



World
Social Initiative
Forum

Living In Between Spaces: To enhance Co-working in the World

What Now?: Social Needs of Today with Joan Sleigh & Helmy Abouleish

Moderated by Juan Bottero | Streamed live on July 31, 2020 | Transcribed by Nicole Asis

00:03.21

Juan Bottero [Juan]: Hello, everyone! It is a pleasure to be here today with all of you, starting our first Web-Seminar in this cycle of activities called “Living In Between Spaces”. Organized by the World Social Initiative Forum, a project of the Section of Social Sciences at the Goetheanum.

My name is Juan Bottero. I am in Buenos Aires right now - Argentina, the place where I was born. Here, I work for the development of Ethical Banking in the whole of Latin America and also I work remotely for the World Social Initiative Forum at the Goetheanum.

In this cycle of Web-Seminars, we aim to address the most urgent challenges and relevant themes we have as a global society. Today, we start this process under the title, “What Now?: Social Needs of Today”. And we have two great speakers to tackle this - Joan Sleigh, the Project Leader of the World Social Initiative Forum, and Helmy Abouleish, the CEO of SEKEM. Hello Helmy and hello Joan! There you are...

Joan Sleigh [Joan]: Hi!

Helmy Abouleish [Helmy]: Hello! Hello, Joan!

Joan: Hi, everybody!

Juan: So before we start with the question, let me just give you a short introduction about Joan and Helmy.

Joan Sleigh was born in 1962 and raised in Camphill, South Africa. She attended the Constantia Waldorf School in Capetown. (She) moved to Germany in 1982 (and) raised a family of 4 children and trained as a Waldorf teacher at Witten-Annen. (She) returned to South Africa with her family in 1995 and worked as a class teacher and teacher trainer for 20 years. (She) is a member of the Executive Council of the General Anthroposophical Society in Dornach, Switzerland since 2013. She is co-responsible for the International Studies in Anthroposophy, matters of First Class, (also) for nurturing relationships of anthroposophic work in the English-speaking world, and Project Leader of the World Social Initiative Forum. Professional and personal endeavors: To support and enhance the development of a healthy, humane, multicultural society worldwide.

Helmy Abouleish (was) born in 1961 in Graz, Austria, is CEO of SEKEM-Initiative in Egypt founded by his father, Ibrahim Abouleish in 1977. SEKEM promotes Sustainable Development in Ecology, Economy, Societal, and Cultural Life. The SEKEM Holding produces, processes, and markets organic and biodynamic foodstuff, textiles, and herbal medicines in Egypt, Arabia, and internationally. They also operate educational facilities. SEKEM is regarded as the Egyptian pioneer in organic farming and was awarded "the Right Livelihood Award" - it is an alternative Nobel Prize - in 2003 under the stewardship of Helmy Abouleish. A quote from him: “I love Mission Impossible!”

It is a pleasure to have you both here. Hello!

So my proposal is that before we jump into the question of today, “What Now: Social Needs of Today”, actually. I would like to give a short presentation on why this title “Living In Between Spaces” and what does it mean. And for that, I have a short presentation.

This is the title we have chosen for our activities in the coming year. So, we start now in July 2020 and this is a process that will end or conclude next year in 2021 in July in an Open Forum or a gathering in the Goetheanum in Switzerland from the 27th to the 31st of July.

And the idea we have is that we wanted to build it up until we reach that moment. And for that we have two different activities - One is “Web-Seminars” and this is the first one we are starting now this whole process, in which we want to share experiences, reflections, proposals, and initiatives to the world and from the world. And for that, this format is - we invite experts to enter into a dialogue with us tackling different themes that we envision as the most urgent themes that we have today as a global society.

At the same time, we are starting on the 16th of October another activity which is more (of) a dialogue between different initiatives and people that are wanting to come together and share what they are doing. And through these experiences from the other also nourish their own activities and widen their perspectives. So, we are envisioning a process of gatherings in which we work different questions and we use break-out rooms. All of this would be online - the webinars and the workshops with the network.

And the idea is to build up this thing until we reach all together in this Open Forum next year. So, this is the invitation to be part (of and) following us in the webinars. Everyone is invited to join the workshop. And of course, everyone is invited to the gathering next year.

Before we jump into the presentation from Joan Sleight about the World Social Initiative Forum, what it is and also why this title of “Living In Between Spaces: To Enhance Co-working in the World”, I like to just briefly give you the calendar of our Web-Seminars so you have the perspective of the different themes and the different dates. And everyone is invited to follow us.

So Joan, before giving you the space to talk and tell us about why this title and what is the World Social Initiative Forum, I just would like to extend an invitation to everyone there following us that the idea for this format is that you can leave comments and also questions that you have to the speakers on the chat. And our team, Nicole and Milla are there in order to give you answers where it is more technical and also to pick it up and bring it to the speakers in about half an hour. So, we start with a short presentation from them, and in about half an hour, we would start bringing (in) questions from you and we enter in a dialogue between Helmy, Joan, and you on the other side.

