

International Stakeholder Dialogue Growth in Transition, Brussels, 16.1./17.1.2014

Report about the World Café

The questions for the World Café were headed by these **umbrella questions**:

- What next – how do “we” want to proceed from here?
- Which processes, initiatives, organizations on national or international level are relevant? Who wants to bring in what?

There were five groups dealing with five questions in three rounds:

1. What can processes like Growth in Transition achieve?
2. How can such processes be improved? How can networking be improved?
3. How can high-ranking decision-makers in politics, economy, media etc. be really involved.
4. How can civil society be reached and involved more effectively?
5. What shall grow? What shall decrease?

On this day 31 people were attending. Not all of them stayed for the world café. Thus the five groups consisted of five to six people each.

After the discussions in groups in three rounds lasting around 20 minutes each, the five table hosts reported the results. The groups had their notes on flipcharts and three cards each with the main findings or conclusions. The notes on the flipcharts and cards are authentic and unchanged, even if some of them seem to be not clearly understandable. Nevertheless they may deliver food for further thought and inspiration for the reader.

1. What can processes like Growth in Transition achieve?

Three main findings/conclusions:

- Support and facilitate forerunners, change agents and local economy
- Condition: find allies in society (movements)
- Advocate mainstream paradigm change

Notes on the flipcharts:

- Conditions: find allies in society, in living & wage movements, SMEs...
- Changing the mainstream paradigm from stakeholders' debates and inputs
- Raise questions / research
- Effective communication of ideas/nuggets
- Agenda setting
- Open minds – breaking of taboos
- Build legitimacy and communities
- Support forerunners (especially because it's government driven)
- Address the issue that there have to be transitions
- Convince “growth addicts”
- Make it clear enough what we want (equal and ecologically sustainable future = sustainable well-being)
- We need change agents INSIDE institutions
- Change in views of targeted influential people and exchange on what works to deliver this
- Counteract the passivity of change agents

2. How can such processes be improved? How can networking be improved?

Three main findings/conclusions:

- Governments can uplift-upscale innovative social practices, provide them the space and regulatory frame.
- Co-production of a vision for outcomes from the process – as a commitment tool
- Add diverse non-government processes that support bottom-up change from diverse actors

Notes on the flipcharts:

- How do we facilitate/empower/enable the stakeholders to be effective changemakers?
- Too much talking, too much lists of information
- The framework influences the outcomes -> the framework is set! (G 8, G20 etc. as examples)
- More bottom-up engagement needed -> how?
- These types of processes should be organized by a diversity of actors, not only governments.
- We need to have both government and bottom-up. It is very good to have the governments involved.
- Some governments have the perception they cannot do much (indebtedness)! Liberate policy-makers from the imperative of growth.
- Debate on reinventing society in the group
- Given real change comes from bottom-up, governments can uplift these initiatives and upscale them, provide them with the space, appropriate tax-laws...
- Italian referendum example -> NOT AN EASY PATH!
- Do we need strong coordination or better dissemination? Do we need better facilitation?
- Country differences:
 - Austria and Finland - what leverage: new tools, attitudes that empower -> learn new ways to influence policy-makers
 - Germany - platform with civil society works better
- Good movie-makers, better TV-shows/programmes, web-clips to screen on computers
- Long-term goal and commitment: be part of an over-generational process
- Diversity of actors needed always involving authorities
- Fair media outreach needed

3. How can high-ranking decision-makers in politics, economy, media etc. be really involved?

Three main findings/conclusions:

- Mobilize all sectors of society (bottom-up, trade unions...) and find key-multipliers (change agents)
- Media follows politicians, concrete answers and concrete projects
- Different terminology – shared ideas: equity, sustainable development, human resources, post-growth/degrowth, justice, well-being

Notes on the flipcharts:

- Mobilize bottom-up in different parts of society, address different multipliers
- Identify key multipliers, especially workers unions could induce discussion within. They have to identify their stake on/of sustainable development.
- Local processes that define SD (Agenda 21)
- Vague concepts -> dissent on consensus
- Cultural differences – connotation of SD: degrowth, décroissance, post-growth, UN SD Goals – N-Europe/S-Europe
- Use social media for SD goals
- GDP may decrease by itself: how to react to that?
- Post-Growth debate: focus on different indicators on well-being, questionnaires to politicians

- Income more relevant than GDP in marketized societies -> how to ensure access to life-services w/o income?
- FN: success w/o media
- First politicians – media follow – NEWS (not repeat)
- Language/terminology important: not degrowth or post-growth but well-being
- Politicians react to problems and/or concrete actions, not visions

4. How can civil society be reached and involved more effectively?

Four main findings/conclusions:

- First ask: what is the question, who are we talking to, what is the goal?
- Question to be answered differently for different purposes (scoping exercise, organise civil society, local communities... -> need a typology)
- Methodology (formats, methods) is important and needed to be specific according to the questions asked; train moderators...
- Participation as a means to create consciousness/learn alternatives

Notes on the flipcharts:

- Finland: NGOs were invited
- Not one model fits all purposes over time
- Is there a room for cooperation or conflict?
- Where does “CS” start/end (think tanks, individuals, only organized groups, great variety even within organized groups)
- Need for feedback (are inputs taken up?) citizens need to be taken seriously
- Examples: scoping/understanding -> a citizens’ jury would be appropriate
- Social media, random picking
- Selective involvement for specific problems
- Involvement is a long-term process
- Are there structures in place to take up citizens inputs?
- Participatory budgeting
- Agenda of civil society should match the political process cycle
- Success stories from local level should not be transferred to national levels
- Civilize the debate (esp. In social media)
- Avoid self-selection bias (e.g. those frustrated, those who paid)
- Facilitation training to improve networking
- Connect regional processes to get results for the larger levels
- “Human” (=non technical) language is important
- What do we want?
- Discuss lifestyles and the consequences
- Schools as multipliers
- Different strategies for different groups of people

5. What shall grow? What shall decrease?

Three main findings/conclusions:

- Create a political process to decide, what should grow and what shouldn’t
- Apply true cost - methodology
- Shift power from bullies and empower society

Notes on the flipcharts:

Should grow:

- Meaningful work, need for cultural change in the workplace

- Breadth of experience and learning
- More free time -> requires solidarity economy, learning lessons, “cost free” activities
- Public/collective ownership of assets, need for tax/fiscal reform to enable such public services
- Self-awareness and empowerment, awareness of tradeoffs
- Scientific literacy
- Leisure time
- Collaboration
- Better framework conditions for childcare
- “Agency” – ability to act and empower and build capacity, democratisation, shifting power away from the bullies to the margins, changing philosophy -> management of holistic approach -> need for deep institutional change
- Gender issues
- Less variation in income, globally, more equality, life wage
- Poetry
- Understanding of differentiated growth
- Knowledge and handling of complexity
- Meat consumption
- Application of footprint methodologies
- Common spaces (e.g. hacker spaces in schools, DIY spaces...)

Should decrease:

- Working time (€) – less € or voluntary less time
- Harmful subsidies
- Job precarity
- Competition
- Campaigns and slogans unless “sustainability-focussed”
- Advertisements
- High-speed trains and cars
- Fossil energy
- Nuclear
- Activities and sectors where environmental costs are greater than benefits (environmental and social externalities)
- Demands for mobility (desired, enforced) -> city planning