

## Spiritual ecology workshop, by Maaïke Bouwmans – Friday 31/05/2019, 15:30 - 16:30

### *Food Autonomy Festival #3 Amsterdam*

This session was not a lecture, but a conversation between participants, and within the larger group. Workshop giver Maaïke Bouwmans, an anthropologist trained in strategic leadership towards sustainability, asked people to first exchange with their neighbour about their own definition or perception of spiritual ecology. There isn't one 'official', strict definition. Some people mentioned how interconnectedness of all life in ecosystems and the search for connection in spiritual practice was bringing the two words together. Others defined spirituality as seeing the magic in everyday reality. One participant brought up the similarity between the words holy, heal (not sick) and wholeness (not fragmented) from a Buddhist perspective.

For Maaïke, spiritual ecology is based on seeing life as sacred, sacred meaning precious, alive. This shift in perception is eye-opening: how differently do you then live your life, for yourself and other people? What does it mean regarding your relationship to food, clothing, and the world around you in general?

The group then did some small exercises from the book *Active Hope - How to Face the Mess We're in without Going Crazy*, by Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone

1. One after another, people shared one thing they feel grateful for. Connections, health, the ability of learning, participating in the discussion were mentioned. Several people also expressed their gratitude for the festival and for the work of people and collectives who made it possible, because often, "people talk a lot but don't do much".

Doing this little exercise on a daily basis can be a good practice. By practice, we mean a routine that calms your body and mind, makes you more balanced and awake, and therefore more able to take action when needed. Practice can also be meditation, creative activities, walking in nature, following personal or community rituals...

2. Participants then shared what worries them about the current state of the world, in pairs. The idea was to fully listen, then talk. What is it that breaks your heart? There is a value in honoring our pain for the world, then using it for inspiration.
3. After that, Maaïke asked everyone to continue the discussion in pairs, and to notice the emotions that came up in the process. The last question was: what do you do with these emotions? Do you try to avoid them, or on the contrary to use them?

As people got caught up in deep discussions, the hour allowed for the workshop was almost over. What did people learn in this discussion? Some said this process made it easier to discuss their emotions. It is important to take time for mourning what we lose. Grief is a helpful emotion to find your place, then to see what's next. It also has the side effect of making one learn more about the beauty of what is disappearing (such as free spaces in Amsterdam...). Connecting to pain and its associated emotions such as anger or sadness is a step in wanting to care.