

**Closing remarks at the ceremony marking the  
presentation of the second international science award  
of the Hans Günter Brauch Foundation  
for Peace and Ecology in the Anthropocene  
(10 October 2024 in Mosbach)**

- Like last year, I have the task of addressing a closing remark to you again this time.
- Hanne Wieder, who is certainly one of the greatest German cabaret artists of the post-war period, including as a member of the ensemble at the 'Düsseldorfer Kom(m)ödchen', but who later also celebrated considerable success as a serious actress, once said: 'The fact that women have the last word is mainly because men can't think of anything else'.
- In this respect, I am very grateful to you, Dr Brauch, for giving me the opportunity to refute this assertion, *at least this evening*.
- At least I will give it a try, although I am fairly certain that in the strict eyes of Hanne Wieder I would have been lost *before* the first word. She was quite set in her opinion. She also coined the famous saying 'Many women today have lost a man... and many men too'.
- Well, what more can be said? So I'll try to focus entirely on the work of our two prizewinners, who have been looking very intensively at issues of environmental and climate change, right up to ecocide.
- And indeed, if what the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report, published in 2022, prophesies is true, then we are indeed facing difficult times.
- The summary says that the consequences of the climate crisis will be worse than feared and will occur faster than expected. [Extreme weather events](#) such as heat waves, heavy rainfall and droughts are increasing in many regions. The rise in sea levels is accelerating. Ecosystems are at risk of [collapsing](#).
- Having started with *actress and* director Hanne Wieder, I would now like to take you on a brief detour to the theatre. More specifically, we will visit the Schauspiel Stuttgart theatre for a moment's reflection. It was here that the play 'Ökozid' by Andreas Veiel and Jutta Doberstein premiered on 24 September 2021, almost exactly three years ago.
- What is this play about?
- The Ulm-based newspaper 'Südwest Presse' will write in its review of the premiere: 'What the play brings to the stage is the story of collective repression'. That's a strong word: collective repression.
- 'Ökozid' is, as the two authors themselves describe it, a treatise, drama and forensic investigation – a court transcript *from the future*. The year is 2034. < Note from me: That would be in 10 years from now. A coalition of 31 states from the Global South is suing the Federal Republic of Germany at the International Court of Justice in the hope that a precedent-setting judgement will open up the possibility of holding other industrialised nations to account. Until now, climate change has been considered a disaster in slow motion. A crime against the future that cleverly conceals its evidence in the present.

- Today < note number 2: the play is set in 2023, so from our current perspective already in the past > today, the creeping catastrophe has turned into a race against time. Scientists agree that the climate history of the coming centuries will be written in the next 10 to 15 years. That is the time frame that remains for action.
- Over 1,400 court cases < Note 3: I am still describing the piece, not the reality > over 1,400 court cases are currently being conducted worldwide to force politicians, administrations and industry to act, but global responsibility is being ignored. What will happen when, in the not too distant future, judges rule on the failures of the past? If they decide that from now on the international community must subordinate itself to nature's fundamental right to integrity in order to enable a dignified life for all?
- And the description continues: While Holland is flooded, Germany dries up and millions of people are on the run, the hall is negotiating who is responsible for the irreversible development, how justice can be done and who has to bear the costs.
- Note number 4: end of the description of the work. We now leave the theatre again and return to the reality of life. It is Thursday, 10 October 2024 and we are gathered here in the town hall of the large district town of Mosbach to present the second international science award of the Hans Günter Brauch Foundation for Peace and Ecology in the Anthropocene.
- What is this play 'Ökozid' now? Is it just a play like many others, is it perhaps an eco-science fiction or is it perhaps a realistic future scenario?
- At least in Germany, the first at least higher court rulings are now in place that oblige the federal government to do more for climate protection. The Higher Administrative Court of Berlin-Brandenburg has particularly distinguished itself in this regard.
- *One of those* rulings has since become final, and what's more, it was handed down on Friday the 13th – September 2024, no less.
- A *second* ruling, against which the federal government has lodged an appeal, is still pending at the Federal Administrative Court in Leipzig. And anyone familiar with the workings of the justice system knows that this could take some time.
- The Deutsche Umwelthilfe (DUH), an environmental, nature and consumer protection organisation based in Hannover, brought an action in both cases, to which the federal legislature has granted the right of association to bring an action.
- But what do these higher court rulings mean in concrete terms? Has the entire German Bundestag been living in collective fear of 'enforcement measures' ever since, as the Deutsche Umwelthilfe has already boldly announced for the period from November 2024? Is this possibly an *inner-German* variant of the play 'Ökozid'?
- The unequivocal answer to this is 'No'. If the judges of the Higher Administrative Court of Berlin-Brandenburg and the leaders of the German Environmental Aid had only taken a tiny look at our constitution, the Basic Law, beforehand, they would have easily recognised that what the Higher Administrative Court has done here is a blatant violation of the principle of the separation of powers. In law school, this would not even have been enough to pass the small public law exam.
- In a constitutional state, judges are also bound by law and statute for good reasons. They may only - and even then only in very specific individual cases,

but not beyond - not apply *sub-statutory* norms, i.e. ordinances, if they believe that they are violating higher-ranking law.