So now, we are ready to start. Joan, please all yours.

11:11

Joan: Hi, everybody. And welcome to our first Web-Seminar of the World Social Initiative Forum. It is great that you are joining us because (of) our question today - What Now? - looking into an unpredictable future. Looking into a lot of concern, fear, anxiety as to what will come out of not only the Corona pandemic, but also global warming, the racism - the racial injustice in the world, and this multiplicity of crises which we are experiencing globally at the moment.

The World Social Initiative Forum has set up, as Juan has said, these various Web-Seminars and workshops. And this is the first of them with an open invitation for you to join us and to become active because the situation is urgent. And we see that.

“What Now?: The Social Needs of Today” is our first topic and we would like to look at what are the social needs. And they are of course multiple and different in different places and localities and so I

will try to just now highlight three main, overall social needs and to look at how can we face these, how can we work with these, how can we step up as an organization.

The World Social Initiative Forum was founded in 2000 by Ute Craemer and Truus Geraets, two wonderful women who work and have dedicated their whole life to social work in poor, marginalized communities - one in Sao Paulo and the other in South Africa. I am currently speaking from Capetown in South Africa. So, we are a worldwide organization even just today as we speak. With me is this wonderful team...

I would just want to thank my wonderful team who are part of this process and make this possible for the World Social Initiative Forum exists and keep growing in the world - and that is Juan, who just introduced everything. He also spoke about Milla and Nicole who are backstage. The four of us, we kind of hold the project but we are now a worldwide network.

13:50

And as Juan will show you in one of the next slides, the World Social Initiative Forum stands for human dignity. And what we say is the human being knows itself in relationship to other human beings. Learning and development happen only through and with others.

So, the World Social Initiative Forum is a network devoted to exactly that - to the well-being of humanity and to social justice, but also to the dignity of the human being - recognizing that human beings cannot be isolated and live on their own.

14:29

The All-World Society, which we stand for, which we try to develop with our different Forums we create spaces of encounter where we work towards forming, creating, co-creating a World-Society. And we understand this World-Society as being dependent on each individual. Each person to develop their unique possibilities - their unique potential - and thereby co-create a World-Society. A global World-Society.

And through this emergence of Self-awareness - through growing more aware of one's Self and the dignity of Others - we become more motivated and responsible for the well-being of our social, natural, economic, and spiritual universe that we live in. The world, the earth, as a living organism. (The) economy as a living organism. Spirituality as something which each one of us holds innately in our being whether we recognize it as such or not. And the social, a society which is relational, means where everybody is interconnected with each other.

15:44

And the World Social Initiative Forum designs and facilitates spaces of encounter in order to explore being human - that means the qualities of humanity, which mean respect, dignity, honor of each living organism but particularly human beings in their role of stewardship for living organisms.

16:12

For Self and Societal Transformation based on trust and empathy, which we try to foster and develop working with social tools and social instruments, social awareness, social skills. And the intention and the goal is to empower individuals and communities all over the world in different localities to maintain a fluid society - that means to stay in motion, to stay in transformation, to move with the changing times, and to be adaptable, to be flexible to be able to shift and change according to how we read the society, how you read the needs of each one of us and our companions in the world.

And in which each individual plays a vital role by taking themselves on and by developing by rising to the occasion and developing their unique capacities - each one - for themselves with the help and in relationship to others. And therefore, thereby we celebrate multiplicity in diversity and work towards an All-World Society.

17:25

Now, this brings me to the three aspects which I would like to bring, as I've said, the three particular social needs. And I would just like to frame them very, very simply.

Firstly, as facing fear. The first one. As dealing with isolation and social distancing. And this need (concerning) unemployment.

And these three very global needs, very global situations, and problems that we have - they are exacerbated. They have been highlighted through the COVID-19 pandemic. And they have been very, very, very clear to all of us.

18: 14

And what is interesting in this situation of facing fear is that it is a situation in which we are all united worldwide. No one is spared from this need to face anxiety and fear. And of course, we can say that some face far more challenges. For some people, it is existential. It really is - their life is really in question; their life is in danger. For others, it's more of a situation that we are facing the feel of this actual illness because we don't understand it. For others, it's facing an unknown future where we can't see what normality...we can't go back to what we call "normality" and what is a "new normality".

So however we are situated in this process of facing anxiety and fear, which is different in different places, and from different communities of people, we still all have this experience.

And this question of fear - how do we deal with this? It's also been highlighted. It's been underlined through our media - there is this real stirring of fear. Then we have the scientists who are searching for an immunity, a vaccine, which will help with immunity. And the scientists don't agree on all the facts. The facts are contradictory. That brings about fear in us. The philosophers are trying to find new ways of understanding this whole situation that we face worldwide - the unknown future. The conspiracy theorists are looking for who do we blame for this, who is actually behind all of this, what's really going on in the background - unseen and in a hidden kind of way. And the media are stirring fear in illogical but also contradictory news, which is being broadcasted.

