

# ACCOUNT OF THE HISTORY OF THE CONCEPTION OF THE HAMBURGER IDEENKETTE AUTUMN 1992 TILL FEBRUARY 1993

The HAMBURGER IDEENKETTE took place on June 5, 1993. The records of its inception, realization and results are documented in a book that is written in German. What you read here is part of the preamble, translated to English.

At the outset of the HAMBURGER IDEENKETTE stood the personal background of the initiator, Evelin Lindner. She recounts as follows:

Both my parents had to leave their homes in Silesia after World War II. At the end of the war my father had been sent to the battle fields still being a youth. He lost one arm, after having lost his brothers, and prior to also losing his father and the farm he was to inherit. Born in 1954 my youth was deeply affected by the atmosphere in my family due to this post war trauma.

During my studies of psychology and medicine, I spent several months abroad each year. I worked in hospitals and related institutions in Israel, Norway, Thailand, USA, China, and New Zealand. I was continuously in search for an answer to the following question: Is there a basic structure in human thinking, common to all cultures, which could lead to a better global understanding?

Following my studies, I lived for seven years in Egypt and worked as a psychological counsellor and clinical psychologist. This allowed me to get a penetrating insight into foreign cultures, the Egyptian and Arab cultures, as well as several Western cultures, since I also had many expatriates from many parts of the world as clients. I was particularly impressed by the skills of the people in the Nile delta in handling aggression; people typically behaved with a certain degree of tolerance and flexibility towards aggression, however, were at the same time able to confine its excesses.

In 1992, I returned to Hamburg and interviewed some 200 local journalists, physicians and artists for my academic work, research on whether or not the notion of "quality of life" has the same significance in different cultures. Very often these interviews developed into the most interesting discussions regarding mutual understanding amongst people in the world, integration, peace and world wide ecological responsibility. These conversations gave the impetus to the development of the concept of the HAMBURGER IDEENKETTE.

The outburst of hostilities against foreigners in Germany in autumn 1992 led to the organization of LICHTERKETTEN (*Chains of Lights*), now a familiar image to all citizens (thousands of people demonstrated with lights against discrimination of foreigners). Inspired by this image many consecutive steps lead to the development of our concept of the VISION OF A WORLD HOUSE on the *Alster* (a big lake in the middle of the city of Hamburg) and the THREAD OF HUMAN SOLIDARITY stretched around the *Outer Alster* that together were named HAMBURGER IDEENKETTE (*Chain of Ideas*).

The VISION OF A WORLD HOUSE was created to remind us all living in a globally linked world of the fact that we can not dissociate ourselves from this interdependence. The aim of the THREAD OF HUMAN SOLIDARITY was to invite the citizens of Hamburg to attach their ideas, opinions, thoughts, suggestions, letters to politicians, or anything else they wished to express in writing or painting to this thread. Moreover the site around the *Outer Alster* was prepared to become the setting for whatever means of expression people would wish to develop, such as dance, song, performance, or theatre.

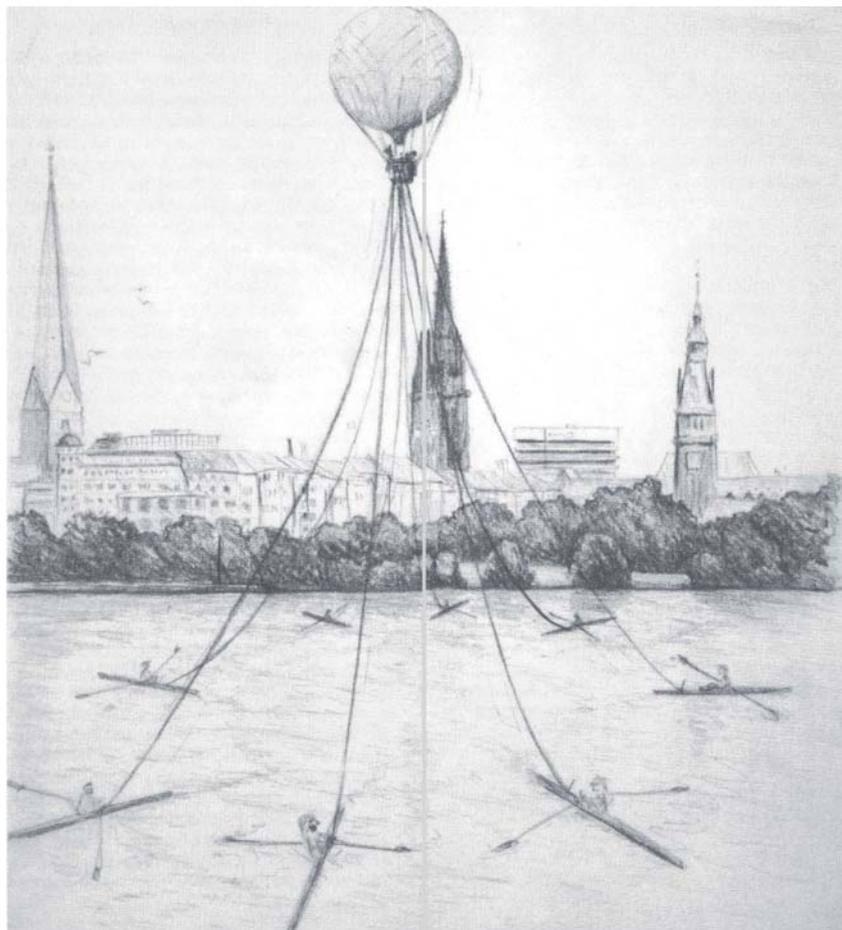
The objective of the book on the IDEENKETTE (that exists only in German) is to illustrate the repercussions this festival had and to create a means of carrying its concept into the future. Its initiator wishes the IDEENKETTE to not remain a one time event but serve as a blueprint for further comparable initiatives.

