up in different ways, appreciating the land they live on, the resources that are offered by it and also a connection to nature in itself:

"Nature, trees, fruits, wind, rain, sun,  
sea, flowers, blue sky"

A lot of the participants mentioned that they can rely on their **INNER RESOURCES**, such as their faith, trust, optimism, energy, intuition, peace, etc.:

"I am relying on my inner support and  
truth"

# RESULTS OF ACTION

## MYSELF AFTER THE COURSE

Participation in the course resulted in inner changes for participants, sometimes more evident, sometimes more subtle. The answers showed how the aim of the course - to support and equip participants so they can be more apt to act in their own environment - was achieved:

“The Inner Pathways learning journey empowered me to deepen my life-long journey towards sustainability”

The answers not only made general comments about the validity of the course for their professional life, but they also pointed at specific tools and methods that were constantly practised during the course as concrete resources for their future work:

“[I have been] developing new skills, knowing more people going in the same direction of regeneration, learning new instruments to share with people to connect with them (like “the way of council”, new beautiful artistic exercises, visualisations and meditations)”

“It supported me in every sense (open community, peer-meetings, information, tools) to find out what should be the next step on my own journey. In most of the practices offered I really see myself as a “beginner” and besides being grateful for them, I find them really inspirational”

Sense of community/common purpose among participants

A special reference was made to the larger community that was created during the course as a resource, as a confirmation that there are many people engaged in the same quest, thus giving a common sense of direction and purpose:

“I strengthened my willingness to act, by meeting people thinking similarly. I have strengthened my positive vision”

“It gives me the feeling of being part of a collective of people moving towards a more conscious and regenerative way of life”



*Photo: Giulia Maria Miscioscia*



The sense of belonging that was created during the course is seen as a resource that can be handy after the course's end, not only because of the insight acquired, but also because the "real people" can still be contacted. There is a common awareness that several people from different places are "in contact" even if far from each other:

"There are possibilities to connect with people with similar vibes. My biggest insight was that I see that awakening is happening world wide. This knowledge is very important"

"A community connecting people from several countries can also grow online over a relatively short span of time"

"It has been a resource and a community that I could access when needed for inspiration and support"

## MY WORLD, AFTER THE COURSE

### AT A MACRO LEVEL

The course finished when the lockdown was just over or about to end in several countries, still with a variety of modalities and open questions on how life can continue after returning to "normality". The understanding and the picture of the world that was waiting for the participants is described by them very similarly to how it was described at the beginning of the course, more than 2 months before.

With a positive perspective:

"As I haven't read the news in the last 3 months, I only know that where I currently live there are a lot of singing birds, sweet cherries, biting mosquitoes, caring people, and noisy construction works. There is hope out there"

"There is now a transition in consciousness from one step to another. People move from thinking with a mind to thinking with heart, from survival to living"

And still, at the same time, with a negative perspective and uncertainty:

“There are riots, restlessness and a lot of fear-based behaviour going on. No security anymore”

However, some witnessed that people have a new consciousness due to the new routines they had put in place during the lockdown:

“I feel that many people have started to be active in the fields like sustainability, gardening, civic engagement, resistance movements etc. People started to be more conscious about the way of (their) living and about other people”

“We can experience more and more natural phenomena, weather conditions which are not normal at this time of the year in this part of the world. It is getting clear for more and more people that this is because of climate change and these are the consequences of our lifestyle. During Covid people might have experienced the need to connect to nature and to have a strong social network. There is a change”.

## **AT A LOCAL LEVEL OR THE LEVEL OF ACTIONS THAT I CAN INFLUENCE**

As the routine around the participants changed their personal routine changed too, for some in structured ways, for some in spontaneous ways.

There are two main focuses that the participants made evident through their answers. On one side they put in place routines that nourish their inner world and these routines are seen as necessary steps for enlightened actions, and, on the other side, there are actions in the outer world that were integrated in their

routines during the lockdown. Often these two aspects are interrelated, and some actions were aimed at the fundamental need to feel good in a situation that is uncertain for the majority and that has obliged to reconsider what “normality” is.