So obviously, we are all facing this fear. And the natural, most natural way of facing fear is either flight, fight, or freeze. These are words, which were brought by Stephen Covey in 7 Habits of Highly Effective People; and he describes that these are the natural reactions that we have.

In "fight", we react with judgment, with criticism. Even to the point of violence.

With "flight", we retreat into ourselves, isolate ourselves, going into depression, or go into a different kind of self-gratification to avoid ourselves.

And with "freeze" is the one in which most of us know where we just freeze in a paralysis. "I don't know how to actually act and what to do."

And the question is: how do we deal with the fear in such a way that we can face it. That we can enter into (and that) we can recognize that we are being asked to face the nothingness. Asked to face that emptiness inside of ourselves and step into a gap. Step into a gap, the gap within ourselves - this unknown space where, and I want to bring a quote just now of Nelson Mandela where he is described as having that capacity to stop, to pause, to step into the gap within himself,

and thereby to find a new possibility for the future. A new understanding for the future. And here is the quote:

When leaders function by going into the gap when disruption happens, they stand the chance of picking possibilities which bring a new future. - John Carlin on Nelson Mandela

They stand a chance of finding new possible futures. And this is...from John Carlin. He was a young journalist and he was good friends with Nelson Mandela. And he was present in the room at that time when Chris Hani, one of the most important people during the apartheid time. A young freedom fighter had been murdered, assassinated. And Nelson Mandela stopped when that news came. He just paused. There was just absolute silence, as John Carlin describes. There was absolute silence for five minutes. And all the people present did not know what to do. (They) didn't know whether he was going into total shock or what he would do. And after that, after five minutes of absolute silence, Nelson Mandela came out and said, "I need to address the whole of society in South Africa." And he gave the six-minute address, which actually saved South Africa from going into a revolution. Completely inclusive and completely understanding.

23:31

So that is what I mean by the gap. And fear brings us to this point of having to meet ourselves and having to take ourselves on, whether it's through "flight" and our own avoidance; whether it's through "freeze" and paralysis; whether it's through "fight" and becoming aggressive, each time we meet ourselves.

The question is: how do we step into that gap? And can I learn to liberate myself from this crushing anxiety by changing my thought patterns by directing them to myself and taking myself on and therefore realizing what it is that is in charge of my thought-patterns?

Who is responsible for my reactions? Are they determined from outside? Are they programmed through my fear? Or am I actually free to take myself in hand to such an extent that I can flow with the fear and I can shape my own responses? That is this one question that is brought about by fear.

24:30

The second aspect which we deal with isolation and social distancing, which is a current theme now, which we are all facing or have faced. And I just spoke about facing one's Self and facing one's own programming, I would say, from without. And taking one's Self on is this important aspect. But I can only take myself on if I am in relation to other people.

So this tension field where we live in between personal rights and social responsibility is very strong at the moment. Personal rights that means I want to decide whether to wear a mask or not. I want to decide if I am not allowed to exercise anymore. I want to decide if I can't visit my family and my friends anymore. And yet, with social responsibility, I also have to recognize that I need to hold back and compromise my own personal wishes and rights for the sake of social responsibility. So we are, in a way, caught in this tension field. And where for us, for some of us it might be comfortable to have like a pause in one's life and to be, to go back in one's own space, and in a way to be forced to stop, think, and turn inwards, and reflect on one's life. At the same time, isolation is something that does not belong to humanity, does not belong to human beingness. As we said in the beginning, we develop through and with other human beings.

So how do we, out of this time now which we are experiencing...and I think we are realizing that there are new ways of encounter, new ways of building relationships, new ways of engaging with people like we are doing right now worldwide. I do not know how many of you are there and I don't know from which countries (you are from). But even the three of us on the screen - one is in Argentina, one is in South Africa, one is up in Egypt. I think you are in Egypt, Helmy. Is that right?

Helmy: Yes, I am in Egypt.

Joan: We have this possibility and it's exciting. That we have this possibility of acting on a global level. Meeting each other. Building relationships globally. And yet, is this a surrogate for (a) real meeting? A surrogate for a face-to-face relationship, a face-to-face encounter?

And among the people that I know, the people I am experiencing and working with, I have a sense that we are becoming more aware of the need of human encounter than before. We all know that we need people. I think it is becoming, we are becoming more acutely aware of this. And therefore this need and wish to develop empathy, to develop understanding. This urgency, almost, to really see every other human being in a dignity, in their spiritual value, in their real humanity. So how do we awaken empathy and social justice - particularly social justice through being faced with isolation and social distancing? How do we do that? That is our challenge. Can we step into that gap and find empathy and social justice within ourselves? Because we all face the challenge.

