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The Multicentric Congress for Integral Politics

...one step on the path to a peaceful and global cultural renewal

Our goal is the creation of a broad grass-roots movement as a powerful transformation force "from the base upwards": A **network of cultural creatives**. These are the steadily rising number of people around the world who have freed themselves from unilateral materialism and its destructive paradigms on account of their free, integral¹ or spiritual² attitudes. People who are no longer prepared to accept a passive consumer role, but who lay claim to their right to make an active contribution to the cultural renewal.

1. Initial situation - the cultural crisis

Taking into consideration the realities of life today, we see that psychologically individual, socially collective and ecologically global-centric problem areas are coming to a head in dramatic manner - world-wide. It does not need a lot of imagination to perceive where the course of this human culture will lead to if the present devastating forces in political and economic life continue to prevail without any change of direction. More and more people are asking themselves whether a "mega-crash" can actually be avoided.

It is not to be supposed that the established political forces or leading figures from industry and politics are capable of providing definitive improvements in these problem areas as a result of their own insight and responsibility. This is clearly demonstrated, for example, by the latest events concerning the financial crisis or the global climate summit in Copenhagen. Despite the global destruction, these leaders are not deviating from the dogma of constant economic growth which causes this destruction. The interweaving of state and economic interests, but also the material compulsion that results from a monetary system that is completely running out of control, seem to make essential changes impossible.

Basically, all that will remain is the usual treatment of the symptoms should other forces not take effect which are capable of developing uninhibited by any party-political and/or economic interests.

¹ See Appendix "Integral / integral consciousness"

² See Appendix "Spiritual / spirituality"

We do not want to hold these leading figures solely responsible for the partly disastrous developments in the world; these are also caused by many people at grass-roots level due to their heedless (consumer) behaviour. People still do not seem to realise that they themselves are, or could be, the propelling force behind a functioning democracy as a part of a sovereign society. Not least as a result of the financial crisis, more and more people are beginning to understand, however, that the state cannot undertake everything for us, things that we should (and could) do ourselves.

The transformation energy must emerge from grass-roots level, from the sovereign society which gives the determining impulse for change in the existing economic and monetary systems, indeed in the entire human culture. An essential goal of the project described here is to bundle the strengths of insightful people in that they discover a common identity.

If we examine the problems in their full extent, and taking into account their cultural background, we can speak without exaggeration of a cultural crisis. The dominance of financial-economic considerations over ethical considerations as a basis for our way of thinking and action is an expression of the decadence of a culture that has transcended its zenith.

The urgently required reshaping of our society is nothing less than a comprehensive cultural transformation. This requires multifarious changes in many aspects of human cohabitation, the foundation of which are renewed ethical beliefs and a new conception of humanity.

1.1 The search for a new political understanding

In August 2008, various supporting organisations and individuals, mainly from Germany and Switzerland, organised a congress in Götzis/St. Arbogast (Austria) with the aim of deepening the contents of a new understanding of political reality in many different ways. This is based on a new, integral consciousness which wants to actively create this new culture.

Integral politics transcend today's concept of politics with its narrow focus on party-political rope acts, and takes it further toward a collective creation of cultural processes oriented to social well-being from the grass roots. The results of this transformation process should be a reshaping of economic life so that it serves the common good, a fundamental withdrawal of intellectual life from the compulsion to yield results, and a situation where state and legal affairs are once again assigned

to a neutral subject field independent of economic interests. One outcome of the congress is the manifesto³ adopted through the consensus of all the participating groups. This points to the existing and worsening psychologically individual, socially collective and ecologically global-centric major problems of human culture, and indicates essential spheres of activity for solving these problems.

1.2 Identity and bundling instead of individual action, impotence and fear

The 2008 congress was a complete success, and the participants expressed the wish that further congresses of this kind should be organised on an annual basis. The programme council formed in the aftermath of the congress under the umbrella of the network organisation HOLON (see below) primarily wants to make a contribution to an effective implementation of the measures proposed in the manifesto. However, it is aware that the annual organisation of congresses such as the one held in Saint Arbogast (i.e. above all for insiders and a special audience) is by far not sufficient to achieve such an impact.