Here we look at the connection between routine and the inner landscape. New routines, wanted or imposed by the pandemic lockdown, have either strengthened choices made previously or brought the need

to reconsider some elements or aspects:

"[I am] working on my inner self and awareness: being kind to people and trying to help where I can; showing empathy but not pity; trusting life in its core; meditating, sending good energies to the world; connecting with my heart"

"Building my own strength and resilience as a person; meaningfully connecting with others; speaking truly, from the heart"

That also included the connection with people in the family:

"[I] raise my children in the countryside and [I have] chosen Steiner school for them"

The connection with the natural environment on the other hand is described as follows:

"I try to live simply -- eating mostly vegan, rarely if ever flying, buying food only from Europe, minimising my consumption and questioning whether I need to buy new things"

"I registered for a natural dyeing workshop and I search for connections with others who are in dyeing with plants, weaving etc. I plan a garden with dyeing plants"

"I spend time in nature to deepen my love for the Earth"

## That is also interrelated with their current working field or profession:

"The current Corona crisis broke many aspects of my life to pieces, but it gave me a chance to start fresh and think about how I want to live, work, connect..."

"I'm an active blogger. I also work for an ecovillage that is about to be born"

"I still plan to become self-employed as a nature and hiking guide and in global citizenship education and to engage in networks of sustainable production and living in my region"

"Together with my friends we are planning to create a locally based NGO to promote international/ intergenerational dialogue, cross-border cooperation and to save/ promote lost cultural heritage"

"[Offering] open Councils where people can stay together in a simple and deep way, offering different kinds of regeneration spaces and opportunities"

"[I plan to] study more about wilderness, adventure therapies, nature-based experiences and change my way of working into a more sustainable and helpful one. Join some volunteering/WWOOF programme once the situation allows it. Connect and cooperate with organisations helping wildlife and other animals"

## THE DRIVE TO ACTION

Based on the answers participants gave to the question *"What are the results of your actions and what do they mean to you?"*, we can conclude that the following are the main motivations, the drives that keep them acting for sustainability:

To **SUPPORT OTHERS**, to be in service:

"I can say that I strive for conscious conduct and that I wish to live a life of deep contribution and service"

To **INSPIRE**, motivate others:

"I feel happy and proud when I see that my work, lifestyle motivated people and they started to change, shift"; "Recently, some people around told me that I've inspired them (students) and that means a lot..."

To feel that they can **MAKE A CHANGE** in the world and in others' lives, that they can make a difference:

"...there are always situations of greater consequence, where I know that they would have ended differently without my intervention"

To **LEARN** something:

"I learned a lot since I decided to move to a rural area. Now I can do and share with others many things..."  
"more knowledge, more embodied awareness and this is vital for me"

To feel that we are **NOT ALONE**, we are doing this together:

“... they built a net of communication and support that doesn't make me and the others feel alone and this brings light in our lives”

Meeting **NEW PEOPLE**:

“I meet a lot of new and interesting people through my actions and I appreciate it a lot”

**FEELING CALM** and stable:

“I am feeling much more calm, more understanding and open for the future. And I know I will be able to cope with it, whatever comes”



# CONCLUSIONS

## SEEING OPPORTUNITIES IN CHALLENGING TIMES

The peculiar historical moment created by the COVID-19 pandemic made itself a dominant element in the learning journey. We realised that, instead of it being a historical context, the pandemic became a central issue itself, something like a pair of glasses through which the whole set of experiences and feelings that were the object of our study was seen. It was a magnifying glass that demanded a look at reality with a regenerative mindset and to face it thanks to the support of regenerative practices. In a way it offered a perfect “real case scenario” where the participants could apply new practices straight away that otherwise might have stayed on a theoretical and ideal level only. This context offered a perfect example of a transition time and its challenges, generating contradictory

feelings in people, worry and hope, a reaffirmation of their lifestyle or a change in direction towards where they move, and the lockdown created an unexpected space for self-observation. The time of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown in spring 2020 is seen by participants as a liminal state, a global transition into another era. The crisis is seen as a catalyst for polarisation and radicalisation, a growing duality of the current world’s narrative, as if two parallel realities were existing: there is human suffering and collapse of ecosystems, and cooperation and awakening at the same time. Amongst the participants’ answers, there is hope that the global systems will change and a new world is emerging with the culture of regeneration.