28:23

And thirdly, unemployment. This is a very, very big topic in the States and also in South Africa. And there are really thousands of people, millions of people, who have lost their job. Millions of people who, the casual workers here in South Africa - and they are many of them particularly from the poor communities - who face the problem that they have no work and no income. And therefore, their families who they support also have no income. And also the service providers in the hospitality industry - they are unemployed. And there is no knowing whether they will get their employment back again.

And this kind of brings up this question of "what is it to have employment?" - not just having a salary at the end of the month, but also (of) having a place where you can contribute. A place where you can provide for your family. A place where you can know you can survive. And this belongs to human dignity and human integrity. The fact that we want to engage a purposeful action, not only for ourselves and our loved ones but for the world.

And this is also becoming an urgent, acute question or social need is: where is the incentive to work? Where is the incentive to step into a purposeful action which makes a difference? A purposeful action, which doesn't only put food on my table but actually makes a difference in the society that we live in? Or in the environment that is dying? Or in the social, racial, justice situation that we belong (to)? All of that belongs to this question of vocation, this question of work. And how do I not just get stuck with this question of employment and unemployment but open up a new, very urgent topic of understanding very new paradigm shift - and that is the importance and the incentive to engage in purposeful work. To find my vocation. To find where do I belong and where do I make a difference.

And so I've just briefly highlighted these 3 social needs, which I see as particularly acute social needs of the moment and add an urgency to act. And therefore the World Social Initiative Forum invites you with this:

To engage in activity. Or to engage either in projects and action, activity. But first of all, perhaps in an open dialogue to help shift these paradigms. To find new ways of thinking, new ways of working, new ways of understanding this situation that we live in worldwide. And together, to try to work towards co-creating a more humane future.

And from here, I would like to invite Helmy to continue because he has done a remarkable, a lot in this direction of creating a humane future, far more humane situation in SEKEM, in Egypt.

Thank you for listening, everybody. And let's hear (from) Helmy.

Juan: I just have an added question for you. I would also like to connect this question of today's Web-Seminar - also with what you brought, Joan - but also if he would like to bring the Vision and Mission of the World Social Initiative Forum into the conversation, as well.

Joan: Very good. Thank you, very good.

32:26

Helmy: Thank you, Joan. Thank you, Juan. I will try to address this. But first of all, I want to thank Joan for this wonderful introduction to the topic. And I think we are all here, wherever we are in the world joining, we all face these same issues. We face issues related to the current crisis. We face issues along all the four dimensions of sustainable development or the threefold order of society. We face economic challenges. We face societal and social challenges. We face a lot of ecological crises, actually, and challenges. And last but not the least, cultural and spiritual challenges.

And this is, I think, what is the particular added value of the World Social Initiative Forum. And if we look (at) your presentation now, Juan, it is very obvious that we at the World Social Initiative Forum, when we thought "What is our vision?", "What is our vision for the future?", "What is the vision of the whole world?", then we actually had a very crazy vision for 2050.

It was, first of all, that the World Social Initiative Forum, which has started in 2000, which is organizing a yearly encounter at the moment, will then be a global agent of transformation, drawing out of Anthroposophy and Spiritual Science and building alliances, and creating spaces of dialogues, as Juan has explained to us.

Now, this is built on a picture of the future of humanity. On our belief in the vision:

1. where people in the future will be able to unfold their individual potential freely
2. where they will practice empathy and a genuine interest in another
3. and where they will contribute to an associative economy in service of the needs of the others
4. and they will sustain the vitality of the earth as a living organism.

So we can see this world coming. And some will call this an illusion. And some will call it crazy. I think some will call this a "mission impossible" for humanity at the moment. But as what you have already mentioned, we are exactly out for mission impossible.

35:35

And on this particular path, we are not alone. I would also like to mention, as Joan did, Nelson Mandela, who gave me a particularly nice quote when he said, "It always seems impossible until it's done."

Yes, we are on a mission impossible. But we are committed to contribute to it.

Now, we exactly know that this is not going to happen by itself. We can not lean back and just wait for things to happen. So, we have to engage. And this is what we have defined in our mission - what is the World Social Initiative Forum going to do?

And if you move to the next slide, you would see how we have defined for the World Social Initiative Forum to engage on all the four dimensions, we have clearly said that on the cultural dimension of the fourfold sustainable development dimensions or the threefold order of society plus the ecological basis.

36:15

But in the cultural dimension, we want to create spaces of human encounter to unfold individual potential. And we started. We had an encounter about this topic last year.

We want to enhance holistic research into local culture, art, science, and social context. Holistic research, in a time when it seems that natural science has overtaken everything, we believe in the importance of the humanities and spiritual science.

