

LEAP - An ongoing journey

A few weeks ago, oikos LEAP participants Irie, Sophie, Katie, and Josie met each other once again in Budapest and recapped their learnings and takeaways from the program. The following paragraphs show one of Irie's diary entries, underlining how Leap influenced their lives and leadership mindsets:

It was 9 o'clock in the morning and my Leap advanced mates and I sat on the banks of the Danube river. Despite a distance spanning over 7000 km, a few of our pirates made it and closed the physical gap. We enjoyed a picnic filled with local riches, fruits, spreads, breads and as many reusable utensils as possible. The morning air was fresh, clean and crisp, while the water was peaceful and pristine. The only humans nearby were some kayakers and an old couple embracing behind us.

We were there, in the now, listening to acoustic music and the morning stillness, which included the chirp of a nearby bird, the crunch of a gravel underfoot, and the slight burbling of the river kissing the beach.

As Josie geared up for a proper swim, I watched her step onto the bank. She exclaimed in a we „It's so warm!“ before setting her goggles and springing forward. No hesitation. She was soon submerged between the blue green. The music played, we were calm, journaling, relaxing and nibbling on the remnants of our feast. Josie's body drifted in the current slightly left, whereas her eyes remained anchored to the horizon. Sophie, meanwhile, watched Josie from the banks, lost in thought, swan-like in her grace as she waded deeper, feeling the coolness of the water becoming one with her skin. During this moment, Katie reflected besides me, so lost in thought she probably never noticed her occasional breath of a song. Sing-song, she turned a page.

When I think of the most potent lessons I carry with me during my time with oikos and Leap, I will always remember this physical moment in which purpose, value, youth, adventure and unabashed admiration for every passing second demonstrated its mindfulness.

It encapsulated the mission of personal development, intertwining the personal scale with the infinite. In this moment, we were not in a rush, to age or to plan out the rest of the day. Let alone our futures. However, we were learning to understand the importance of a growth mindset, the importance of flexibility, and the importance of self-reflection.

Before Josie embarked on her swim, she picked an anchor point across the way. Despite such destination in mind, such as the sand bank, she knew that the current will put her back and down, so she directed her energy up and to the right to counter balance the drift. Literally and physically, she embraced the flow.

Despite every effort to plan, dream, achieve, and set seemingly-insurmountable goals (such as crossing a mountain in just one day) we must all learn to embrace the drift. This starts with embracing ourselves, asking the hard questions, learning how to actively listen and aligning our path to our values. Once this alignment is set, there is still no guarantee that our conditioning will pay off. There's no guarantee that we'll reach that ultimate beach on the horizon - but at least we know how to try. We know that in order to reach our dreams, we have to first understand the mechanisms through which we drive progress. We have to learn how to embrace the drift, anchor our eyes and enjoy this present moment while we do so.

Just as Josie embarked on this swim along the danube, embarking on a development journey such as Leap is a pivotal step in our mental conditioning to be the kind of leaders the world needs and to understand our role in this process. If we, the idealistic change makers, are to tackle oppressive systems such as climate injustices, human right violations and ecological destruction, it is imperative that we acknowledge social change and personal change as two sides of the same coin. They are in flux. They're part of the same flow - the one we must learn to embrace. I'm ready to dive in.