## EMERGENCE OF REGENERATIVE CULTURES

The aspects of the present world crisis that many see negatively are perceived as learning opportunities e.g. the world under pandemic as opportunity for something new to be born. The values outlined by the participants draw a clear picture

of how a regenerative culture is characterised. Main values are integrity and authenticity, respect and compassion, a renewed connection to nature, community and self.





Photo: Viktória Csörgő

## STRONG NEED FOR SELF-CARE FOR EFFECTIVE ACTIONS

One of the main realisations is that there is a strong need for self-care, both because self-care is needed for action (“you can only give what you have”, “the inner fuels the outer”), and because the participants want to feel “as within so without”, in a sort of need for coherence and integrity. A healthy routine that brings the amount of energy necessary for dealing with strong emotions and events is central.

Although the connection of their inner state and outward actions towards a better world seems obvious for some participants, for others it can be very blurry and intuitive:

“Me being further along my way, I believe, will turn into benefiting the Whole, but I am yet unsure how - but I trust it deeply”

“I am discovering [the connection between inner and outer] as I enquire more into my engagement with outer actions. I am very familiar with the inner, and trust that the outer would follow”

Participants changed the practices based on their real needs across the time of the survey, so that the practices were serving those ever-changing needs. The regenerative practices are thus a perfect training that allows us to connect to something that is beyond the factual reality - not limited by the concreteness of the events - the higher potential.

## POWER OF COMMUNITY OF LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE

The importance of **being surrounded by like-minded people**, to feel a sense of community, a sense of belonging that is nurturing was highlighted in the answers to the

survey. The online learning journey and similar educational events and settings can provide people with the necessary support and reaffirmation.

# EFFECTS OF THE INNER PATHWAYS LEARNING JOURNEY

**The Inner Pathways learning journey was a container** for finding a community that suggests and models a way of taking care of oneself while taking care of others. The main effect of the learning journey was considerable both in dealing with the historical context of the pandemic, and in connecting the participants

with an inner place that informs, nurtures, renews, inspires and sustains their actions. Regenerative practices and the emerging regenerative cultures greatly support the inner sustainability and outward actions of the activists, community leaders, and adult educators who took part in the journey.

# PERSONAL REFLECTIONS FROM THE RESEARCH TEAM

## PAOLA BORTINI

“Regenerative practices create a mindset that is the main tool for the person to have an inner sustainability, something that supports them in any situation. Regenerative culture supports the person because it is together with like minded people, so the co-presence reinforces the keeping and strengthening of my mindset. If I am alone I have to put too much effort in creating and keeping a mindset that is regenerative. There is a list of regenerative practices but also a list of qualities associated with them that defines regenerative practices. This is the first step to having outside actions that are not bouncing back

like a boomerang with burn-out, depression, being frustrated and feeling powerless.

We identified a list of practices and qualities that make a practice a regenerative practice. These practices help create a mindset that supports people, and the presence of people with the similar mindset is a great support in keeping that mindset. Practices support inner sustainability that is the first step to act without burnout, depression, and feeling powerless”.

## ÁGI BERECZ

"Participants already had a solid base of regenerative practices and this course provided a focused attention to that. Putting emphasis on our own wellbeing makes one's actions more authentic. To me reading the words of the participants was a great reminder of just how important it is and that without inner wellbeing it is so hard

## KRISZTINA PÁSZTOR

"What this study revealed to me is that self-sustainability is essential in the work towards sustainability. We need regenerative practices in our lives to be able to act, and not only that but also to do it in an authentic way. This

to do any good. The other thing that struck me was how from the answers I was reading while coding, I could see a new way of being in the world and a new set of values necessary for this being - we called it new values for the regenerative culture".

is well known in the world of social workers but what the learning journey offered for the participants is to have this information on the embodied level".