And we want to promote the education and practice of integrative health - a term which has proven to be tremendously important and at the same time as a concept totally missing (in) the last few months. Integrative health and not only treatments and vaccines as the solution for resilience, immunity, and so on.

37:23

On the societal change part, we are committed to (facilitating) encounters where we can build empathy and start understanding each other. The World Social Initiative Forum is doing this since many years already, but we believe that we have to do more and we will see much more of this to come.

We will encourage models of sustainable community building all over the world. And also in this part, we have already started. But we need many, many more efforts to start in this direction.

And last but not the least, obviously we will network with all of our partners and friends all over the world to dedicate our community, our movement to human dignity and equal rights for everybody.

38:18

And when you look to the associative economy, it really gets to be a crazy mission because here, we believe - and we'll do everything possible - to develop ethical and social banking systems all over the globe. And where it is as of the moment is still a very small portion of the banking system. We can see that this can be one hundred percent the mainstream because there is no other alternative, as one of our colleagues in the World Social Initiative Forum, Joan Melé, is always beautifully explaining.

And from the other side, we will also support the development of sustainable and holistic services and products to serve all the needs along (with) fair trade principles, along (with) associative economic principles. Some call it "Economy of Love".

And last but not least, we will of course do a tremendous input into the discussion of the value of jobs, of employment, of job creation not only for productivity issues but for the essential needs of human development and human dignity.

39:40

And last but not least, on the ecological dimension, of course, we will promote, enhance and support organic and biodynamic farming as a solution for the challenges of biodiversity, water scarcity, climate change, and many others. We will do everything possible to contribute to the mitigation of the climate crisis.

40:13

...And having all these, I hope that I didn't move out now for a second. This is the picture that I have. Having said all these, this is the mission we are committed to. This is the mission that the World Social Initiative Forum wants to embark on. And to do this, we have also identified, obviously, projects, initiatives, and actions. And so in line with this world vision, we at the World Social Initiative Forum want to embark in the future together with you, together with all of our

partners, together with all those who believe in such a vision for humanity on projects and initiatives to contribute to a better world.

And yes, there are already a lot of such projects on the way. We have started with initiatives on lifelong learning, unfolding potential. We are seeing already some efforts from partners in the Goetheanum and elsewhere who start to work on the federation for the biodynamic movement. We are seeing initiatives connected to climate change mitigation. We will have a big conference next year at the Goetheanum. We are seeing projects to launch a label called "Economy of Love". And of course, we are very happy that there are conferences on the first holistic research already happening in the world.

But we need many, many more activities. We need many, many more initiatives. We want to see not only one World Social Initiative Forum per year, but we want to see World Social Initiative Forums in every country happening on these topics.

We want to see people connecting globally, locally, regionally on these topics because we believe that miracles are possible. That we can change the world. Our own experience shows this every day but it needs us to connect, to join, and to share.

And in this spirit, I want to thank all those of you who are going to engage and support the World Social Initiative Forum on this mission and on these goals. Thank you very much.

42:38

Juan: Thank you, Helmy. And now I'd like to start the second part of this proposal that is a Q&A, a dialogue out of the questions that will come from the audience. So please, everyone who is there who (is) following us, feel free to leave comments, but also questions for us to pick up and bring them into the table here and to the speakers.

And as a starting point, I would like to bring a question from myself. And I would like to pick up this image of the impossible, "and that (it) is impossible until it is done" (Mandela). And also this picture that you built, Joan, at the beginning, where we are suffering from fear out of the uncertainty of the situation and unemployment. And also this isolation where our social life - which is the fundamental aspect of our human life - is being damaged or in danger and so on.

And how is it for an individual, one person alone in this situation, when they see this context. And they see this impossible. How to bring what is living inside this person into this outer world until it becomes possible? If you would like to some words about - how is this process of an initiative, out of an intuition of the moment? Or what is living inside that person that can actually be manifested out in the world?

So maybe it is not a concrete question but more (of) this picture of an initiative. If you would like to bring some aspects of it.

Feel free to start who is willing to start.

44:32

Joan: That is a complex question, Juan. But thank you. What is it that motivates us into action? How long do we stay an observer? We observe, we see. You, know, we've learned looking at the news where you do not even know what is true what's not true, what you could believe or what not. And so many things which are described in the news are usually the sensational, dramatic, difficult challenging things. What about all the beauty that is happening? What about people who feel impelled to stand up and to do something?

And my question is - what is that motivation? What is it in each one of us that shifts the attitude from the observer to the participant? And what is it that motivates somebody to step up and take action?

And we have so many examples of people out of the most fraught and traumatic situations in life who stepped up and changed the world. Nelson Mandela is a classic example. We bought quoted from him today.

But what is it that shifts? That takes that inner shift - that we can believe in the impossible and step up and actually do the impossible. And we all can do that.

