

Ten Things You Might Want To Know When Planning A Land Journey

1) Why are you doing this? What frame, 'givens' or context does it exist within? In terms of the Emergence Land Journey (ELJ) we wanted to organise a pre-conference event where people literally walked to the gathering. We wanted to bring people together in an embodied way with each other and with the issues of sustainability before *meeting* in conference. This we felt would impact on how people related to one another at the conference itself.

2) Do you want to walk an existing route or create your own? If the prior it might be easier as the maps and plenty of information on accommodation etc probably already exist. We wanted to create a new walk – one that had meaning for Emergence and which would relate in some way to the Centre of Alternative Technology in Machynlleth, the site of our conference.

3) If you're designing your own route, what pattern or shape do you want it to take? This will probably be meaningful for you – conceptually, geographically, mythologically – in terms of what you want to communicate to or engender in your walkers. With the ELJ we discussed the possibility of a spiral (referencing Joanna Macy's *Work The Reconnects*), a circle (cycles of life, seasons) and a linear route (how do you get from A to B). The final route was in fact TWO routes traced by two sets of walkers, one group walking in a circle clockwise to the North, the other starting and finishing in the same place but describing an anti-clockwise circle in the South. The final pattern was therefore a figure of 8 which signifies completion. The final pattern had to be transposed onto the land. Finding public footpaths or routes through common land and national parks embedded the concept into the topography.

4) What 'must-have, would-love or add-ons' would you like to incorporate to support the context and enrich the experience? How does the art come through? What is your design within the design? For the ELJ we proposed to plan surprise visitations or meetings en route with artists. Food and feasting also became an important element and the logistics of realizing this became an important part of planning.

5) How do you want people to experience the walk and the group? What is your 'holding structure?' How do you balance safety and adventure, challenge and accessibility, individual and group needs and planned or emergent activities? For the ELJ we wanted the walkers to feel supported– transporting luggage, retrieving tired walkers, providing Qualified mountain leaders, group facilitators and three meals a day. We also wanted to create a feeling of challenge - high mileage, long walking days. There is always a balance or compromise to be made between the two and you probably will never get it right for everyone but you will get it perfect for many.

6) What is your timeframe and who are your walkers? The timeframe will be a balance of how many days you think people will be able to walk (realistically in

terms of time available and daily mileage) and how many days an average person needs to walk your route. You might have to go back and adjust the shape or pattern of the walk accordingly. Can people drop in and out or do people have to commit to the whole thing? For the ELJ we had relatively high mileage and created a pretty arduous walk but this was also balanced by the decision to complete the walk in five days. The length of each day's walk was also influenced by location of campsites. We favoured people coming for the whole time and gave a slight discount if this was the case. We also had a 'daily walking rate' for people only able to come for one day and arranged pick-ups and drop-offs accordingly. We also decided that the emphasis was on the walk rather than just being in nature, the ELJ was more similar to a pilgrimage than to an immersive outdoor experience.

7) Given everything you have decided so far, what are the consequences of those decisions in terms of planning and execution? This is the 'back-stage' reality of the land journey and represents the nuts and bolts of the planning. Depending on the length, challenge and complexity of your walk you will have a large number of areas to break-down. For the ELJ separate factors included; walkers' support (vehicles and personnel), food (preparation and transport), accommodation (campsites and wildcamping), walkers' welfare (kit lists, back-up equipment, medical issues, fitness, risk assessment) mapping and routes (roles and responsibilities of Mountain Leaders), group dynamics (roles and responsibilities of group facilitators), art (commissions, walkers emergent art and open air encounters) and documentation (walkers own and commissioned film).

8) Imagine all possible scenarios, brainstorm what's not there and plan for the unexpected!

9) What are your key processes and materials? For us these included balancing pre-planning with emergent design and activity. Collaboration and partnership working were key, we created partnerships at every level of the project, between Volcano and Centre for Alternative Technology, between the north walkers and south, between the mountain leaders, group facilitators and walkers between the walkers and the land, between the walkers and the conference, between volunteers and key collaborators. We were also interested in how you create a community and how walking meets activism. The main materials we brought together were people, people, people and the land - it's geology, geography, history, culture, language and spirit.

10) And finally you will probably need to have a little of a lot of the following; vision, local knowledge, beginner's mind, perseverance, patience, doggedness, tenacity, obsessive compulsive attention to detail, humour, generosity, spirit, warmth, a desire to explore a collaborative process, blindfaith, a driver's license, a willing partner/s, a budget, a spirit of adventure, kindness and a love of maps.

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