

"Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is to not stop questioning." ~ Albert Einstein (<http://www.leadachange.com/>)

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## [ANETTE: FINDING BALANCE IN A NEW COMMUNITY MODEL \(/5/POST/2014/04/ANETTE-FINDING-BALANCE-IN-A-NEW-COMMUNITY-MODEL.HTML\)](#)

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To capture all Anette's ventures is not easy. She is an educator, working in media, engaged in politics, life-long learner, she organized humanitarian help for areas of crisis. In short, she is an interdisciplinary thinker and doer, changing the world for better. Anette's life work is the realization of her development of a holistic concept of fully sustainable communities.

Just imagine to live in beautiful apartment placed in natural settings, powered by green energy, with a community kitchen, healthcare and even learning and business centers on hand. And you live peacefully, surrounded by interesting and inspiring people who care about our world and society as much as you do. No, it's not an utopia, Anette is mobilizing everyone to make this happen!

Follow [Anette's activities on her Facebook \(https://www.facebook.com/pages/balance4yourlife/142949832536082\)](#) page.

### AUTHOR

If you like our interviews and have a story to share, please get in touch. More we know about each other, more impact we can create!

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#### 1) What was your first educational project and why have you chosen the field of education?

Hard to figure out, in school I was good at English and French – I made a deal with my classmates who needed support: I helped them in languages and they taught me to play the piano.

When I started my business in Karlsruhe/Germany I created an event which showed my philosophy and abilities in marketing, communication and event management. The event was called "Breaking Bread for Kids in Need" which was a gala with professional entertainment (live Soul with Betty Sea from USA) and I invited business owners, celebrities, opinion leaders, politicians and media using an address list someone gave to me because I was a foreigner and didn't know anyone.

I talked to every guest personally that night and obviously managed to leave a good impression. One of the guests was the director of the public music school. This lady, Mrs. Giebeler told me about the problems in financing that she was having and that the means for early musical education are cut because there wasn't a big enough budget provided by the local government.

I knew from reading scientific publications how important this early education for kids is and how much it influences their whole lives. On the other hand I was aware of the financial situation of the local government. Her problem kept my thoughts working until I came to the conclusion that my services provided to any company or institution should also benefit the public music school (which is, by the way, the very famous and almost 130 years old "Badisches Konservatorium"). Well, I offered Mrs. Giebeler my services. She was surprised and said – we are music teachers, none of us have a clue about what you will be talking about. I replied, if you are ready to learn about the meaning of marketing I will teach you and we can learn from each other!

They agreed, and we worked together to create a marketing concept for public music schools. I was keynote speaker at a national music school teacher's congress and suddenly had 1,200 participants in my work shop ;-)!

My next project came about when I noticed there was a lack of qualified staff in my newly founded advertising agency – Apple had the highest standard at that time but there weren't any operators educated in advertising and design. At that time "desk top publishing" was brand new. There was no education on these subjects for the public (and very few and expensive ones in the private) market. So I went to the Chamber of Commerce and told them that there is a demand and I have an idea to close the gap. They supported me and I created the first educational program for multi-media professionals and other media related professions. This program was honoured with an Oskar by the German Government, Ministry of

Education.

**2) You have very interesting life experiences, from starting up the first local TV Station in Germany to being a hostage in Iraq. Which experience marked you most, was there any turning point when you decided to change your life?**

Yes, I already have had countless "turning points" in my life and it seems to be continuing. These experiences broadened my horizon and my awareness and I am thankful for every lesson life presented me. To give you a better understanding about the lessons I am talking about, in addition to being held hostage I managed to survive cancer, a bad bicycle accident, a burn-out, being victim of financial crime, being stalked for three years ... but the worst experience ever happened in Iraq: Just 6 months after the first Gulf War ended I heard from WHO that more than 500,000 children under five had died because of lack of nutrition and medicine. I took action and organized medicine and nutrition transport. That was difficult because I needed official permission from UN to enter Iraq and every single medicine and good had to be checked and registered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs plus all the visa permissions and so on. I had to go by truck from Amman to Baghdad. In Baghdad I learned that I did not have enough medicine and nutrition – how do you decide who gets food and medicine?

At Baghdad University Hospital I spoke with the doctors and I had to watch a baby to die because the injection needle was too large to inject the medicine I brought into its little vein.

Maybe, it is a combination of experiences such as empathy, being frightened to death, struggling to survive, devotion, humility, despair and absolute hopelessness and helplessness what awoke the deep desire for sustainable changes in my life and my creativity. The worse my experiences were the more I yearned to dedicate my abilities towards sustainable goals. One big turning point happened just some years ago when I was sitting in a private jet of a luxury customer with a glass of champagne enjoying life and I asked myself whether there isn't something more important to do to help humanity and our planet. Being aware that my lifetime is limited I decided to use my skills and knowledge to focus exclusively on sustainable projects and holistic thinking partners. And you won't believe how much I have learnt since then. Amazing! It is incredible and I am very happy with this change in my life.

**3) One of your activities which sounds really fun was helping a group of Swiss school children to organize their own TV channel. Could you share how you found these kids and what exactly have you built together?**

I had read Prof. Gerald Hüther's books and met his son who is also working on new education systems. One day, about four years ago, Prof. Hüther gave a fantastic speech in Heidelberg about how our brains function, new scientific findings and why we need a change in education and life-long learning. There I noticed that a very young boy was taking a video. When this boy left the building I followed him. He just wanted to have a smoke outside and we started talking. He (a 15-year-old producer of Indian nationality) told me about the youth TV Station project and I went to Switzerland to visit, teach and help them. The project was already outstanding but they did not know how to progress to the next level so I showed them. During the six months I was working with them they read my book (I did not tell them about my book, they found it on Google) and asked whether they could make a short movie about me and my experiences in the way they would like. I agreed, but they also had some questions for my mother. Here is the [result](http://anettepekrul.com/media/) (<http://anettepekrul.com/media/>).