### **January 1993: The VISION OF A WORLD HOUSE**

At the start it seemed impossible to convert the idea of a GLOBAL VILLAGE or WORLD HOUSE into an event or happening that would illustrate its interdependence and thus indicate the inescapable responsibility to care for it for humankind. However, slowly, in many consecutive steps the concept crystallized into the shape of a VISION OF A WORLD HOUSE, a happening in favour of global responsibility.

The first idea was a helicopter holding 166 ropes (representing the number of nations of the UN as it was at that time), each rope being held by a rowing boat on the *Alster*. Through many discussions the project evolved to its final stage: the helicopter was replaced by a hot-air balloon, the number of boats reduced to eight, the ropes would have each a length of 179 meter (the number of members of the UN which in the meantime had increased to 179), moreover each line would bear a string of international flags. The aim was to let the boats together with the balloon perform a dance that would visualise global interdependence in an innovative and unprecedented way. The local radio was to contribute live music and comments so that the audience watching from the shores of the lake could both enjoy a visual and an acoustic input.

A friend who was a graphic designer made the first pencil sketch of the scene:



**Figure 1: The drawing of the VISION OF A WORLD HOUSE**

### **January 1993: In search for a balloon pilot**

We had to find out whether or not our project could be technically realised. After a long search we found a very skilled balloon pilot who judged the project to be feasible and who furthermore was ready to participate. Suitable climatic conditions and timing were essential, he explained: A calm summer day afternoon with a wind speed of less than two knots together with little uplift, typically to be observed after seven pm on a summer day. For obvious reason the happening would have to take place on a Saturday. After consultation with the tourist authorities the date of June 5, 1993, was chosen.

### **February 2, 1993: Contact with the authorities**

The first official contact for the realization of the VISION OF A WORLD HOUSE took place on February 2, 1993, with the *Referatsleiter of the Authorities for Environmental Affairs for Water- and Soil Protection*, responsible for the *Alster*. Our first idea to organize the festival on the *Inner Alster* had to be abandoned. Indeed it was not possible to find an unobstructed area of 50 by 50 meters necessary for the inflation and the take-off of a balloon. A suitable place was however available on the *Alster Green* so that the *Outer Alster* was selected as the site of the action.

### **February 7, 1993: Design of a brochure**

With the first money received as support for the action a professional presentation could be financed. A leaflet with text and graphic design illustrating the VISION OF A WORLD HOUSE was printed.

### **February 8, 1993: Support of the *Ausländerbeauftragter der Freien Hansestadt Hamburg***

The *Ausländerbeauftragte der Freien Hansestadt Hamburg* issued and distributed a letter of recommendation together with the leaflet to several hundred prominent people in a position to propagate the idea. An invitation to the citizens of Hamburg to participate in the action was joint to the letter.

### **February 21, 1993: Foundation of the association BETTER GLOBAL UNDERSTANDING e.V .**

An organizational platform for the planned festival had to be created. The name for the association was chosen to be BETTER GLOBAL UNDERSTANDING. On February 21, 1993, seven founding members met and signed the statutes and the foundation convention.