## GYULA SZABÓ

"Two years prior to the publication of this study we gathered for the very first time to start the Inner Pathways project. One of our tasks was to find our roles in the project. We were walking around the big pieces of papers which represented the different tasks. It was really hard for me to find the part I would want to be involved. The research group was the last one I wanted. I had only some experience in conducting a research. Still I found myself in the group working on the research and the study at the end. Telling the truth it wasn't easy for me. Sometimes I

didn't even understand what we were talking about. But by the end of a long process something really exciting emerged. I've learnt a lot about this topic especially from Jana, our mentor. And it was a beautiful experience to read about other people's deepest feelings about the state of the world, about these challenging times and see their personal responses and actions. I am really grateful for them for sharing and also my colleagues to help me to digest all these sharings".

## JANA STARÁ

“To me it was amazing, to see again how complex is the human understanding of certain topics and how rich is the matrix of collective mind. When we coded the individual surveys, at some point after reading many of them, the underlying topics started emerging from the data as repetitive quotes and mentions. That is the moment when I think “Oh, I love qualitative research.”

A green-tinted photograph of a natural landscape. In the foreground, there are thin, dark branches with small, light-colored flowers. Below the branches, a dense field of tall, thin reeds or grasses is visible. In the background, a calm body of water stretches across the frame, with a faint, hazy shoreline in the distance. The entire image has a uniform green color cast.

**FURTHER  
INNER PATHWAYS  
RESOURCES**

## THE INNER PATHWAYS STORY BOOK

Features stories that arose from our own inner pathways: the practices, tools and experiences that shaped us and guided us on our individual journeys. They have become our

anchors and passions, often leading to significant lifestyle changes or supporting concrete actions toward a sustainable future.

## THE INNER PATHWAYS GUIDE

Is a book of inspiration, a collection of teaching methodologies, activities and a facilitation guide. It weaves together experiential learning activities on planetary well-being and inner ecology. It connects our human body with the larger body of the Earth, including body-based learning methods and structured outdoor activities. It also deals with developing the capacity to be

fully present in social interaction, generative listening and cultivating mindful communication. Additionally, a connection to nature allows shifts of attitudes and behavioural patterns, both on the personal and group level of community life, and so we give special attention in all these dimensions.

## THE INNER PATHWAYS PODCAST

Our series of Inner Pathways Podcasts is a joyful collection of practices, stories and reflections carefully and lovingly put together as an accompaniment along your inner journey towards a regenerative lifestyle. Through these practices we invite you to explore your relationship with life on Earth and your inner source of action, and to respond to the current state of the world with peaceful, resilient, creative and meaningful acts, attitudes and experiences.



**ALL OUR RESOURCES ARE  
FREELY ACCESSIBLE AND  
DOWNLOADABLE AT  
[INNERPATHWAYS.EU](https://innerpathways.eu)**

**OUR ONLINE LEARNING  
JOURNEY CURRICULUM  
IS AVAILABLE AT THE  
TEACHABLE PLATFORM:  
[HTTPS://INNER-PATHWAYS.TEACHABLE.COM/P/  
INNER-PATHWAYS-LEARNING-JOURNEY](https://inner-pathways.teachable.com/p/inner-pathways-learning-journey)**



# APPENDIX

# SURVEY 1

*Survey 1 invited the participants to reply to the following set of questions, presented by an introduction.*

Dear participant, welcome to the INNER PATHWAYS survey.

The purpose of this tool is to inspire you to reflect on how you are doing on your “inner pathway toward sustainability”. The background reason is to collect data for our research study that aims to bring an understanding of the inner changes that happen as a result of your participation in the learning journey “Inner Pathways Towards Sustainability”. We are also hoping to contribute to the understanding of inner and outer regenerative action. Your participation in this part of the project is much appreciated.