With our intended subsequent action, we want to emerge from the niche of being an insider organisation and appeal to all people who are ready for comprehensive changes. The time has come to create an identity and networks between those people who, since the study by Ray and Andersen, are referred to as being "culturally creative"⁴ people. The more interconnections of this kind that come into being between like-minded people, the broader is the scope for counteracting the paralysing feelings of impotence and fear that arise from political and economic compulsion, and the greater is the common desire for action to transform the aforementioned problem areas.

We would like to encourage all cultural creatives to demonstrate their commitment to an identity as a society-forming force on the basis of joint action above and beyond their local and/or subject-specific networking activities.

³ The manifesto has been translated in various languages. It can be downloaded from www.integrale-politik.org like a reader with essays on the theme of "integral politics".

⁴ See Appendix "Cultural creatives"

2. Vision, goals - network of cultural creatives

Our prime goal is a network of cultural creatives. The identity that is to be created as a spiritual ribbon between these people differs from anything ever seen before, for example the flower-power movement. It is not only about outwardly visible same beliefs and a common life style. Rather more, it also concerns the practical creation of an organisational culture of people who attain the ability to "govern" themselves. *The essence is learning to listen and becoming aware of which patterns create the collective structure with our help and what decisions are to be made.* This identity fabric can be compared with the organisational form of a "holacracy"⁵. Just imagine the immense transformational energy that could be released if these cultural creatives, their groups and organisations take joint action.

This visionary and idealistic prime goal is in accordance with the trend in the development of humanity, although the problem areas mentioned above exert a hampering influence on this development. Hence, we consider it necessary to actively strive to achieve the following sub-goals:

- *A bundling of existing small networks, groups, organisations and economic and service organisations that currently tend to pursue the aims of a new (integral) culture single-handedly.*
- *A constant consolidation and dissemination of the integral theory and practice from different perspectives and beyond national and cultural borders.*
- *The formation of central locations through the co-operational efforts of these groups, organisations etc., which seek to establish contact with individuals in their regions in order to integrate them into the gradually growing network of cultural creatives.*
- *The information and messages to be sent out should counteract the feelings of impotence and fear in people, strengthen their will to take action and create a common identity.*

⁵ See draft paper "Holacracy"

3. Action, strategy

3.1 The multicentric congress in 2012

The 2012 congress is one step on the path to realising the vision, the first tangible sub-goal: Some of the organisations and groups that are already involved in creating a liveable culture form the basis for a network of culturally creative organisations and groups. The constant growth of this network allows it to reach more and more individuals throughout Europe for integration in the network. Thus can the network of cultural creatives gradually expand.

Initially, our search will focus on Europe and existing group and organisation partners. Together with these, the aim is to organise congresses during the same period between May and August 2012 in as many locations as possible throughout Europe. In addition to the larger congress in the German-speaking area, the intention is for congresses to be held in Scandinavia and English and French-speaking countries. It is desirable that at least four larger congresses take place. Additionally, as many smaller congresses or courses of action as possible should also be initiated.

These congresses and events should radiate the strongest possible media presence during the build-up, while they are taking place, as well as in their aftermath. The organisational nature and responsibility for these events lie solely in the accountability of the individual partners. However, certain elements should be the same to underline the common thread:

1. The common motto "*the way we really want to live - Cultural Creatives Shape Change*" will create a "thematic energy field", which will inwardly deal with a new integral understanding of politics.
2. Simple, common messages are to be sent to willing people by means of concerted publicity work urging them to join the movement: "*Look, you are not alone with your discontent, let us begin to return the power it is due to a sovereign society, we shall reshape the system*", "*We possess the means and knowledge to set up sensible alternatives and to remove the old, now useless system*" and "*We shall also unite with all willing political and economic forces which co-build the new integral culture*".

We consider the summer of 2012 to be a realistic date for the realisation of this plan.

3.2 Joint action - the immediate results

A cultural "earthquake" should be created in that all the conference participants, but also all those people in Europe who have taken favourable notice of our efforts through the media, take part in one or more common courses of action that are still to be agreed.

These actions should have at least symbolic political significance. Inwardly, these common courses of action serve to create an identity and strengthen the bonds. Outwardly, they send a clear signal to the public domain and illustrate that changes in the overall system can be achieved within a short period of time through joint action. Thereby it becomes evident that a sovereign society holds the true political-democratic power if it bundles its energy.