And I can just offer one little aspect to that, and that is what I was trying to discuss and that is this question of the “gap”. Do we dare to go into the gap inside of ourselves? Do we dare to reflect on the silent moments where stuff comes up from within which we are not expecting, which we didn’t know was there? And can we face it, and listen to it, and hear it? Or do we have to quickly shut the door, you know, close the trap door so that nothing comes up from that unknown gap within ourselves?

Helmy, what’s your experience? How do we actually take on that resource, which we all have, but which we are scared to know about?

46:53

Helmy: My own experience is that the only way - people start believing in themselves and in their ability to change the world is when they find their inner voice. Their call. Their inspiration. Their sources of inspiration. And these are manifold and can be from religion to meditation, to arts - many, many different sources. But it needs this kind of a source for inspiration to get this conviction and this self-confidence. And then, when you are there, I think the next logical step - and this is our call - then you start to share, to unite your efforts with others, to create a community, a movement. This is what we need.

But as you rightly said, it starts with this waking up the light in yourself. As it is beautifully said in Islam, “the divine light in every one of us, which is there, needs to come out”.

48:10

Joan: And I would like to suggest that in a way the hidden gift or possibility which is given through the pandemic. Because we are so faced with isolation and fear and unemployment that we are in a way being pushed and forced to look into that nothingness. And as Rudolf Steiner, and also Heidegger, and also Karl König have all spoken about it - in that nothingness that we find our inspiration. That there is a little, little light. That we find that there is a little light there. And that is our core. And each one of us has that and has the possibility of finding it.

48:48

Juan: Thank you, Joan. Thank you, Helmy. And know, I start bringing questions from the audience. David Fairclough from Ireland sends greetings from there and asks us: “Could you suggest one practical thing that each of us can do wherever we are, which could help you in the work in WSIF and help further intention?”. So...

Joan: Go, Helmy. You’ve got ideas. You’ve already started.

Helmy: If it’s only one thing then the first step for me is as any responsible civil society consumer is to make the right choices in what you buy, what you pay, what you do every day from the morning to the night in all the products and services you consume. Make the right choice. You

create the world out there with your decisions as a consumer and you can change the world with the right decisions as a consumer.

Juan: I would like to underline that completely- become consequential. But also David - hello David - I also want to describe the suggestions that we've started in Dornach. And that is, to try to highlight what is, what are the social needs right here, right in this place. In every locality, they are different. And every locality has got social needs because we are human beings. So what is the social need in our locality - and we've identified one and I will describe that what it is, which we are working on regularly. Now, we meet regularly. But there's a shift. So okay, this we've highlighted, we've identified as a social need. But now let's shift the focus and say that within that - what is the abundance that each one of us carries and can offer to the social need?

So, we meet out of this situation - this is the social need. Yes, we recognize it. We see it. We know it. And what is my abundance, which I have in abundance in myself - the fact that I am alive, the fact that I can smile, the fact that I love people, whatever, which can I offer to deal with this need?

51:19

Juan: Thank you. Another question from Edward Baumheier. He asked us about the income gap we have nowadays in our society, even as a global community, we could say. And he asks us about, "How do we take on wealth inequality?" And I think this is a great question for you, Helmy because you have a whole, a lot of experience with this concept of "Economy of Love". I would like to invite you to illustrate a little bit about your experience in this regard.

Helmy: Now, if it is about the income gap between the poor and the rich and the highest and the lowest salaries, if I understood you right, then there is obviously a whole new world out there. We have to reinvent economics. We have to reinvent economics overturning capitalism and Adam Smith's economy, which did not lead us to better livelihoods obviously. So I believe, personally - and this is what we are working on in Egypt - that we have to move to "need-based salaries". We have to move away from salaries which are related to jobs or responsibilities but a salary is something which covers the needs of a human being and nothing else. And any gap between a manager and the simple worker is not in our meaning and understanding not justified if there is not really also a definite need.

From the other side, I think that the "Economy of Love" calls for a re-focus of the economy. Instead of profit maximization and shareholder value, economy is about providing services and products to those we love - meaning, in this context obviously, we believe that we want to offer these products which are produced under the label of "Economy of Love", with prices which everyone can afford. We do not want to provide products, which are designed in a pricing structure that can only reach a certain income elite.

There is a lot to go and a lot to develop in this. But we will move to need-based salaries and sustainable products for everyone.

54:03

Juan: Thank you, Helmy. And here - David from the previous question is thanking you both. He said that both answers were great. So, appreciation from him. And now, we just received a question. Let me just read it: Sta. Cecilia is asking you, Helmy, if you can share a bit more this "Economy of Love" and how to extend help in small initiatives? Can they do that for other farming communities outside Egypt?

