

## Childs Dream

Do you remember your greatest childhood dream? Not a mountain of gummy bears; not the giant ice cream; not the flight in the soap bubble like in “The Wizard of Oz” either. Rather, my question is aimed at the kind of expressions used by children such as “When I grow up I’ll be...”. Or maybe you knew what your dream was all along. Maybe you actually did become a wizard, even if not the Wizard of Oz. Or were you rather indecisive, like me? I could not decide whether to become an Indian or a cowboy; a locomotive driver or an astronaut; a construction worker or an inventor. Four decades later, I must admit that none of my childhood dreams came true. Instead, I became a copper fitter and welder, a scribe, and a cross-world traveler, which I would never have dreamt of in this weird constellation. Thus, looked at in bright daylight, my professional career is a confirmation that reality does not necessarily - and certainly not automatically - emerge from a child's dream. This ultimately, and after a disillusioned phase, brought me to the sober realisation that it takes something more than just an innate ability to dream up one’s life: in the words of a mechanic, a universal-dream-realiser tool; one which takes you out of your dream phase to carry you on with your life. In contemplating this, my own indecision brought me to the solution of the problem. As to the name of the tool: no matter what I wanted to become, it would always have been necessary: education! After all, as an Indian, I would have had to learn about smoke signals and how to read tracks; also, how to use a bow and arrows, and how to smoke a peace pipe. If I had become a cowboy, I would have had to study the proper handling of a lasso and a colt. I’d have had to learn to catch cattle and mustangs with a snare rope. While bullets shot from a shot-gun reached Indians with an unmistakable loud bang, they were much faster than the arrow shot by the Indian in the opposite direction, whispering silently through the air.

It is highly likely that such thoughts on the vital advantages and disadvantages of different professions were the cause of my early childhood indecisiveness; doubtful and weighing whether I would really become an Indian, or perhaps rather a cowboy, or whether I should rather learn something decent. A profession that not only increases my own likelihood of survival, but also brings communities together; for example, a locomotive driver or an astronaut or a construction worker or an inventor. Believe me, it was really not easy. The

advantage of my continued indecision was that I lived in a dreamy state for a long time, not unlike the Wizard of Oz in the soap bubble. In a miraculous way, both he and I survived these original phases of our lives, which, however, did not lead to a single profession only in my case. This leads me to the core of this story: the fulfillment of childhood dreams. Starting from the fact that every child in this world dreams. Every child! And we as adults know the shortest and safest way to fulfill these dreams: school...from dream, to education, to reality. A self-evident conclusion in a modern, developed world: going to school. Those children who are deprived from this right will hear their dream bubbles burst as adults. Not with a gentle plop like the bursting soap bubble, but a frighteningly loud plop. Into their hearts, sometimes fatal, like the bullet fired by the cowboy from his colt. The days of the Wild West are over. Such wild days in which children have no access to school education continue. It is still about lives. In the old days, survival meant weapons. Nowadays it is about self-determination of lives, possibly provided through a universal children's-realisation-tool. It's about education. To fulfill this dream of every child. If this one dream is fulfilled, growing children have a fair chance to fulfill themselves as adults as well by continuing to fulfill their other self-determined dreams. According to the slightly modified quotation of the Italian philosopher, Dominican and poet, Tommaso Campanella, (1568-1639): "Do not dream your life, live your (childhood) dream."

Ensuring access to education for many, possibly for everyone, especially for underprivileged children, is the declared goal of a dream come true, Child's Dream Foundation. Its two Swiss founders, Daniel and Marc, were also once dreaming children. They took their opportunities – thanks to education - to meet their professional dream. They built their (professional) lives on a secure foundation and lived their dream jobs by being bankers, nationally and internationally in Switzerland, Hong Kong, Seoul and Singapore. Steep career paths to recognition, euphoria, success, but then disillusionment after a few years. There was a sublime doubt about this brilliant life in the financial world, blinded by the glittering façades of the banking metropolis glistening in the sun to this day. Self-critical glances behind their own façade. Asking about the real meaning and purpose of their everyday activities for the increase in capital, no matter at which cost, to the satisfaction of the bank, investors, speculators. Faster and faster. Progression provoking dizziness. High-rise. Still, it was never

enough. Never, Daniel and Marc realised, would it be enough. In this world characterised by numbers and interest rates, profits, percentages and potencies, balance sheets and analyses. Never-never-never. With courage and determination, but also with fear brought about by change, they analysed their young lives; dared to dream. Woke up, trusted their intuition and decided – thanks to their own education – to self-determinedly establish a children's charity.

Fourteen years have passed since then. Since Child's Dream was founded in 2003, the two "dreamers" have been joined by many, many children's dream fulfillment workers: "You'll Never Work Alone!" is true not only for industry, but also in development aid. As an employee, as a volunteer, as a donor, or as an ambassador. To sum up, a multicultural team in a collaborative commitment, focused on education from childhood on. Precisely because education is one of the most important factors for sustainable social and economic development. Because education improves not only the future of the individual child, but of entire communities in the Mekong Sub-region chosen by Child's Dream. In Thailand, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia. Crossing borders. Improvement lived, led and guided by boundless love. Theoretical and practical. A mechanic would say: interlocked effectively, and functioning like a well-oiled (almost) frictionless gear. For the transmission and transformation of movements, forces and energies. Powered by headquarters in Chiang Mai, transferred to the branches in Yangon and Siem Reap and from there into the individual projects. Authentic. Professional. Transparent. The question is why two successful bankers became founders. And why do so many other adults, including me, follow their dream, for heaven's sake? Blinded by the phenomenon of herd behaviour known from financial markets? Follow because all follow? Because a realistic dream, a profitable investment, is infectious and enthralling. Or because their life change motivates other people to lead a philanthropic instead of an "I-centred" fantastic life. Philanthropy? No reference here to the Berlin Philharmonic orchestra or tropical rainforests. Only to the ancient, original Greek meaning of philanthropy which is "the hot love of harmony". Entirely human-friendly in thought and behavior. Or is there even a more complicated, unconscious reason for such a change of life in the sense of a good cause? "The answer is simple," Daniel and Marc beam at me. "Because the realisation of Child's Dream helps children fulfill

their most valuable dream. It just feels good and right. Because this Child's Dream feeling does not come from the mind but from the heart. "

*Chiang Mai, Thailand, February/March 2017*

*Stephan Thimonds*