3.3 Possible steps after 2012

The event in 2012 marks the beginning of a "network of cultural creatives" in Europe. The diagram in the appendix attempts to visualise this. Although further steps towards creating a network can hardly be specifically planned, it is permitted to take a look at the future:

- *Some or all the congress venues become permanent central locations that remain in active contact with one another.*
- *The central locations are consolidated, they continue to send messages to willing people with the request to join the growing network of cultural creatives.*
- *Enlargement of the network through the creation of additional central locations as a snowball effect.*
- *Further (symbolically) political actions with an increasing impact.*
- *Additional multicentric events.*
- *Expansion of the network to other continents.*

3.4 The German-language congress in St. Arbogast, Austria

From July 29th through to August 5th, 2012 we will be organising a German-language congress, which will again be held in the youth and educational facility in St. Arbogast⁶. People from the local region, personalities from municipal politics, industry and cultural life, as well as interested individuals, are invited to take part. During this period, the local population is to be continually informed through the media about the congress and its programme and vision. The congress with its topics and issues should be omnipresent for a certain time. With its artistic main

⁶ This does not mean that no other events cannot additionally take place in the German-speaking countries.

points of focus, it is planned to last for eight days and to become an intensive, all-encompassing process for around 200 people.

At its climax, it could turn into an open air event and for one weekend expand into a festival of more than 1000 people.

During the run-up to the congress, various pilgrimages and wanderings will take place in the German-speaking countries, which will link many decentralised events to the themes of the congress.

3.5 Preparatory conferences

The themes of the German-language congress in St. Arbogast will be organised at preparatory conferences in 2010 and 2011 together with the supporting organisations and associated partners. If European partners can be found, it is desirable that these also take part in these conferences in order to jointly create the overall event as a multicentric European congress.

The main purpose is to define the "thematic energy field" and common courses of action. The partners of the affiliated congresses will organise their own preparatory meetings.

4. Means of communication

4.1 Communication until 2012

Media and communication work will play a central role. The very latest technical resources must be used to enable co-operation between the many organisations and groups. However, physical meetings cannot and should not be avoided, as communication can never succeed fully without personal contact. In the case of a cross-regional project (and even more so with an international project), the time and money spent by so many people working together can increase substantially. Nevertheless, this can be limited through the utilisation of modern media (e-mail, Internet forums, intranet systems, Skype, etc.).

Within the scope of the multicentric congress for cultural creatives in 2012, it is intended that it will become a focus of public attention for a certain period of time. In an ideal scenario, it will be "on everyone's tongue" during this time. To achieve this, it is necessary to find people who are professionally active in the fields of media and communication and who would like to apply their knowledge and skills.

4.2 Communication after the multicentric congress

After 2012, there will be a greater focus on reaching more and more people and on pressing ahead with the establishment of the network of cultural creatives.

Industries such as the underground music sector reach billions of people with their

messages through the media within the shortest space of time and at huge financial cost.

We will gradually have at our disposal structures and network relationships with organisations and groups all around the world. This means that no new structures will be set up, but existing ones will be used instead. This will enable people to be reached quickly through the newspapers, TV, Internet etc. in the vicinity of the new central locations.

5. Organisation

5.1 HOLON

The network organisation HOLON links people and groups who are striving to create a human, united and ecologically sustainable society, question materialism and the growth-oriented way of thinking, and who want to contribute to establishing a durable social structure. HOLON continues to remain primarily active in the German-speaking countries.

HOLON regards itself as an umbrella organisation without a hierarchical structure. It is identical with the groups and organisations gathered under this umbrella, which are then part of a new entirety, while at the same time maintaining their identity as separate entities.

HOLON was founded in the 1990s for the purpose of interconnecting groups, organisations and movements, with the aim of making a contribution to deepening a new integral and spiritual consciousness, for instance in line with the principles of Jean Gebser or Ken Wilber. Not only does HOLON spawn and disseminate visions, but it also contributes to their realisation.

5.2 The structure until 2012

The current organisational structure is holarchic.

The programme council is the central body which organises the German-language congress in St. Arbogast under the umbrella of HOLON and develops the overall idea behind the project. It is divided into an inner (central) and exterior circle.

5 people currently belong to the *inner circle*. Each member of the inner circle is assigned fields of responsibility. The members of the inner circle are delegates of the supporting organisations:

- "Die Violetten - für spirituelle Politik", a German political party,
- "Integrale Politik" (IP), a Swiss party project with an integral orientation,
- the "Konvergenzgesellschaft", which devotes itself to holistic perception and deep ecology,
- and the board of the umbrella organisation, HOLON.

