

How to describe an Ikarian learning lesson ?

Sitting here with a Tsiperou ; raindrops on my window are a perfect soundtrack for a grey November night. I try to concentrate on this empty sheet of paper. I was asked to write something down upon the « Ikarian Days in Brussels», something personal, some kind of key experience. I am hesitant. I am a bit afraid. How to describe an experience, that was overwhelming without becoming too philosophical? So let's try and keep it simple: for me it was a crucial experience in my life. An experience that has its roots on Ikaria and that will have a deep impact on my future activities. I know, big words, but this is the very personal part of the story. For more than four days I could experience in Brussels, in the very heart of the European capital - in the city, where the austerity policy for Southern Europe and especially for Greece is negotiated and concluded - an intense feeling of community, caring, cooperation, sharing and support. A feeling, that during the last years I only had a chance to experience during my summer vacations on Ikaria ... but certainly not in Brussels. In Brussels I live another life: focussed, time effective, superficial discussions on politics, Greek subjects dealt with distance and coolness. So, how was that possible ? Same city, two different stories? I think, it was the Ikarian spirit that captured me and took over. During my stays on the island I can not only observe, but also live this joy of life and the hospitality I admire the Ikarians for. I can witness their solidarity and support for those in need, without making a big discussion about it; I like the cooperative aspect that is shown in many projects on the island. All this is always a lot of food for thought for me and so far I did not really have an answer to my question: how to integrate these teaching aspects of the Ikarian life into my „normal life“ in Brussels?

But then the idea of the „Ikarian Days in Brussels“ started off and all of a sudden it was self-understanding that the whole project could only be developed in the „Ikarian Way“, that means: on a volunteer basis with like-minded people, not profit oriented, but focussed on the social projects that should receive financial support with the money gathered in Brussels. It was a long way to go, many discussions - and many seemed very Greek to me ;-)
- but when at least I took a picture of the Ikarians and those, who love the island and came to Brussels to share these events - I was speechless and very touched. We had been working like fools, we made a lot of mistakes, because we lacked the experience, there was a lot of hustle ... but: there was also so much generosity of people involved and others, who wanted to help to make it a success story. There was so much laughter, there was so much singing, there was so much dancing, there was so much hugging and kissing, so much joy, just because we were together and we made these events happen. It was so enriching. We all knew, that we were living unique moments and that we owe this to Ikaria, our „master“, because it is the love for this island and the respect for its people, that was giving us a chance to perform as a strong like-minded community: a community committed to work together to make a good result happen to support Ikaria.

So in that context, these days are marking a kind of turning point for me. First: Now I have the knowledge, how to integrate the „Ikarian lessons“ into my Brussels life and I am willing to continue with it. Second: I am grateful for the experience to have found like-minded people - coming from different countries, having different backgrounds and goals in their lives ... but: despite all these differences it is possible to work together and make something good happen. For me : this is the Ikarian message to Brussels - and in these dark days the message might perhaps even be bigger: together we stand and make little changes happen.... who knows?