Helmy: This is difficult to make it quickly. So I would like to connect with her. If it is possible if you can provide her my email or vice versa, whatever is possible. Because "Economy of Love" needs, I think, a Web-Seminar in the future. But now, what I would like to say is, we believe that by reinventing economy, we will enable the consumer to answer four questions in regard to every

product he is buying. And then - because we believe in the sanity of human beings and of consumers worldwide - they will make the right decision.

We will answer the question:

1. What is the impact of this product on the ecology?
2. What is the impact of this product on equality and the social sphere?
3. What is the impact of this product on potential-unfolding?
4. And what is the true, fair price of this product?

Answering these four questions to any consumer should enable him to take the right decision (about) what to buy. And we are promoting this and we are promoting it in Egypt and outside Egypt. And I am happy to join forces with anyone who is interested.

Juan: Thank you. So, maybe we can type on the chat the website (of) SEKEM and that there is a contact email or something like that. I think it is www.sekem.com, isn't it?

Helmy: Yes.

56:26

Juan: So here we have a comment from Dottie. Not a question, but just bringing an insight (into) the situations of the farmers today, saying that many farmers (or) farming harvesters cannot even afford the food that they harvest, said an article today. So this is a very delicate situation that is also happening in this field.

56:49

Juan: We have a question from one of the students from (the) Goetheanum - Adria Subirats Rivas. I am sure Joan knows him very well.

Joan: Hello, Adria.

Juan: He is in Catalonia right now, asking us - how does the individual respond to this restriction of our human needs by the state that actually should protect them? Greetings.

Joan: Can you state the question again?

Juan: The question had to do with the individual responsibility and the role of the state, I would say...has to do with that - this combination of the state as a protector but also there is a restriction of freedom. How is it placed in individual freedom and responsibility as well?

Joan: Yes, that means this is this whole difficulty. This whole tension field that we find ourselves in. On the one hand, our own personal rights. That we don't want this dictatorship from this state in many, many countries where I think it almost feels like a totalitarian state. And they are quite enjoying it, one feels. And under the name of healthcare, they are dictating a whole lot of sometimes very illogical inconsequential regulations. And yet, of course, one has to understand that they have the responsibility to try to hold the society together. And I think in many, many countries, (they) are totally overwhelmed with the unknowness of the illness. Of the virus.

Because one does not know it and it is mutating and changing all the time, they would rather turn on the side of safety and try to shut things down. And of course, they like the power. And so, how do we as individuals navigate, and at the same time honor our own rights? And I would like to tell you what they are doing in South Africa. But this maybe is not a good example, but this is what they are doing - that civil society is taking it on. They are actually doing what they believe is right. I

love what Helmy said, “to trust in the sanity of consumers”. Trust in the sanity of each other. And of ourselves, hopefully as well.

And of course, there is a big variable. So, what it's done in South Africa, they have banned cigarettes and alcohol - the sale and the consumption of cigarettes and alcohol. They have banned because many of the hospitals here are full of cases, which are caused particularly home violence and family violence and social violence, which has been caused by alcohol, particularly.

So, what does it do? Apparently 40% of cigarettes are anyway sold by the black market and not (legally) from official trade. So what it has done is it strengthens the illegal system, the illegal sale in South Africa. So everybody knows where to get alcohol and cigarettes. It's absolutely no problem. You can get it anywhere. So what it has done is that it has strengthened the illegal sale of these things. So that is what they had to deal with. So that is one thing.

And the other thing of course if you stopped selling alcohol in restaurants - it's one thing from the home consumption of alcohol. The other thing is in restaurants. And with these many, many restaurants here have closed and probably won't open again and it's existential for many, many people. The whole hospitality industry is really suffering here. So, I just heard that they sell wine in teacups. You fill the bottle of wine into the teapot and then you serve it in teacups. I mean, I don't know whether the wine drinkers really like that but that's another way of getting wine. And you sell it in a glass that looks like apple juice. So, things like that. There are many ways out of this. Okay, Adria, I know that this is not what you meant by this question.

But I would like to say is that “Civil society has to become strong now.” I think that's the call - is that we, each of us step up and take on the urgency of the situation. And make, as Helmy said, the right decisions.

Helmy: I can just share some of my experience in SEKEM in Egypt over the last 6 months. And it's pretty much like what Joan said. Yes, we are facing all the same restrictions - hopefully with the good intentions to protect us from the pandemic. But what I have experienced in SEKEM, that within the legal structure and regulations, we have enough space as (a) civil society to still organize a good life, a good livelihood.

In our SEKEM community, over the 6 months, we continued having circles. We continued (to) have weekly cultural programs. We continued (by) having a core program. And at the same time, we are very, very protective of our people and did real tests as much as we can, support everyone who had any kind of disease or illness - not to transmit the pandemic and so on. So within the (community, we keep up and develop) a high-quality barrier from the disease. We could within this community still live a life that went on. And we continue to have brainstorming sessions and cultural events.

