Citylife
Chiang Mai

A Butterfly Effect? Phi Suea House Project

by Laura King | March 1, 2016

Climate change. It has become the world's most malignant mass murderer, constantly shifting from one form to another and often striking without warning. Climate change conversations have been ongoing for decades and numerous initiatives and solutions been proposed and implemented, some effective while others less so. This is where innovators like Sebastian-Justus Schmidt feels the need to step in, and make his own contribution to save the planet.

In May 2015, Citylife published an article to commemorate the opening of phase one of the Phi Suea House Project — the world's first ever house, powered solely by renewable energy. Now, Phi Suea House Project is much more than just a 'project' — it is an officially functioning compound with multiple houses, a communal swimming pool, beach volleyball courts, a nursery, and a permaculture garden and lake. Additions such as the beach volleyball court and swimming pool are more than just fun extras; they were built to protect the central water filtration system, which serves the purpose of collecting, treating and storing water for later use. The permaculture garden wasn't built purely for aesthetic reasons, as almost every part of the garden plays an important role in keeping the compound completely powered by

renewable energy (even the garden trail drains water from the permaculture garden into the conveyance system).

However, with innovation come challenges, and changing the world takes awareness, commitment and in many cases a lot of money. The prohibitive cost has been what has stymied many projects and this is where Schmidt has stepped in. A successful entrepreneur, Schmidt has invested his own money into this project, one which he intends to be used as a showcase to inspire others to follow. The rewewable energy system he has built costs “less than the price of a Ferarri,” declared Schmidt, but should it be implemented on a grand scale, the price will drop to manageable levels. Already, ten months down the line the costs of components have dropped noticeably.

“The peak output of the solar panels for the first house was 315 watts, but just a few months later the product line was updated and we were able to equip the second house with panels with a peak output of 330 watts for the same price and conditions”, said Sebastian’s son Jan, the lead engineer of the family business set up for this project, CNX Construction.

Jan firmly believes that as “everyone around the world is realising the importance…of sustainable technologies for the future of our planet…technology will continue to advance and the cost of these kind of systems will continue dropping faster and faster”. CNX Construction is not going to wait around for other companies to start building their own renewable energy housing compounds — as they have recently announced plans to develop The Sanctum Chiang Mai; set to be six private eco-villas based in the hills of Chiang Mai. This latest venture will help draw more attention to renewable energy housing, as raising awareness of this sustainable lifestyle is a mission the company holds close to their heart.

It isn’t just sunny countries that can use this system, as the storing technology saves energy for later use. This system will therefore allow countries with colder climates, to steadily accumulate a reserve of hydrogen gas over the summer months to be stored for winter use.

At the most recent United Nations Paris Climate Conference it was announced that “We are the last generation to end climate change”, so what are we waiting for? New technology is constantly being developed and their prices are always dropping. We still have a chance to stop the devastating acts of climate change from continuing but only if we act now. Maybe the answer is simpler than it seems, and raising awareness and investing in renewable energy houses like the Phi Suea House Project is what we need to do.

For more information visit:
www.phisueahouse.com
www.thesanctumchiangmai.com

King, L. (2016, March 1). A butterfly effect? Phi Suea House project. *Chiang Mai Citylife*. https://www.chiangmaicitylife.com/citylife-articles/a-butterfly-effect-phi-suea-house-project/