

Theory of Change

Defining the problem – the vision – preconditions & hypotheses

Defining the problem and finding hidden potentials:

- **Separation and detachment:** growing separation between Europe and the Middle Eastern cultures despite greater interaction due to migration and economic interdependence.
 - Misunderstandings and misperceptions in large parts resulting from a lack of knowledge and biased information.
 - Europeans increasingly disintegrate culturally as opposed to an attitude of oneness and a mind-heart centered approach. The 'other' is downgraded getting excluded from European identity and values. Not recognizing commonalities but rather focusing on differences and separation.
 - Enduring imperial practices of Europe (EU), defining the norm and standards of doings in an apparent or more sublime manner via media and defining global thinking.
 - Potentials for mutual growth culturally and economically are not realized. Addressing them on a grassroots level opens up new opportunities to meet on equal footing.
- **Women** and women's issues became the center of attention in cultural discussions.
 - Women are widely being used as projection screens for cultural debates and conflict over societal power on European and Middle Eastern side. Cultural and religiously reasoned debates are covering up patriarchal systems and traditions resuming different kinds of inequality in our societies.
 - Feminism could act as a connecting power between women with different backgrounds strengthening their joint position.

The Vision:

I want to contribute to efforts making European and Middle Eastern societies respect each other's values, talents and contributions; Create new narratives and open up the discourse about the Middle East to a positive, more diverse and integrative view. Bring people together and inspire Europeans for learning impulses and the chance to question own beliefs and cultural norms. Change the way, how women and their roles in society are being viewed. These transformational approaches are reflected in a changed mindset as well as increased encounters and concrete collaborative projects between different countries in both regions.

Preconditions: Research and Experience

Positive emotions allow us to broaden our awareness, see more possibilities and feel more oneness. In Europe, we are called upon reminding ourselves of the virtues of antiquity: a balance of mind(intellect) and emotions. Integrating both in a deeper understanding of our

own nature - as human beings with heart and mind. Individualistic, materialistic, performance driven values do not satisfy human needs to connect and build relationships. In this respect, we always need to learn from other cultures developing our capacity to build empathy and to grow personally.

A real connection between people is the prerequisite for positive emotions (B. Frederickson). Love is its strongest form. "Love is a power which produces love" (E. Fromm). This notion carries the vision of a society capable of love.

Special foci and hypotheses:

- The balance of freedom and sociability in the Arab cultures compared to the European cultures. Exploring how this affects different ways of leading a happy and meaningful life. Individuals need a good balance of both (Paul Parin).
- Educating our hearts and minds: we all want to feel connected. Opening our hearts is one important prior-condition to receive and integrate new information and creating positive emotions (Barbara Fredrickson)
- Transformational learning based on disorienting dilemmas, reflection and critical thinking (Jack Mezirow)
- Transforming the view of human beings as high performance machines to heart and mind centred human beings (European discourse)
- Creating islands of reason (Paul Parin). Sharing experiences can make one realize that there are alternative ways of seeing and acting upon our intercultural relationships.
- Women deserve special attention, because females are being used as cultural divides in the East-West discourse. Cross-sectional feminism, feminism without borders provide theoretical and practical guidance.

The ideas of this project are strongly influenced by outstanding **thinkers, their books and research**. *inter alia*:

- Brigitte Dorst: Alles beginnt mit Sehnsucht und Suche – Herzensbildung auf dem Sufi-Weg (Patmos, 2018)
- Mathias Enard: Kompass (2015)
- Barbara Fredrickson: Love 2.0: Finding Happiness and Health in Moments of Connection (Plume, 2013)
- Erich Fromm: The Art of Loving (1956)
- Thomas Gebauer and Ilija Trojanow: Hilfe? Hilfe! Wege aus der globalen Krise (2018)
- Dalai Lama: Beyond religion – ethics for a whole world (2012)
- Nagib Machfus: The Journey of Ibn Fattouma (1983)
- Meister Eckhart: Vom Wunder der Seele – eine Auswahl aus den Traktaten und Predigten (Reclam, 2017)
- Chandra Talpade Mohanty, and Linda Carty: Feminist Freedom Warriors (FFW) digital video archive <http://feministfreedomwarriors.org> (book 2018)
- Reichmayr, Johannes et al.: Ethnopsychanalyse revisited. Gegenübertragung in transkulturellen und postkolonialen Kontexten (2016)
- Dschalaluddin Rumi: Gedichte aus dem Diwan (Beck)
- Edward Said: Orientalism (1978)