

The social entrepreneur

An idea travels the globe: Dialog im Dunkeln in Hamburg



identifies a specific task that focuses on the greater good

Promoting dialogue

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with disabled individuals around the world

ndreas Heinecke started down the path to social entrepreneurship unexpectedly. His boss at Südwestfunk asked him to show a new visually impaired colleague the ropes. At the time, Heinecke couldn't imagine what it must be like to live with such a disability. Was it a life worth living? Heinecke thought he would be helping a victim, but their roles quickly reversed. His first meeting with his colleague disproved all his prejudices - and changed his life.

Heinecke then decided to share this experience with others. "When I meet someone who's different, and we start a dialogue that's not based on prejudices, clichés, and pity, something starts to happen." Learning by interacting: this is where the idea for the exhibition Dialog im Dunkeln (Dialogue in the Dark) arose. Visitors experience different everyday situations in complete darkness. Their visually impaired attendants are the ones who know how to "see" - turning visitors' pity into respect.

The concept works. Since its launch in Frankfurt in 1989, the exhibition has traveled around the world: Milan, Istanbul, Moscow, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, Tokyo, and Buenos Aires. It has already reached

more than 8 million people around the globe. The guest book offers proof of just how impressed visitors are: "Being able to step into a blind person's shoes was an incredible experience for us, and from our guide we learned a great deal about the daily lives of the visually impaired. Thank you!"

Social return on investment

Meanwhile, Heinecke has become an international social entrepreneur. He carried over the successful Dialog im Dunkeln model to a new project, Dialog im Stillen (Dialogue in Silence). His company, Dialogue Social Enterprise GmbH, uses a social franchise system to distribute licenses to local partners and to advise them on implementing the exhibition. The company's aim is the inclusion of disabled people and senior citizens around the globe. Its partners include private investors, museums, universities, and non-profit organizations. "In addition to changing visitors' perspectives, we can also back up the project's social return on investment with solid numbers," Heinecke says. In Hamburg, for instance, more than half the Dialog im Dunkeln associates are visually impaired - from visitor services associates to the exhibition manager. The company has created 8,000 jobs for individuals with disabilities worldwide.

To mark the 150th birthday of Robert Bosch in 2011, the Robert Bosch Stiftung named Heinecke as one of their "responsible citizens." This network includes people

who take responsibility for themselves and others, just as Robert Bosch did in his day.

Andreas Heinecke

With the financial support of the foundation, Heinecke was able to expand and refine his dialogue concept. Last year, he launched the latest offshoot of his project, Dialog mit der Zeit (Dialogue with Time). Accompanied by guides who are 70 years of age or older, visitors can discover and come to better understand the various facets of old age and aging. German President Joachim Gauck attended the Berlin launch. And the concept is now beginning its journey around the world. Next stop is Bern, Switzerland, and preparations for Asia are already in full swing.



develops a new solution, or a solution that is new for the given target group

combines social action and sustainability in the implementation process



Source: Heldenrat



Andreas Heinecke and Joachim Gauck in Dialog mit der Zeit Photo: Kay Herschelmann

How social ideas have a global impact

The Robert Bosch Stiftung supports social entrepreneurs in disseminating their initiatives internationally

wanted to work on behalf of others, to give my life entrepreneurs, who establish networks across national SINGA France, which helps refugees to become social a social entrepreneur. She founded the Future is Brighter (GDN) initiative to help schoolchildren and university students in Turkey get a foot in the door of the working world. Young people use an online platform to get in touch with companies and universities, receive advice, and participate in free training.

Alongside other social entrepreneurs from around the world, Titiz is participating in the program This Works -Ideas and Solutions for Employment and Recovery in Southern Europe. With the support of the Robert Bosch Stiftung and the Ashoka organization, the social entrepreneurs are making their business ideas available to partners in southern Europe. Titiz and her team are working on establishing the GDN Initiative in Spain, Greece, and Egypt as a means of combating youth unemployment. The initiative is also already cooperating with Robert Bosch Italy.

The program ChangemakerXchange is also aimed at internationally disseminating the ideas of social

meaning," Serra Titiz says of her motivation to become borders and make contact with local players. The participants present their initiatives at workshops and come together to form international teams that work toward setting up joint projects. One of these "changemakers" is Nathanael Molle. In 2012, he founded the organization



Molle and Capelle: SINGA is becoming a global Photo: SINGA France grassroots movement.

entrepreneurs themselves. This facilitates their integration into society, and they receive some recognition for

Today, SINGA operates worldwide. The initiative is currently setting up shop in Germany and Australia. In Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Hungary, and Belgium, partners are already working on adapting the SINGA concept. Morocco is one of the first countries where Molle and his team implemented their initiative. Large numbers of African refugees come to Morocco hoping to move on to Europe, but many of them end up staying in the country for years.

"Launching SINGA Maroc was a fantastic moment. We realized that the idea we'd scribbled down in a notebook two years earlier had become a real global grassroots movement," Guillaume Capelle recalls. He is one of two employees working on spreading SINGA around the world. Their greatest goal is to one day network all of the global players under the aegis of a franchise system and charity