- The only court that can discard *formal* laws and, conversely, impose specific obligations on the legislator – at least in extreme cases, and even then only within very narrow limits – is the Federal Constitutional Court, and certainly not, with all due respect, the Higher Administrative Court of Berlin-Brandenburg.
- In this respect, the German Bundestag can safely *go back to sleep*.
- We on the ground – and now I come to the keyword that Dr Brauch quite rightly *threw* at me: ‘Think and research *globally*, act and implement *locally*. One task and one challenge’ – we on the ground, however, have always been fundamentally different.
- Of course, we are also bound by law and justice. But those who are lucky enough to live in the midst of a largely untouched natural environment find it much easier to learn to take responsibility in the natural environment and, above all, to act independently.
- I could also say that those who notice the consequences of their actions or inaction *in very concrete terms* have a completely different relationship to future-oriented living than those who only know about it from the news.
- That is why, to give a very mundane example, *forest kindergartens*, as they are currently being set up in many places in our Neckar-Odenwald district, are so valuable and important from an educational point of view. This is nothing more than a future-oriented approach for even the youngest children.
- That is why we are committed to the *preservation of our unique cultural landscape* in the Neckartal-Odenwald Nature Park, of which I am also chairman and in which Lord Mayor Stipp is also an active member of the board. Not by putting a cheese dome over it, but quite consciously in cooperation with those who maintain this cultural landscape with their own hands in agriculture and forestry every day. Protection through use. That is the motto of nature park work.
- That is why we are strengthening the structures of *regional direct marketing*. Last Sunday was Thanksgiving. However, we will not hold our own district Thanksgiving celebration until next Sunday. This is based on an old agreement with the district farmers' association, because the farmers prefer to go to church at home on the actual Thanksgiving Day. We naturally respect this wish. However, Thanksgiving is always a good opportunity to draw attention to *abundance and thoughtlessness*.
- There is no need for strawberry cake in winter when the fruit has to be flown in from far away. Incidentally, most winter strawberries come from Israel. This supply chain is likely to be interrupted now for completely different, quite tragic reasons.
- There is no need for avocados, either, which are grown in huge monocultures that require the clearing of entire forests and which then need 330 (!) litres of water per fruit.
- It doesn't have to be wine from South Africa or beef from Argentina. And this list could be extended almost indefinitely.
- That is why we promote direct marketing by local farmers in our region – with the weekly market in Mosbach, with our nature park markets, with the farm shops and with many other things.
- We are also a model *organic region* – one of only 14 in Baden-Württemberg. This is not because we want to pit conventional agriculture against organic

agriculture. Not at all. Both have their absolute justification. We do this to help those who want to convert. But we love those who don't want to do so just as much.

- We are a *Fairtrade district* and, Julian Stipp, I am delighted to say that Mosbach is now also well on the way to becoming a Fairtrade town. This is because we want to set an example of shared responsibility in our *one world*.
- And: as a rural district in Baden-Württemberg, we are *pioneers in the generation of renewable energies*. In wind, solar and biogas, not to mention hydro-power – because there is a hydroelectric power plant at every lock on the Neckar – we are among the country's leaders. We want to expand this even further in the future.
- Regardless of this, I am and remain deeply convinced that our future in Germany in general will be very much *characterised by decentralisation*.
- We are already seeing this in the energy supply. We are moving away from large central units and towards a network that is fed from the area.
- I am sure that this model will also be adopted in other areas. Anything that is too big, too anonymous, too impersonal, too loud, too crowded or even congested, not infrequently too dirty and possibly even too dangerous, but in any case in many places now simply too expensive, is not suitable for living.
- People will realise this more and more. That is why it is so important that we fight together for the *future of rural areas*. That we take responsibility for our *own little world here in the district town of Mosbach and in the Neckar-Odenwald district*. And that we do everything we can to make this world a little bit better every day.
- This is not only how we want to *see ourselves*, but above all how we want to *be*. That is why the Hans Günter Brauch Foundation is an ideal component that perfectly complements our own self-image.
- With this in mind, I would like to thank you, dear Dr Brauch, and the Foundation for Peace and Ecology in the Anthropocene that you founded, for your extremely important and valuable impulses.
- In your private and professional life, you have always been a tireless and restless bird of passage. Nevertheless, you have always been drawn back to your nest here with us in Mosbach.
- And it is precisely from this nest that, with the help of your foundation, *new ideas are now to fly out* again, not only to make our *one world* better, but, in the final analysis, hopefully to save it.
- We are deeply grateful to you for this. It is wonderful and encouraging at the same time that you exist. Thank you very much for everything.
- In the same way, however, I would also like to thank everyone who has contributed to this evening. Your contributions will resonate with us for a long time to come. Thank you very much for that.
- But I also want to thank you, dear colleague Julian Stipp, on behalf of the city of Mosbach, for your constant support of the Hans Günter Brauch Foundation's idea. The 'medieval young university town', as the cosmopolitan Dr Brauch lovingly and respectfully calls his hometown, is thus continuing the path already begun by your predecessor Michael Jann, under your stewardship.
- And: the Neckar-Odenwald district, to which you, dear Dr Brauch, have attributed the beautiful attribute of a 'region in harmony with nature and peace', will of course continue to support your foundation to the best of its ability.

- Anrede. A moving, impressive, thought-provoking evening, but despite all that, an encouraging evening, is slowly coming to an end.
- As the saying goes: in all human endeavour, it is the greatest task to find the goal and the end.
- That is what I am doing now. Everything has an end – even the conclusion. Thank you very much for coming and, of course, for listening to me so patiently for so long.