There are 13 open-ended questions that you are invited to answer. Suggested length of your answers is 1-2 paragraphs (around 200-300 characters) so you can keep it to the essence. We intend that these questions serve as a tool to support your inner journey as well throughout the learning process and be the basis of the research and study on inner motivations and outer actions. Answering the survey can take 45-60 mins on average.

We suggest you read all the questions before answering them as they are interconnected and in order for you to have a clear picture of what you are asked, before starting replying.

Please remember that we are asking your perspective and therefore there is no right or wrong answer that can be given. What comes to you, is the answer for you in this moment of your life, in this situation of the world. There is no need to be absolute in your answers, nor to be general nor to think of theories.

During your “Inner Pathways learning journey”, you will have a chance to visit this survey four times. Now, at the beginning of the journey in April, two times during our online learning journey and finally in June 2020 after the last national meeting.

We are asking you to provide your email address so we can keep track of the longitudinal changes that will occur as results of your participation to the survey.

Rest assured however that your answers will be kept confidential, anonymized and available only to the research team, which will use them until the end of the project in November 2020, as research data. If you wish, you can review your answers later or withdraw from the research if needed.

So, here we are, at the beginning of your journey, and here goes a little warm-up exercise: "Take a deep breath and smile. Breathe out and relax your body. Now please bring your attention to the first question."

Enjoy the ride.

# SURVEY 1 - QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe the current state of the world?
2. How do you feel about the state of the world?
3. What state are you in physically, mentally, socially, spiritually?
4. What is there in your life that needs regeneration?
5. What do you need to let go of in you in order to make this regeneration possible?
6. What are the feelings, emotions, thoughts and motivations you act from towards sustainability?
7. What are the 3 things you are grateful for?
8. What practices do you do to maintain your wellness/wellbeing, inner motivation and harmony?
9. What actions do you take in response to the state of the world you described above?
10. What resources support you in acting for sustainability?
11. What are the results of your actions and what do they mean to you?
12. What do you need to let come in order to make your actions more effective?
13. What is the connection between your inner regenerative practices and your actions toward sustainability?

# SURVEY 2

Dear participant, welcome to the INNER PATHWAYS second survey.

The purpose of this tool is to inspire you to reflect on how you are doing on your "Inner Pathway toward Sustainability". The background reason is to collect data for our research study that aims to bring an understanding of the inner changes that happen as a result of your participation in the learning journey "Inner Pathways Towards Sustainability". We are also hoping to contribute to the understanding of inner and outer regenerative action. Your participation in this part of the project is much appreciated.

There are 16 open-ended questions that you are invited to answer. 13 of those are the same as in Survey 1. Please look at them with fresh eyes, as time has gone by and for sure you are not the same as when you have started the learning journey. For sure you are in a different moment in your life and of the world around you.

Please answer according to your present state in full sentences, even if you feel some of the answers would be similar to survey 1.

Suggested length of your answers is 1-2 paragraphs (around 200-300

characters) so you can keep it to the essence. We intend that these questions serve as a tool to support your inner journey as well throughout the learning process and be the basis of the research and study on inner motivations and outer actions. Answering the survey can take 45-60 mins on average.

We suggest you read all the questions before answering them as they are interconnected and in order for you to have a clear picture of what you are asked, before starting replying.

Please remember that we are asking your perspective and therefore there is no right or wrong answer that can be given. What comes to you, is the answer for you in this moment of your life, in this situation of the world. There is no need to be absolute in your answers, nor to be general nor to think of theories.

We are asking you to provide your email address so we can keep track of the longitudinal changes that will occur as results of your participation to the survey. Rest assured however that your answers will be kept confidential, anonymized and available only to the research team, which will use them until the end of the project in November 2020, as research data.

If you wish, you can review your answers later or withdraw from the research if needed.

So, here we are, in the middle of your journey, and here goes a little “getting ready” exercise: “Take a deep breath and smile. Breathe out and relax your body. Now please bring your attention to the first question.”

Enjoy the ride.

