

Cont. Wolfgang Pinner explained how Raiffeisen Capital Management (RCM) applies the ESG criteria to its investments: E for Environment, S for Social, G for Governance. Further decision criteria include CO2 emissions and waste. There are now many supporters for "sustainable investment" (COP21, SDGs, ICCP). The EU action plan is focused on climate change. The Austrian "green" financial market is one of the fastest growing. Upon request, Pinner quoted the

share of sustainable investment in RCM as 10%, which corresponds to 3 billion euros.

Another aspect of the discussion was that the role of central banks was seen in long-term investment, but also in their role as supervisors and in research.

The event focuses on exploring economic and societal pathways towards pro-active approaches and a vision of a society that improves the well-being of its citizens. The conference brings together researchers, professionals, politicians, public officials, entrepreneurs, enthusiasts, practitioners and other civil society groups from Austria and Europe.

A team of transformation journalists documents the event on a conference blog. This conference newspaper summarizes some of the highlights from the first day of the conference. You can find more at [growthintransition.eu/conference2018/blog/](http://growthintransition.eu/conference2018/blog/)

We hope you have a great second day at the conference!

Your **cooppa** conference reporter team

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**cooppa**, the cooperative press agency, wants to make topics related to a cooperative economy and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) accessible to a broad public in the spirit of positive and constructive journalism. We want to spread information about activities for a Great Transformation both in- and outside the sustainability community in a cooperative and participatory manner.



## EDITORIAL

The 4th International Growth in Transition Conference: 'Europe's Transformation: Where People Matter', jointly organised by the Federal Ministry of Sustainability and Tourism and the Environment Agency Austria, links up the transformative processes and power already taking effect within the particular participating institutions. The international conference is supported by 31 stakeholder organisations, including the Ban Ki-moon Centre for Global Citizens here in Vienna. It has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme.

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# GROWTH IN TRANSITION

## CONFERENCE NEWSPAPER

by **cooppa**

Vienna, 15 November 2018



Former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon & Sustainability Minister Elisabeth Köstinger

Evelyne Huber

## NATIONAL VISIONS & GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

Elisabeth KÖSTINGER, Austrian Federal Minister for Sustainability and Tourism, and Ban KI-MOON, former Secretary-General of the United Nations and Co-Chairman of the Ban Ki-moon Centre for Global Citizens, focused their opening statements on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Climate Agreement.

Köstinger began by stressing that there must be no either-or when it comes to the economy and sustainability. The topic of sustainability, above all climate change, is a highly explosive one for the Minister, which calls for concrete action. As part of the Austrian Council Presidency, she is therefore keen to

bring the climate conference in Katowice in December to a successful conclusion. "I believe that there is no greater challenge for our generation and our century than tackling climate change." She mentioned the climate package, CO2 emission reduction, the ban on plastics and environmental pollution as the most urgent issues currently under development. To this end, the Austrian government intends to strengthen its joint commitment in order to make progress in the implementation of the SDGs. "We are in 9th place in the implementation of the SDGs and our goal is to be among the top 5", says Köstinger.

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Cont. This of course requires even more commitment, including in areas with room for improvement such as agriculture or sustainable consumption and lifestyles. She also mentioned the "massive fight against climate change" that is yet to be won.

A massive effort on the part of everyone is necessary. "This vision of an oil-free society is a vision that I absolutely want to realize." A tax reform is set to be introduced in 2020 in order to harness potentials and steering effects, including the introduction of a carbon price floor. The building renovation rate is also to be raised to 2%. Koestinger expects resistance and is still looking for allies to advance the vision. is in very intensive talks with the federal states. „We want to create an unprecedented incentive system so the vision can progress rapidly. But the crucial thing is that we will only succeed if we bring about a movement where each individual citizen understands that this is to their own advantage. We still have a long way to go. We still have

a lot of convincing to do, that is our main task". Köstinger concluded with an appeal to journalists and the media's responsibility to present climate protection in a way that highlights it as a huge opportunity for everyone.

Ban Ki-moon also confirmed the importance of the implementation of the 17 SDGs in his statement. He voiced concern about increasing nationalism and protectionism, while calling on all world leaders to implement the SDGs "for a global leadership, global citizenship for global solutions." This could lead to "common prosperity for all", even in the poorest countries in Africa. The nationalist outlook of many leaders and the SDGs could not work together. Especially the empowerment of women and young people was close to his heart as part of the Ban Ki-moon Centre for Global Citizens, so that they can assume this responsibility. "Leaders don't know how to walk in someone else's shoes." His centre aims to be a role model in that regard.