**4) Let's turn to your newest project which introduces sustainable community living where people can spend their whole lives. What inspired you to develop this idea?**

Actually, balance4yourlife did not appear as an idea like turning on a flashlight. I prefer to describe it like as a life-long process being curious, continually learning and being active in all fields of society. Last year all my interests, concepts, life and activities came together to a complete new urban village concept. I have been fighting so many years for paradigm shifts and I have undertaken uncountable approaches: I even worked several years in politics, charity, different organizations and realized that I was tilting against wind mills and all my attempts were just a drop in the bucket. One of my dreams is also to include wisdom into our education systems and a Socrates quote comes to my mind: "The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new."

So like I created the new educational programs and other things people thought I could not do, I decided to try to realize the concept. I am on my way and any support is heartily welcomed.

**5) You also started your own foundation – what is its purpose? What is the biggest challenge when it comes to finding sponsors?**

I created [balance4yourlife](http://www.balance4yourlife.org/) (<http://www.balance4yourlife.org/>) for several reasons. Main reasons are to demonstrate that the concept balance4yourlife can be non-profit. The foundation will protect the balance4yourlife community and resorts. The purpose of the foundation is to help create the resorts, sustain them, scale, adapt and multiply them globally and to help people in need within the complex and maybe, other projects. The foundation and the balance4yourlife living and housing model will help create resilient societies and make sure that work can be continued long-term.

I am a strong believer in dreams, therefore, I am convinced that the right people, the required capital and the positive purpose will meet each other ;-). The big challenge is to communicate my holistic and complex concept and to explain it in short.

**6) The concept is based on using over-production of green energy as a source of income for the centers. As the centers are designed mainly for people over 50 who may struggle to keep / find a job, what other sources of income can the centers offer? How do you envision a typical 'day of community life'?**

A show house still has to be built to prove the concept that it will be possible to amortize the building costs long-term. The balance4yourlife concept contains 9 different income streams - the main income will be

achieved from the media and event center. The profits will cross-finance the new Education Innovation Center and other free community facilities and common properties. One part of the revenues will be paid back to the inhabitants and help secure a second income at older age. balance4yourlife provides a new active community living perspective for the latter half of life.

Describing my vision of a typical day in balance4yourlife is a real challenge because balance4yourlife will provide almost unlimited opportunities for all generations. The wishes and demands and the definition of "well-being" is individual for every person. The concept was created based on research published last year. But of course, balance4yourlife will also meet my wishes and demands as 50 plus. Here is my idea of a typical day:

Getting up, having a first cup of coffee in my apartment, meeting with friends and going for a walk or running in nature. Having breakfast in the community kitchen, maybe together with my neighbours.

Starting work at about 8:00 in the community office. Arranging a business lunch meeting in one of our restaurants. Then sitting outside in the garden, reading newspapers or sitting in one of our libraries.

Joining workshops in the afternoon or supporting the community life by at least one hour a day by gardening or helping neighbours, etc.

In the afternoon I would work or visit the media, business, education innovation center or think tank - either for learning, working or lecturing – the best of everything.

In the evening, perhaps I will have guests on my terrace, go dancing or do some sports, attend a course or a concert within the complex, it's also possible that I go on a boat trip or that I go fishing ...

#### **7) What type of education would you like to offer and where are you looking for collaborators?**

Until our Education Innovation Center is officially accredited we will focus on education which will really be fun for everybody and on advanced training. E.g. pre-school teacher, an alternative approach in journalism, crime prevention in media and mass online collaboration will be offered as well as different media, events and health care training.

We will find global collaborators via the Internet. We already have inquiries from 25 interested journalist and also several requests for internships. I have been involved in several online discussions and most end with the other wishing to join and/or support us. The Education Innovation Center shall be a place all generations love to be because they will enjoy learning and communicating – multi-generational, multi-cultural – every age has access to all available knowledge and different learning methods.

#### **8) I am sure this would be a very attractive idea for many people, what can we do to make this happen, so we can start packing our boxes?**

Oh yes, you can help a lot by talking and listening to me, by challenging me, networking, volunteering time, knowledge and money donations and by just spreading my idea to the world.

We just started fundraising for balance4yourlife on betterplace.org:

[Neues Wohn- und Lebensmodell für 50 Pluser: balance4yourlife \(https://www.betterplace.org/de/projects/17710-neues-wohn-und-lebensmodell-fur-50-pluser-balance4yourlife\)](https://www.betterplace.org/de/projects/17710-neues-wohn-und-lebensmodell-fur-50-pluser-balance4yourlife)

Any "like", comment or donation helps towards realization.

The first complex can be built easily, if 10 % out of the global target group would donate just \$1. They would create their own solution and complex for a completely different, positive, stimulating, healthy and a prosperous living perspective for those 50 plus – an advantage for themselves and the commons. Everybody can become a creator of social good. In order to meet with potential users and to provide the opportunity to create the final design in collaboration I intend to "crowd storm" the project.

#### **9) Around me I see a lot of young people taking a lead and changing things in their communities – what message or advice would you send them?**

Never lose your passion. If you fail, learn, improve and try again and again until you succeed. And you will succeed! Connect! Don't hesitate to ask for help! And most important: Never give up!

#### **10) Is there anything you would like to add?**

Yes, I would like to add that meeting you and talking to you is wonderful, inspiring and a great pleasure. Thank you so much – also for all the effort you undertook to meet and interview me. I wish you success with your approaches in changing education. I would love to stay connected and cooperate and I would appreciate to welcome you in balance4yourlife. Take care and be blessed!

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