## SURVEY 2 - QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe the current state of the world?
2. How do you feel about the state of the world?
3. What state are you in physically, mentally, socially, spiritually?
4. What is there in your life that needs regeneration?
5. What do you need to let go of in you in order to make this regeneration possible?
6. What are the feelings, emotions, thoughts and motivations you act from towards sustainability?
7. What are the 3 things you are grateful for?
8. What practices do you do to maintain your wellness/wellbeing, inner motivation and harmony?

***8b. For how long have you been doing regenerative practices and how regularly?***

***8c. When and how did you start your journey to sustainability?***

9. What actions do you take in response to the state of the world you described above?
10. What resources support you in acting for sustainability?
11. What are the results of your actions and what do they mean to you?
12. What do you need to let come in order to make your actions more effective?
13. What is the connection between your inner regenerative practices and your actions toward sustainability?
14. In what ways is the online Inner Pathways course supporting you on your journey?



# SURVEY 3

Dear participant, welcome to the INNER PATHWAYS third and last survey.

The purpose of this tool is to inspire you to reflect on how was and still is your "Inner Pathway toward Sustainability". The background reason is to collect data for our research study that aims to bring an understanding of the inner changes that happen as a result of your participation in the learning journey "Inner Pathways Towards Sustainability". We are also hoping to contribute to the understanding of inner and outer regenerative action. Your participation in this part of the project is much appreciated.

There are 17 open-ended questions that you are invited to answer. 13 of those are the same as in Survey 1 and 2. Please look at them with fresh eyes, as time has gone by and for sure you are not the same as when you have started the learning journey. For sure you are in a different moment in your life and of the world around you.

The extra questions have a focus on actions that manifest your inner change.

Please answer according to your present state in full sentences, even if

you feel some of the answers would be similar to previous surveys.

Suggested length of your answers is 1-2 paragraphs (around 200-300 characters) so you can keep it to the essence. We intend that these questions serve as a tool to still support your inner journey as well throughout the learning process and be the basis of the research and study on inner motivations and outer actions. Answering the survey can take 45-60 mins on average.

We suggest you read all the questions before answering them as they are interconnected and in order for you to have a clear picture of what you are asked, before starting replying.

Please remember that we are asking your perspective and therefore there is no right or wrong answer that can be given. What comes to you, is the answer for you in this moment of your life, in this situation of the world. There is no need to be absolute in your answers, nor to be general nor to think of theories.

Please provide concrete examples, so to make it easier for us to understand your thoughts and your situation and therefore we can correctly represent it in the research final report.

We are asking you to provide your email address so we can keep track of the longitudinal changes that will occur as results of your participation to the survey. Rest assured however that your answers will be kept confidential, anonymized and available only to the research team, which will use them until the end of the project in November 2020, as research data. If you wish, you can review your answers later or withdraw from the research if needed.

So, here we are, at the end of our common journey, and here goes a little “getting ready” exercise: “Take a deep breath and smile. Breathe out and relax your body. Now please bring your attention to the first question.”

Enjoy the ride.

## SURVEY 3 - QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe the current state of the world?
2. How do you feel about the state of the world?
3. What state are you in physically, mentally, socially, spiritually?
4. What is there in your life that needs regeneration?
5. What do you need to let go of in you in order to make this regeneration possible?
6. What are the feelings, emotions, thoughts and motivations you act from towards sustainability?
7. What are the 3 things you are grateful for?
8. What practices do you do to maintain your wellness/wellbeing, inner motivation and harmony?
9. What actions do you take in response to the state of the world you described above?
  - 9a. *Which concrete actions did you already do before embarking in the Inner Pathways Learning Journey?*
  - 9b. *Which actions have changed as a result of the lockdown?*
  - 9c. *Which actions have changed as result of your participation in the Inner Pathways Learning Journey?*
  - 9d. *Which concrete actions are you planning to do?*
10. What resources support you in acting for sustainability?
11. What are the results of your actions and what do they mean to you?
12. What do you need to let come in order to make your actions more effective?
13. What is the connection between your inner regenerative practices and your actions toward sustainability?







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