Ilse Kleinschuster

## ECONOMY & ENVIRONMENT - CHALLENGES FOR A SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION

The session, organised by the Vienna University of Economics and Business, Competence Center for Sustainability, presented and discussed the results of a study presenting the main challenges and opportunities at the intersection of "Economy and Environment".

The panel - with Martina Schuster (Federal Ministry for Sustainability and Tourism), Sigrid Stagl (Head of the Institute for Ecological Economics at the Vienna University of Economics and Business) and other researchers - presented thematic inputs on research- and policy needs as well as sustainable consumption and production culture and consumer strategies. It emphasized also the need for conceptions of sustainable work strategies, socio-ecological tax and infrastructure reform and last but not least the importance of transformative learning, inter- and transdisciplinary research and societal discourse. The group discussion within the audience

moderated by Fred Luks (Head of the Competence Center for Sustainability, Vienna University of Economics and Business) and Stephan Lutter (Senior Researcher at the Institute for Ecological Economics at the same university) stressed issues such as „How can we transform?“, „How to achieve a sustainable constitution“ or „How to create a post-growth economy“ and other closely related themes.

Results of these discussions raised the attention of the highly qualified guests on the podium: „Finding solutions is not a question of bottom-up or top-down but a question of bottom-up AND top-down.“ „Another kind of bottom-up approaches is to be expected, primarily from civil society movements“. „There is no other alternative to acting for transition - and preferably for a more radical one!“



Johann Jachs

## "GREEN" OR "BROWN" INVESTMENTS - ANOTHER BUBBLE IN THE MAKING?

Most finance companies have both "brown" investments (oil and coal) as well as "green" investments (e.g. the producers of wind turbines) in their portfolio. In the debate on the first day of the conference, Anitra Nelson (University of Melbourne) argued that coal should be boycotted, but the „green“ route was also controversial.

Franz Partsch (Austrian National Bank - OeNB) said at the outset that standardisation would be advantageous in sustainable financial business, but that there is a certain reluctance in the financial sector. Together with the Sustainable Research Institute Europe (SERI) and the Austrian Chapter of the Club of Rome, the OeNB hosted the discussion.

Fritz Hinterberger (SERI) spoke of the need for a resource instead of an energy transition. Population growth, price increases and higher consumption demanded a different strategy than „business as usual“. If, in addition, consumers consumed less and opted for more leisure time, GDP by 2050 would be 6.5 % below business as usual, but employment would increase by 3.5 %.

Lukas Stühlinger of oekostrom AG (60,000 customers, 2,000 shareholders) mentioned that the electricity sold today is largely produced with wind turbines, hydropower and PV systems. The production of renewable electricity represents a good investment because it is backed by a "strong political will" and long-term demand. Some companies are already opting out of fossil energy (divestments). E-mobility will serve to boost the trend.

Armon Rezai (Institute for Ecological Economics, Vienna University of Economics and Business) took the view that "fossil assets" were overvalued, which could ultimately lead to "stranded assets" in a negative case. "Peak oil" is no longer an issue. The production of wind and solar energy today already costs less than coal power in some cases. Predominantly oil-producing countries today have a higher risk than countries that are not dependent on oil exports. The next bubble will therefore be a "brown bubble" that can to some extent already be observed. Systemic risks in the financial sector would increase as a result.

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## THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN TRANSFORMATION SHARING EXPERIENCES WITH CHANGE PROCESSES

The workshop „Women in Transformation“, organised by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Sustainability and the Austrian Society for Environment and Technology, presented five women and their success stories. Small groups discussed the approaches, challenges, conflicts and enabling factors the so-called „changemakers“ went through in their individual biographies and presented those in the plenum. This showed that most of the women were very strongly committed to solidarity and cooperation. However, they did not allow themselves to be unsettled by setbacks and, in some cases, demonstrated lea-

dership qualities. The passion to make their dream come true and thus to achieve positive changes in society was common to all as a driving factor. With courage they went out into the world looking for opportunities and allies to achieve their goals and acted on serendipity. In situations of conflicts, it was important for them to know, „when it was right to fight on and when to let go“. They faced their fears and overcame their self-doubt. The women advise courage and wish for more people who want to go their own way.



