

SUSFOR 1:

European Sustainability Forum
(Acronym: SUSFOR):

Workshop-Symposium
27th to 30th of Sept. 2006:

"New Ways Towards a Sustainable Post-Modern Society
(Scenarios for a Sustainable Future: Alternative Paradigms and
Visions - Guiding Principles for a Future of Sustainability)

INTRODUCTION

*The global crisis situation of our ecological system and the increasing disparities with respect to socio-economic developments and the inherent tensions resulting therefrom, make it very probable that ecological and human survival can in the future only be guaranteed if the **overall scenarios are changed profoundly**. Assuming that the present economic and social trends will continue and no marked efforts towards change will occur, this is almost bound to lead to a collapse of both nature and social systems. Therefore it seems evident that any intelligent society would make significant efforts to develop alternative prospects and perspectives for the future.*

*Such alternative models, however, can only be developed on the **basis of sufficiently - partly radically - new approaches** - going beyond traditional basic concepts. Trying to balance ecological and social "dynamics" - and the economics accordingly - will involve the modification and perhaps replacement of some of the traditional paradigms by new alternative ones. - With TINA (There Is No Alternative) having become the code-word for resignation in major parts of all societies of the world, **TARA (There Are Reasonable Alternatives)** could become the new code and guiding objective on the way to a new era of sustainability. This Workshop-Symposium wants to provide the opportunity to elaborate some contributions towards this goal.*

SCOPE AND GOALS OF THE WORKSHOP-SYMPOSIUM

A process towards TARA includes a **transformation** of our attitudes and behaviour, logistics and rules etc. in all relevant modules of our civilisation (the mental and institutional structures). This involves - and could partly be initiated through - a profound change of paradigms, i.e. by new concepts of orientation encompassing all aspects of our public, political, economic and social life, and even our "globalised culture" as a whole (including the treatment of natural resources and life-bases, the prospects of growth and liberalisation, global competition and regionalisation, monetary systems and efficiency, sufficiency and co-evolution, mobilisation and satisfaction, happiness and personality etc). The task - as already seen by many people - is to enlarge our chances in preserving the bases of life for mankind, and perhaps life in general. It aims at ascertaining the natural and social foundations of our everyday life thus rendering them sustainable and preserving them for generations to come.

Depending upon the individual aspects and origins of certain perspectives and **visions for the future**, various models of prospective developments have already emerged (- also defining viable and concrete first steps). These existing models or outlines could be presented in the beginning (some eventually elaborated more precisely and improved in the course of discussion). Reviewing the important existing scenarios, visions and models, we want to proceed by comparison and evaluation (primarily with regard to strong sustainability as the most viable perspective). The work-teams can also come up with totally new "alternatives", perhaps using combinations of reviewed models or recombining ideas for new TARAs. - Finally, with regard to s o m e or several of the dimensions and aspects of such "future architecture" a common consensus of the participants can probably be achieved, with respect to other dimensions differing views might remain; - it is an open-end process and plurality is welcome.

CONTENTS AND PROGRAMME SEQUENCE

In order to provide proper impulses for the respective working-sessions (in the Plenary Meetings and the Workgroups), some presentations and some papers will initiate the discussions - presumably mainly with regard to the following fields:

- New Geo-political Dimensions - Global Governance
- Sustainability in the Life Cycles - Ecological Economics
- Politics for and with Citizens - State, Corporate and Civil Governance

Examples of topics for potential initial papers (to serve as individual contributions for a "syn-optical" - i.e. outreaching towards all dimensions relevant for sustainable development - discussion of scenarios and perspectives):

1. In the field of New Geo-political Dimensions

- GLOBAL GOVERNANCE - Problems, "architectural" modules and overall outlines, steps towards governance (versus government)
- SUBSIDIARITY and Globalism
- REGIONAL culture and the emerging "new regionality"
- NORTH and SOUTH - towards sustainable co-operations

2. In the field of "Sustainability" in Economics

- The Future of the overall ECONOMIC SYSTEM – Problems and prospects
- The FINANCIAL SYSTEM as the central module of the economic system
- RESOURCES management (diagnosis and steps towards "therapy")
- "Sustainable" INNOVATIONS IN TECHNOLOGY
- Emerging new CULTURE OF LABOUR
- ENTREPRENEURSHIP – Transnationals, Medium and Small Enterprises
- POVERTY (IMPOVERISHMENT) – Working Poor, Middle Class Dilemma
- Emerging new BASIC STRUCTURES – governmental, intergovernmental, supra-national, international, global ...

3. In the field of "Citizens' Politics"

- DEMOCRACY needs refinement
- HUMAN RIGHTS need enforcement
- CIVIL SOCIETY needs empowerment
- INSTITUTIONS - old and newly emerging
- MEDIA - Communication Forms and new Impacts
- COMMUNITY POLICY
- RELIGION
- ETHNICS
- CIVIL GOVERNANCE
- CO-OPERATIONS and PARTNERSHIPS (old and new)
- PRINCIPAL ACTORS in the 21st century (traditional and new-comers)

