

Can the individual change the world?

Report on the Waldzell Meeting 2006

The question "Can the individual change the world?", the concept of the meeting and the speakers sounded promising. Fortunately the German newspaper "DIE ZEIT" selected me as one of twelve so-called "Architects of the Future" for the "Waldzell Meeting 2006 - Global dialog for inspiration". There were many prominent speakers, as Paulo Coelho, Isabel Allende, the discoverer of the HIV-virus Robert Gallo, the Nobel laureate and microbiologist Werner Arber, Christo and Jean-Claude. It was held in the most beautiful Benedictian Melk Abbey, that inspired "The name of the Rose" by Umberto Eco. Waldzell is a fictitious place in Hermann Hesse's novel "The Glass Bead Game" where selected people, once a year, create a spiritual-sensual work of art. Its effect reaches far beyond the circle of players and essentially contributes to the further development of society.

I had not read the "Glass Bead Game". I did not know what to expect. I did follow the instruction though to come with an open mind to Waldzell. What is the result of the Waldzell Meeting? Inspiration. New friends. And the certainty that we can change the world together. This is also the answer to the primary question. Can an individual change the world? No. One person will sometimes be at the forefront of a movement that changed the world, as Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi.

Two things are needed to change the world. On the one hand it needs to be the right time and it needs a leader. There needs to be a person, that has a dream and is able to inspire others. Isabel Allende said, that she has the feeling that it is the right time. We are in rough seas and there are many strong undercurrents. Everything changes quickly. Much quicker than ever before. She compares the time now to the worldwide social upheaval in the 1960s. She said: "Our generation messed it up and the next generation is about to clean up the mess." I think she belongs to the people which clean it up- it is not a matter of age, but a matter of a state of mind and of deeds.

"What is so messed up?" In many respects it is five past twelve. Global warming, population explosion, poverty and HIV are some of the most dramatic problems. Robert Gallo presented a graph, which is most shocking and motivates him in his scientific research for a HIV vaccine. According to the graph 90% of the 15 year old boys in Botswana will be HIV-positive in their life if nothing changes. Concerning the global warming it is very enlightening to watch the movie "An inconvenient truth" by Al Gore. In 100 years Europe will not have any glaciers. In thirty years the sea level might have risen by ten meters. This will lead to massive migration in the Netherlands, Bangladesh and around Shanghai. It is as Allende said: "The world is messed up!".

Paulo Coelho said, that we need the critical mass to change the world. This point in time can be reached soon. All you need is an open heart and the understanding, that there is a lot to do. A good start to act upon this belief is to support the work of the "Architects of the Future". The vitas of some of the architects are deeply moving and their work is in different areas on different locations on this world.

Vishal, Ali and Felix give hope to kids in regions which are struck with poverty, conflicts and little opportunity. At the age of 30 years Ali built up 150 schools for street children in Pakistan and did this without earning any salary for three years. Andreas and Seif develop better living conditions and communities according to environmentally sustainable and cultural standards. Danilo from East Timor wants to bring together the leaders of his country to create a vision for his oppressed and ferociously downtrodden people. Laurent brings together the young global leaders of tomorrow to progress thinking and action.

Kemi, Sasha and me work against poverty, HIV and political oppression in Africa. Sasha saves refugees that are targets of genocide, rapes and torture. He saved more than 1000 refugees already. Georg has created an association for social encounter in Mexico to develop a common vision of a better society. Christoph cycled from India to Switzerland and fundraised 250.000 Euros for leprosy-affected people in India.

With 50 Euros you can heal a person suffering from leprosy. With 8 Euros you can fund a HIV test and thereby save others. With one Euro you can treat nine kids that have Malaria. The creation of a future vision for a country like East Timor is more costly, but just as important. It is easy to help to change the world. The websites and email addresses of the "Architects of the Future" can be found below.

Stop! Think! Open your heart! Open your mind! What is the reality? Where and what are the problems on this planet? Do you want to leave a waste land with poverty and raging sicknesses to the next generation? It is time to act. The time of procrastination is over. If you don't do it now, when will you do it?

There are people that do not want to change their mind and their habits and do not see the signals of the time. Possibly they rely that the others will fix it. But you can belong to the ones that want a better world that will sustain this and the next generations. The "Architects of the Future", Isabel Allende, Paulo Coelho, Allan Webber, Walter Link and the abbots of Melk Abbey are part of the movement for a better world.

„Architects of the Future“:

Ali- <http://projects.takingitglobal.org/YES-Pakistan>

Andreas- www.bda-architekten.de

Christoph- <http://www.colourtheworld.org/>

Danilo- daniohenr@gmail.com

Felix- www.schuler-helfen-leben.de

Georg- georg.schoen@gmx.at

Kemi- www.evanigeria.org

Laurent- www.shiffoundation.org

Niels- www.lebenschancen.org/malawi

Sasha- www.mapendo.org

Seif- www.akdn.org/agency/aktc.html

Vishal- www.dreamadream.org

Written by Niels Beisinghoff