Three people are active in the *exterior circle of the programme council* at this time. Its task is to organise the media, communication and public relations work, and to check and enable partial financing by means of alternative monetary currencies. The people in the exterior circle can be members of independent groups or organisations or even individuals who do not belong to any of these.

The executive office was equipped for performing administrative duties. It works closely together with the programme council and the HOLON secretariat.

The supporting organisations are part (members) of HOLON and at the same time autonomous organisations that are active in different spheres of public life and always propagate the ideals of integral politics. These organisations are legally and financially jointly responsible for the contents of the entire project and its ramifications, initially until 2012.

5.3 Co-operation opportunities

The nucleus outlined above is the starting point for realisation of the set goals. During the course of this process, the programme council seeks partners in Europe who can contribute in different ways, with the view after 2012 of working toward the broader expansion of the network of cultural creatives. The prerequisite for participation is fundamentally linked with an orientation to the aims of an integral lifestyle. It is not so important to use the word "integral" itself, as to pursue and live the integral principles.

As a network partner, the group/organisation organises its own congress in its own responsibility. The participation of network partners is the fundamental condition for referral to a multicentric congress. Desirable, but not mandatory, is that all the network partners become a member of HOLON. They co-ordinate the thematic orientation of the respective congresses among themselves and together with the programme council in its role as the commission for the German-language congress.

As a supporting body, an organisation or movement does not organise its own congress, but co-operates on the realisation of the German-language congress and the idea as a whole. These supporting organisations make available their own structures and can become involved in the inner or exterior circles of the programme council. They are jointly responsible for the congress in 2012 in St. Arbogast (financially and as far as the topics are concerned) and therefore also have a say in procedures.

Associated bodies are groups/organisations or individuals who work in the exterior circle of the programme council and contribute their knowledge and know-how. The following stages are possible:

- Advisory co-operation with regard to the contents
- Specific activities (for example PR, publicity work, fundraising, etc.)

- Provision of structures and technical know-how (for example assistance in distributing information over an own network/magazine/other medium). Associated bodies do not hold joint responsibility and therefore do not have a say in procedures.

Patrons are groups/organisations or individuals who provide financial support. Possible services in return are arranged on an individual basis.

5.4 Holarchic structures

Once the network attains a certain size, structures will have to be created to enable it to retain an overview of the network as a whole. These are structures that serve the entirety and do not become an end in itself. For this reason, we aim to create holarchic structures⁷ instead of more centralised structures (single organisation > regional forums > nodes for regional forums > consolidation of nodes for regional forums into language-oriented forums, etc.) with a system of delegates to guarantee the flow of communication.

If the intended effects are achieved, the project will attain a critical size which will not only question established destructive structures, but will also change them. This may be regarded in industry and the political arena as a threat and give rise to opposition. A small number of large headquarters with charismatic "leaders" or committees are therefore to be avoided in favour of a living network.

5.5 The character of the project as a whole

We believe it is important to point out that the programme council and all the supporting organisations, associated bodies and partners dissociate themselves from all forms of violence. The movement should be peaceful and respect nationally and internationally acknowledged legislation and agreements in so far as these are not hostile to life or call into question the basic perceptions of democracy, in particular the sovereignty of the population. After all, the goal is to begin a collective change of direction on the basis of personal responsibility. To do something which cultural creatives would do anyway, but what they up to now have not done consequently as would be desirable, be it due to feelings of impotence or fear, or as the result of excessive individualism.

As far as the vision described in Section 2 is concerned, the project as a whole must be regarded as an open network process which will change over and over again.

⁷ Hierarchically organised structures in which each sub-system functions autonomously but is still integrated in the entity as a whole; there are no centres of power (see Appendix).

6. Financing

The cost structure and accordingly the financing comprise different elements:

- Accommodation costs, hall rental charges and infrastructure costs that are incurred in conjunction with the preparatory conferences and the congress itself are covered by the conference fees paid by the participants.
- All the remaining finances must be raised by honorary activities or the supporting organisations and associated bodies providing they cannot be covered entirely or in part by donations.

On account of the open overall nature of the project, patrons (individuals or organisations/groups) who are not interested in a win-win situation in the economic sense, but who support the idealistic nature of the project, are more likely sources of income instead of sponsors.