MAIN OBJECTIVES (GOALS) OF THE WORKSHOP-SYMPOSIUM

- To present - in an open discussion process - **scenarios and models of various authors** and groups (as elaborated starting points with regard to the proper literature).
- To aim at depicting such scenarios more comprehensively and **evaluate them critically and constructively** against such criteria as “future suitability/capability” and “strong sustainability”. - Furthermore, to explore in which way these scenarios might mutually supplement one another (and also to which extent are they “compatible”, to which extent there are overlaps); and most importantly, to find out, if and where a “common denominator” or something like a “red thread” in all these concepts can be delineated.
- And finally - if principles and **guidelines for a common vision** of sustainable development can be formulated -, to roughly outline a possible step by step **transformation process**. Such a process will, of course, have to take into account the present politics, economics and society. (In the course of such elaboration - also some of the fundamental aspects will also have to be defined more precisely.) - Aspects of transformation - from the present expansionism to a future sustainability era - can provide also the link to the final discussion round, hopefully with the participation of some high-level decision makers of our time.
- What would a profound enough change - with regard to sustainable development - in our system of civilisation and / or culture mean? How can certain protagonists (above all those in the field of economics, politics, media and civil society) - **in a joint effort – initiate such a process of transformation** towards sustainability? - (The ideas and propositions presented in the discussion on future developments in education – as e.g. within the EU-Conference on “Education for Sustainable Development towards Responsible Global Citizenship” in Vienna in March 2006 – provide hopeful examples. Others will come, even though the first steps might look rather tiny compared to the enormous challenge of our time.)

INTENDED IMPACT:

The primary objectives of this Workshop-Symposium on Sustainability in Vienna – probably one of the first of its kind – are:

- Promoting **scientific foundations and arguments for “Visions of a**

Sustainable Civilisation”.

- Creating – in the course of these discussions – preliminary **blue-prints for a design** of the architecture of such a “sustainable post-modern civilisation/society”.
- Supporting and **enhancing public awareness** of these issues (such as locating environmental protection from its present position as a mere appendix of the political agenda to a key theme of an "ecological and social programme" with regional and national as well as international and global scope).
- We therefore want to address also political decision-makers directly and invite them, as mentioned, to participate in the final discussion (Final Panel). The whole process can, furthermore, also help in achieving a **common consensus within the EU** (thus furthering the overall EU-discussion on the re-negotiation towards a revised version of the European Constitution): Since "sustainability " as a path to survival and lasting prosperity is - and more and more people become aware of this and can thereby bridge former cleavages - our common denominator in Europe and, in fact, world-wide.

A EUROPEAN PLATFORM

In the long run a “European Sustainability Forum” can provide an impulse to establish a permanent – globally oriented and inspiring - **European platform**. It should, however, not be limited to a discussion process only, but strive towards developing **effective strategies for a "de-facto" transformation** process towards sustainability. Such a forum will make it possible to continuously review all main ideas, concepts and initiatives for future scenarios and document them appropriately.

A constant “review and up-date” would contribute also towards establishing and empowering a common consensus on “future scenarios”, aiming at the EU and beyond it. Thus, socially and politically effective impulses can result by elaborating strategies and concepts for governmental programmes and national and international agreements etc. – as was the historically significant case at the UN-Conference on Environment and Development in Rio in 1992).

Operational Data for the Workshop-Symposium: "New Ways Towards a Sustainable Post-Modern Society"

Date: Wednesday, Sept. 27th 12,00 - Saturday, Sept. 30th, 2006, evening party

Location: Conference Center of Schloss Laudon, Vienna;

1140 Vienna, Linzerstrasse 431 (Terminal of Tram 49).

Conference language: German (selected workshops in English)

Conference Organisation: ESD (European Association for the Promotion of Sustainable Development) - Section ETT (European Think Tank for Sustainable Development), in co-operation with the OIN (Österr. Inst. f. Nachhaltige Entwicklung), and the Club of Rome - European Support Center.

Publication: Papers, workshop creations and documents produced for and in this Symposium will be published as "Conference Proceedings" in their original language, - and the executive summaries also in English.

Continuation: In case EU-funding under the Mme. Curie Programme can be obtained, this Workshop-Symposium shall serve as a preparatory stage for a larger conference planned to take place in spring 2007.

Invited participants are among others:

Brunnhuber Stefan / D,
Bursik, Martin / CZ
Cuffe, Ciaran / Ireland
Daly, Herman / USA
De Soto / Peru
Douthwaite Richard, Ireland and UK,
Felber, Christian / A
Filho, N., Hamburg / D
Galtung Johann / Nw,
Geissler Heiner / D,
Göll Edgar / Univ. Berlin / D,
Heintel Peter, Klgt / A
Hinterberger Friedrich / SERI-Wien / A,
Hirsh, Arthur / USA
Huffschnid, Jörg / D
Kaldor Mary / London School of Economics / UK
Kemp René / Univ. Maastrich / NL,
Kier, Volker / A,
Klimenta Harald / D,
Lambert Jean / UK
Leggewie Klaus / D,
Ley Michael, A
Lietaer, Bernard / Belgium., USA
Luks Fred / Univ. Hamburg / D,
Mosiewicz Magda, / POL
Popa Silviu / Romania,
Radermacher Franz-Josef / D,
Ramonez Ignazio / F,
Scheer Hermann / D,
Schlyter, Carl / Sw
Stadler Wilfried / Wien, A,
Strigl, Alfred, OIN / A,
Uexküll Jakob v. / S,
van Dieren Wouter / NL,
Weizsäcker Ernst Ulrich v. / D,
and many others..