Franz Skala

Videos from the conference coming soon!

## AT THE PEAK OF SOCIAL CHANGE! LEARNING FROM SUCCESS STORIES FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION

Social change towards sustainability can begin with small steps of pioneers who feel the need for it and become active. They establish alternative initiatives to meet basic needs like nutrition, to provide support for testing innovative solutions or to improve the political system. Stories on successful examples were presented by some pioneers.

One of them started, after academic botanical research, as an organic farmer near Vienna. In reaction to low revenue from his vegetables he tried the then new idea of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) in „GE(meinsam) LA(ndwirtschaften)-Ochsenherz“ and made the budget for the farm in cooperation with consumers as partners. In the first year 200 partners could pick up their

vegetables at a market in Vienna. This model can ensure food supply in times of crises.

The presented initiatives had in common a strong individual meeting a need in cooperation with a collective as factors of success. They can help to further sustainable transformation, but their broader dissemination in the surrounding faces the obstacle of slow progress in convincing neighbours of the benefits, especially in the above case of CSA. So the success is mainly limited on the „inner circles“, while the important question „How to reach out?“ unfortunately remained without answer.

## CALL TO ACTION - ABRIDGED SUGGESTIONS

The event will close with the Call to Action from the conference. The suggestions in short:

1. We do not wait for the future - we build it!

### SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

2. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) lay out a clear vision for a sustainable future. The robust follow-up and review mechanism for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires a solid framework of indicators and statistical data to monitor progress, inform policy and ensure accountability of all stakeholders.

### ECO-INNOVATION

3. In general, eco-innovation is enabled under EU environmental law. However, environmental legislation is often based on current technology or designed for classical business models and production sectors. Thus, while the goals of the legislation are still valid, the means to deliver them may no longer be the most appropriate.

### SUSTAINABLE FINANCE

4. The transition to a more sustainable economy is strongly supported by integrating sustainability considerations into ongoing investment decisions. In this respect, mobilizing private capital is a key enabler for the transition. Furthermore, the participants encourage the European Commission to pursue ambitious targets regarding Sustainable Finance, proposing effective regulations in accordance to the commitments made at the climate summit in Paris 2015.

### DEMOCRACY

5. European citizens do not seem to perceive enough national and EU steps towards further democratization. Participants believe that EU and national decision makers should strengthen the involvement of citizens in shaping the transformation process towards sustainability. The participants call upon the European Commission and national leaders to address the relevant issues such as decarbonisation, circular economy, sustainable management of natural resources, mitigation of climate

change and digitalisation in the framework.

### FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH

6. While the SDGs have been globally accepted as political targets, more research is needed to provide a knowledge basis for their successful implementation. Particular emphasis needs to be put on synergies and trade-offs between the different SDGs and the corresponding sub-targets.

### SUSTAINABILITY MUSEUM/FACTORY/LABORATORY

7. As to make sustainability visible, participants recommend the foundation of a Museum/Factory/Laboratory for Sustainability Development. At this museum creative, communicative and reflective spaces should be opened up - people need to be able to feel and grab sustainability.

### ARE MEDIA ENCOURAGING TRANSFORMATION?

8. Media coverage of sustainability issues and sustainable practices is often questioned by stakeholders engaged in these issues. However, blaming media is not a very fruitful approach. Instead, we should try to understand media logic(s), frame our messages correspondingly and point out why our messages are important for people's everyday life.

### KNOWLEDGE-BASED SOCIETY

9. A knowledge-based society is one where the generator of exchange value - wealth - has shifted from material goods to knowledge and ideas. Both, consumer satisfaction and the achievement of the entrepreneurial goals become possible.

### INTERNATIONALISATION

10. Participants welcome the initiative Growth in Transition as a fruitful platform to explore and discuss instruments of cross-sector implementation of the SDGs and to foster the transition towards a sustainable future. They would like to see this initiative to further extend on European level and are prepared to participate in it.