### **End of February 1993: The conception of the name IDEENKETTE**

The ceaseless eruption of hostilities against foreigners in autumn 1992 had initiated the LICHTERKETTEN. Hence, the notion of LICHTERKETTEN was well established and known to all citizens. In Hamburg it meant: "One comes to the Alster to demonstrate with a light against hostilities against foreigners."

The invitation to the VISION OF A WORLD HOUSE was an almost identical call: "Come to the Alster with something more than a light, bring your concrete ideas and suggestions as to how to preserve our planet, the global village, or the WORLD HOUSE. What could be a better name than IDEENKETTE for the action in which the idea of the VISION OF A WORLD HOUSE would take a central part?"

### **Beginning of March 1993: Conception of the idea of the READ THREAD OF HUMAN SOLIDARITY**

A reputed designer together with the referent for public service of the *Ausländerbeauftragte* developed the idea that in addition to the VISION OF A WORLD HOUSE, a rope should be fixed at the trees around the

*Alster*, a seven kilometers long red rope to which citizens could attach written or painted contributions, similar to clothes that one attaches on a line. Its name: RED THREAD OF HUMAN SOLIDARITY.

### Beginning of March 1993: The creation of the poster

Events were precipitating. It was March 1993. A poster had to be conceived, printed and distributed. Public attention could not be sufficiently reached through writing letters alone. But who was going to produce this poster and who was going to pay for it? The problem was solved within a few days, a foundation agreed to bear the cost for its production and a reputed photographer/designer was ready to design it.



Figure 2: The large-size poster that was glued to the walls of Hamburg in 6000 copies

Now the final design for the impressive blue poster was ready. The *Hamburger Außenwerbung* was willing to display several hundreds of these in subway stations and on advertisement billboards. Posters were furthermore distributed through and displayed by numerous official bodies.

Subsequently, postcards were produced and thousands distributed.



Figure 3: Postcard, front



Figure 4: Postcard, back

Thousands of flyers were distributed that invited the citizens of Hamburg to participate in the IDEENKETTE.

# HAMBURGER IDEENKETTE

Fortsetzung der Lichterkette zum  
Thema Völkerverständigung und Gewaltlosigkeit.

**Kommen Sie alle am Sa. 5. Juni  
ab 18.00 Uhr an die Außenalster**

Hängen Sie Ihre Ideen, Bilder,  
Meinungen, Erinnerungen, Lieder,  
oder was immer Sie wollen, mit uns an den  
**ROTEN FADEN DER MITMENSCHLICHKEIT.**

Jeder Beitrag ist willkommen,  
der Fantasie sind keine Grenzen gesetzt.  
Erleben Sie auf der Alster die spektakuläre  
**VISION EINES WELTHAUSES.**

Bringen Sie ein Radio mit, denn die NDR 1  
Hamburg-Welle (90,3) macht Musik dazu.

Schirmherrschaft: Der Ausländerbeauftragte des Senats der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg  
Senator a.D. Günter Apel. Im Rahmen des UNICEF-Partnerschaftsjahres der Stadt Hamburg. John  
Neumeier, Dagmar Berghoff, Jürgen Flimm, Carlheinz Hollmann und viele andere Prominente  
rufen jeden zum Mitmachen auf. Bundespräsident Richard von Weizsäcker wünscht guten Erfolg.

Veranstalter:  
BETTER GLOBAL  
UNDERSTANDING e.V.  
Info-Fax: 040/38 05 888

**MACHT ALLE MIT !!!!!**



Figure 5: Flyer

Furthermore, Evelin Lindner invited the citizens of Hamburg to participate in the IDEENKETTE on many radio and TV channels that served the area of Hamburg. Articles in the printed media explained how school children prepared for the IDEENKETTE or which ideas people planned to present.

**Loreley an der Außenalster**

Ihr Charme hat alle überzeugt – von Prominenten wie Roger Moore bis zu den Genehmigungsbeamten elf verschiedener Verwaltungsbehörden. Mindestens 100 000 Menschen will **Evelin Lindner**, 39, am 5. Juni zu einer ungewöhnlichen Demo bewegen. Sie sollen sich zu einer sieben Kilometer langen „Ideenkette“ rund um die Hamburger Außenalster versammeln.

