

Janine Prins - Passing through (parts of) Europe – week 30

Back in the Netherlands, Final reflection: 66

Once returned to The Netherlands after seven months roaming around parts on the European continent where I had not been before people ask me if the trip changed me. Well, yes and no. My personality and professions made certain experiences and observations happen. But these in turn made my perceptions change too. In any case I have come up with a probably typical Dutch approach to it all: combining experienced realities with some sort of utopia. Herewith my personal socio-cultural engineered dream for (parts of) Europe.

The future of Europe lies in its people. They will need to build and adjust the necessary and most appropriate technical and social infrastructures. But how can this be done on a continent so full of deep cultural gaps and many historical rifts and shifts? During our travels alone we witnessed the enormous mental and historical gap between former communist countries and our western selves – part of this gap now existing between parents and children even – as well as lack of knowledge about and fear for the country next door and of course massive westward migration. What to do?

What is needed are open minded dynamic people, able to bridge cultural gaps, who want to stay where they are with specific ideals - and support - to keep going under extremely difficult circumstances so as to 'future prove' their immediate surroundings. People who believe in improving their own place and country. Idealists and dreamers with the capacity to achieve.

Well, we met such people everywhere and funnily enough most are female with names ending on – a so herewith I present what I have been calling '**the A-team**'

All pictures in a mosaic or scattered through the text with a little personal info??

Why I think these women possess the necessary powers is only part intuition. They impressed by the way they ignited into discussions and examples about how they thought a certain *mixture* of eastern and western values could work. They strongly believe in their own cultural identity, yet would like to implement certain new values and notions in their worlds, such as 'civil society'. But they meet walls of resistance.

They are surrounded by people who did not have the same experience with 'the west' be it through boyfriends, study, travel, etc. The fact that they experienced a kind of short circuit between their own and 'western' values inside themselves which made them stronger has made them very special, but total outsiders, loners. Each one of them has become a multicultural or trans-national 'team' in themselves – which hold the future according to theory – but they need support of some sort. In other words: there is human potential 'out there', how do we not let it go to waste?

Meeting these, and several other people and situations, strengthened my believe in handpicking people for small scale empowerment through tailor made interventions helping *existing processes* rather than institutionalised top down model measures.

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If only a little that we have here could go there. The amount of waste in talk, money, documents and human energy I encounter back in The Netherlands has made me feel rather nauseous. When that feeling remains I may become one of those people who moves east.



Barbara and John, Ron Sluik



I remember one British couple that sold their antiques shop and started a Bed and Breakfast in Poland, now using their perspectives in organising a collective fight against regional corruption with success, providing locals with work and westerners with experiences and information about Polish life.

Or video artist Ron Sluik who left this country for a society that in his opinion still realises that the world is round rather than flat. He is now based in Chisinau, Moldova, hoping to inspire the international contemporary art scene from there.

And why not.

Good luck to all of them and thanks to letting us share in their life, we may learn from it. These travels may have changed me after all.

Amsterdam, June 2007.

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Info to go with the images

1926 Danka Vidovic – international law student from Mostar, Bosnia



2337 Ana Jankovic – rock base student in Podgorica, Montenegro



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2507 Jozefina Gjelij – business student Brussels, from Lezha, Albania



4826 Gonca Gurses – opera and contemporary singer, Istanbul, Turkey



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2735 Flutura Acka – writer and publisher, Tirana, Albania



5299 Mihaela Danailova – visual art student, Plovdiv, Bulgaria



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7111 Irina Grabovan – small gallery owner, Chisinau, Moldova



9158 Linda van Da – new media student, Kosice, Slovakia



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9568 Magda Mazik – philosophy and conceptual art student, Cracow, Poland



20070526 Barbara and John at their 'Blue Beetroot' near...



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7134 Ron Sluik at home in Chisinau