So, it is difficult finding a line between the freedom of the individual and societal constraints. And I have seen wonderful examples all over the world, by the way. I just mentioned SEKEM but I have seen pictures, videos, all kinds of crazy things from people doing in these times over all borders and over all kinds of restrictions. So, this is the only way I see because, from the other side, I would never support anyone breaking laws or regulations as long as they are in line with the laws of the country.

1:03:48

Juan: Thank you, Helmy. Thank you, Joan. And since we are already on the edge of the time that we had set for this Web-Seminar, I would like to extend a few more minutes and give you the chance, both Helmy and Joan, to bring (the) last reflection, (the) last message.

Maybe, a short review of what we went through is “Living In Between Spaces” project - that these are the activities and themes we have for our activities this year. That everyone is welcome to join.

We have Web-Seminars. We have the Workshops altogether. Everyone is welcome to join us on the 16th of October for the workshop. And also the Web-Seminars streamed monthly via Facebook. And everyone is invited to this gathering in the Goetheanum one year from now. And also Joan gave us this picture of what is the World Social Initiative Forum. And Helmy also connected it to the big vision and mission statements that we have. And then we went through this topic of “What Now?: Social Needs of Today” (and) the questions that we received. And I would like to, out of this context, give you a chance to have a last message to conclude our first Web-Seminar today.

1:05:17

Helmy: Should I start, Joan, so that you close?

Joan: Yes.

Helmy: I would like to say that I believe that this COVID-19 pandemic, with all the sorrow and pain it brought to the world and obviously our prayers and our thoughts are with all those who suffered. But on the other side, I think it was a huge catalyst for change. And I believed the vision which we have drawn up before this whole Corona crisis even ever started - last year, we started in October or November - we'll see a boost after we go back to more normality. After Corona, or COVID, or whatever you would want to call it.

I think people today are ready for (a) change in all four dimensions. We have seen that change is needed. That we cannot go on like this on all the four dimensions - whether it is on unfolding potential, society, economy, or ecology. And hence, I am, as always, very optimistic that we will come out with better ideas, more inspiring...(that we can) achieve our vision even a little bit earlier than 2050.

Joan: Wonderful. Thank you, Helmy for your positivity. And I want to invite everybody - I agree with everything that Helmy has said - I would like to invite you to “Mission Impossible”.

And what we have titled “Living In Between Spaces” - every word is important.

Living - it's all about bringing life to the planet. Bringing real life to the planet. Bringing new life to our economy. Bringing life into our cultural, spiritual aspect, with which we live. Bringing life into society - into a relational society. A fluid, relational World-Society. How do we do that? The life we can see in the elements now where nature is reviving because we have got not much pollution anymore and hardly any airplanes - we can really see how nature is absolutely resilient. And this is the “life forces” that we need to learn to enhance and we learn to harness as human beings. So that is what “Living” means - how do we really live? How do we find new life?

“In Between Spaces” has got to do with the gap. How do we live, how do we bring life through this in-between space between human beings and that gap in ourselves? Our own in-between space - between myself and my other Self, or whatever you want to call it. How do we re-enliven the in-between spaces? And that's one could say (needs) weeks talking about this. But this is our theme for this next year and a half. And I would like to invite all of you to join that because you are all part of the in-between spaces. And you are all part of the “livingness”, which we want to enhance.

So, this is a call to action. A call to participation. A call to join us and make this a world, a global, huge, world project.

Juan: Thank you both for these closing words. And now, we are really coming to an end. And let me just invite you one more time to our upcoming Web-Seminar next month - The Power of Commitment: Safeguarding what is Human. It will be on the 28th of August. And we are preparing a surprise. I didn't put any follow-up information because we are still doing some arrangements for

this Web-Seminar, but at least I can share you with the title and the date. And in the coming days, we will post the flyers on social media to know what it is all about.

And also, as this call to action in engaging into this - joining us and being active in “Living In Between Spaces”, the date to start in a real will participation - not only as an audience but really being part of the dialogue is on the 16th of October. And everyone is welcome to join that. You can also follow this information via social media. We will be announcing there.

But also, we would put now on the chat a link for a feedback form that you can give us so that we can improve for the upcoming webinars. And also one of the questions in this form is if you would like to join us for this workshop together. So then we are creating this list of people and initiatives that like to go (through) this process with us.

And if you don't want to use the format (but) you (would) still want to connect, just send us an email at hello@socialinitiativeforum.org. It will have the same effect.

Thank you to Milla and Nicole one more time. They were in the background doing a lot helping me constantly. Thank you. And thank you everyone there on the other side bringing in the question and being connected. I think we reached a number of 80 in one moment, we were in between 70 and 80, most of the Web-Seminar, from people from all around the world. So, thank you for being there. And thank you Helmy and thank you, Joan, for these deep, insightful messages you brought today.

Joan: Thank you and goodbye, everybody!

Helmy: Thank you.

Juan: Until next time.