Die hanseatische Ärztin und Psychologin möchte mit dem neuen Beitrag zur Völkerverständigung „einen großen Schritt weitergehen als die Lichterketten“: Jeder Teilnehmer der Aktion soll einen Vorschlag zum besseren Umgang mit anderen Kulturen mitbringen. Acht Drachenboote mit je 22 Paddlern werden zum Beispiel mit einem 25 Meter dicken Heißluftballon verbunden sein. Das Motto von Frau Lindners Beitrag: „Entflechten alter Zöpfe“ – vorgeführt an ihrem eigenen Loreley-Haar.



**Lässt Haare wider den Rassenhaß: Ärztin Evelin Lindner**

## June 5, 1993: The HAMBURGER IDEENKETTE takes place

About twenty thousand people came. It was a Saturday afternoon. People came to the park around the *Alster* with around two thousand “ideas” that they had prepared in advance, “ideas” in prose, drawings, or paintings. These objects were attached to the rope around the lake by the helpers of the association BETTER GLOBAL UNDERSTANDING. The participants of this unique festival walked around for many hours, both as actors and audience, reading and viewing the objects that had been attached to the RED THREAD OF HUMAN SOLIDARITY. Furthermore, many came, who had conceptualized other happenings, such as meditation groups, drawing groups, or mobile musicians bands. People from other cultures came with their indigenous clothes and music, and a groups of photographers asked foreigners and German citizens to walk ten steps together and agree to have the pictures exhibited at an exhibition. Yet another group, that stayed anonymous, had placed crosses with the names of those who had been killed in right wing violence in Germany after 1945.

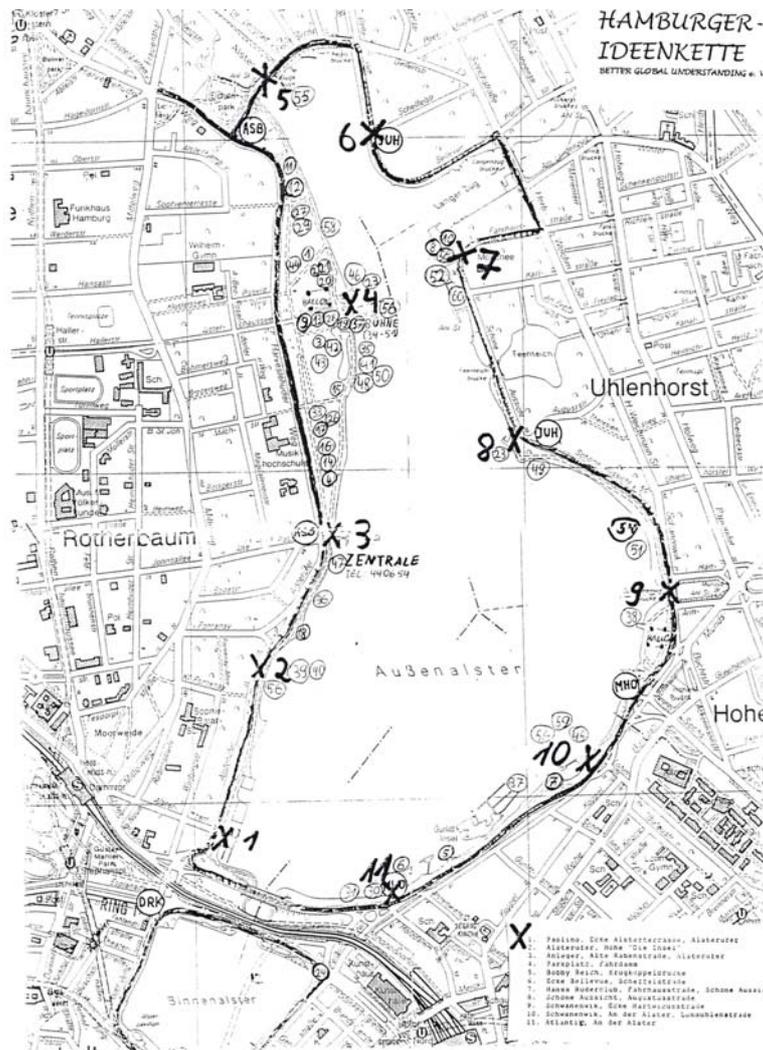


Figure 6: The numbers indicate the positions of the helpers at the red rope that stretched seven kilometers around the Alster

## 1993 and 1994

In June 1993, a selection of the objects that had been attached to the RED THREAD OF HUMAN SOLIDARITY were displayed in a first exhibition in Hamburg. In July 1994, these objects were shown to the public in an exhibition in Bonn that was organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.