In general, we would like to utilise existing structures. Efficient use of these structures should enable the remaining monetary expenditure to be distributed in such a way as to remain viable for everybody.

7. Conclusion

We do not claim to save the world. We are fully aware of the fact that we are hardly in a position to change centuries-old (and in some cases millennium-old) structures, ways of thinking and obsolete traditions within a short period of time. As responsible citizens, we make our contribution to the cultural change and trust that we will meet people who support us. It will require patience, willpower and courage to achieve results.

Moreover, with co-operation processes, it is vital that each individual learns from within his midst to recognise and overcome his own egoism and claims to power, which are often applied in a subtle manner. This consolidates the collective energy. The common path must therefore be accompanied by incessant inner contemplation by every single one of us. However, we should begin without fail!

Last, but not least, it should be a pleasure to become acquainted with people who are taking the same path as we ourselves. We are convinced that there are many other groups and organisations pursuing the same goals with similar projects who are open for any form of co-operation.

It does not come down to realising "our project"; it is all about a cultural renewal for the good of all of those many people who desperately yearn for it.

* * *

Appendix

A1 On the concept: "integral / integral consciousness"

The "integral" concept was first put forward by Jean Gebser in the 1950s and developed further by authors such as Ken Wilber. An important philosophical basis is the link between western humanism and the spirituality of the east as taught, for instance, by Sri Aurobindo in the first half of the 20th century.

The integral world view assumes that an evolutionary development of consciousness takes place such as it appears at different phases of the history of humankind. Following a mythical and a rational phase, today we stand on the threshold to a new integral consciousness.

This consciousness recognises the holarchic structure of the manifestations of our world⁸ and incorporates the cultural achievements of all previous stages of development. The integral perception regards the varying knowledge and life levels of the person as being equally valid and important. The physical, emotional, rational and spiritual natures of a person have their own inherent needs which are in equilibrium with an integral lifestyle.

The relativism of the post-modern age is transgressed in that a clear position is assumed from within the intuition which penetrates the four levels of perception and transcends them. In this philosophy, the person is radically responsible for his actions, which means he is called upon to shape his own future and the future of his contemporaries on a compassionate basis. The perception of an all-encompassing coherence between all things, as well as knowledge of human freedom and responsibility, form the basis of integral politics.

A2 On the concept: "spiritual / spirituality"

How the concept of "spirituality" can be defined was decided by consensus after many discussions at HOLON:

"Spirituality is the sensing and experiencing of an all-embracing fundamental presence. This can have different names. The relationship with the fundamental presence is personal and individual. The unity with this fundamental presence expresses itself in love for life and everything that exists."

Spirituality as a stance or belief is not to be equated with religion, rather it is what allows religion to become a plausible cultural sphere of activity in the first place.

⁸ "Holarchic" is the hierarchy that can be seen in the development of nature, i.e. the natural growth hierarchy: a continued development is only possible if the preceding stage is integrated as part of the new whole.

The relationship with the fundamental presence is subject to a constant development once it has consciously begun. From this spiritual connection with the fundamental presence arises a longing for an increasingly deeper perception of the person as a physical-material, emotional and spiritual being, of the earth and the universe.

A3 Transformation energy, potential: cultural creatives

Not all people by far seem to be prepared to take heed of the background of the present situation and the changes that are necessary.

To whom should a transformation project turn to from grass-roots level as a matter of priority?

From the studies conducted by Paul Ray and Ruth Anderson we know about the rising number of (as far as consciousness is concerned) progressive people, those cultural creatives who are indeed prepared for changes (approx. one third of the population of Europe and the USA). Many people with this orientation are already actively or passively supporting the increasing number of groups, organisations and NGOs all over the world in order to contribute to the establishment of a new (integral) culture. Accordingly, there are approximately 170 to 200 million people living in Europe alone who are ready for change: a tremendous potential source of transformational energy!

These people should be addressed first.

Agenda

Preparatory conference 2	05.08 to 09.08.2010	Alte Mühle, Bad Gandersheim, Germany
Preparatory conference 3	16.08. to 20.08.2011	Jugend- und Bildungshaus St. Arbogast, Götzis, Austria
KIP - German-language Congress	28.07. to 05.08.2012	Jugend- und Bildungshaus St. Arbogast, Götzis, Austria
Star point walks	dates still undecided	Undecided
Closing festival	dates still undecided	location undecided