Red card for progress on sustainable development. "We are way off track"

Manfred Ronzheimer

## SUSTAINABILITY IN RESEARCH POLICY

Science and research must constantly keep an eye on the grand challenges that are crucial for the future of the planet and develop solutions. That was the message from Wolfgang Burtscher, Deputy Director-General of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, in the Opening Session of the conference. This focus on the major challenges including the protection of common goods such as the atmosphere or the oceans, is also important as the only way for science retain acceptance and support from society. "We therefore also need more direct participation of citizens in research projects," said Burtscher. Sustainable Development plays a major role in the preparations for the next Research Framework Programme "Horizon Europe". At 77 billion euros, around 60 percent of the budget is earmarked for these topics. An Austrian national, Wolfgang Burtscher was a Director in DG Agriculture since 2000 before joining DG Research and Innovation in 2009. Before his Commission career Mr Burtscher was representative of the Länder at the Austrian

Permanent Representation to the EU. From 1992 to 1996 he was Director of European Affairs in the Vorarlberg administration.

Wolfgang Sobotka, First President of the National Council of the Austrian Parliament, also expressed his views on sustainability and social development as part of the Political Panel. He was concerned about the "breaking apart of society" and the growing "fears of losing out". More and more people were remaining in their own communities of information and self-affirmation. Here, politics had to address interdependence and the feeling of togetherness more strongly. Participation is a key to this. "When people are no longer heard and taken along, they create their own world," said Sobotka. But the emphasis on tolerance is also important. "Sustainability is also always about accepting the other positions", the politician stressed.

Fritz Hinterberger

## A SCIENCE WILLING AND ABLE TO CHANGE?

"Science in Transition" - this was the title of a conference held one day before the "Growth in Transition" congress at the Austria Center Vienna within the framework of the Council Presidency, organised by the Alliance of Sustainable Universities in Austria in cooperation with the Austrian Foundation for Development Research (ÖFSE), the Global Higher Education Round Table, the Austrian Conference of Universities of Applied Sciences and the OeAD/Department of Education and Research for Development Cooperation.

The Alliance of Sustainable Universities is an informal association of 13 scientific organisations. Their meetings "are among the most gratifying in the university context, supported by a positive atmosphere, appreciation and optimism", said Prof. Helga Kromp-Kolb, the "Grande Dame" of Austrian climate and sustainability research, at the beginning. Among other things, the participants asked themselves: "Do we teach students critical thinking and questioning? What contribution does research make? The spectrum of activities ranges from concrete sustainability in the operation of the "University" organisation - from construction to cleaning - in an area that often works "more reproductively than responsibly".

But the universities must become "change agents" who take others with them. It is "a huge challenge to actively shape change". This requires courage for change and civil courage as well as a conducive habitat and real interaction between researchers and students, society, business and decision-makers. "This needs transformative, transgressive and transdisciplinary social learning", said Arjen Wals, Professor of Transformative Learning for Socio-Ecological Sustainability at Wageningen University, in his Key Note (see box).

"Has the transition of science already begun?" was the question asked at the end of the conference. It needed a transformation of both research and teaching. However, the role of the students was repeatedly lost in the discussion and had to be continuously

inquired about by committed people (students, professors, decision-makers). Corresponding messages were sent to universities and politicians. For example, targeted promotion of SDG-relevant content, networking of actors and incentive systems in the corresponding funding guidelines were called for.

## SCIENCE IN TRANSITION

"Publish and Perish...?" Arjen Wals - Professor of Transformative Learning for Socio-Ecological Sustainability at Wageningen University in The Netherlands - asks provocatively. „While Scientist are increasing their number of publications in order to survive in an education system, in which accountability matters, the time to read those articles is decreasing“, he continues.

Therefore he emphasizes a transition in perspective, engineering balanced with a holistic way of thinking. This requires transformative, transgressive and transdisciplinary social learning, which benefits from diversity, social cohesion and trust. It is transformative when psycho-social processes of cognitive and emotional perspective shifts lead to social-ecological change and the affirmation of life.

It becomes "transgressive" when it questions, disrupts and changes vested structures, powers, systems and routines that have become oppressive. Last but not least Social learning becomes transdisciplinary when it's crossing boundaries to co-create and affirm in iterative and inclusive ways that contribute to changes in action and practice. That can lead to new ways of seeing the world and create original forms of problem-solving. Wals sees the SDGs as a catalyst for 'off-the-grid' science for a more sustainable world. Sustainability is leading while Research, Governance, Education, Private Sector and Societal Organisations are collaborating.