

We are running out of time!

The last ten summers have been the warmest ever since the beginning of temperature measurement in 1881. We are witnessing the acceleration of the effects of climate change in an exponential manner; more and more storms arise globally, deserts are expanding, and fast-flowing streams caused by rainfalls are occurring more frequently than in earlier times. The course of climate change is much like sitting in a train which is speeding up ever more, and we are losing control. At the same time, more and more people are realizing that the previous ways of living cannot continue like this. We have a sustainability movement consisting of different youth movements (Fridays for Future, enactus, 3zeroclubs,..), an expanding social entrepreneurship community and all kinds of efforts on an international basis to mitigate the consequences of climate change. Despite the expanding sustainability movement, the train 'climate change' is accelerating. One could say: We are running out of time! In other words, the transformation of our society into a sustainable one is happening too slowly. We will lose the race, if we do not take more courageous and radical decisions! More so, the race cannot be reversed once it is lost, we would have to live in a world which has lost its balance completely, where natural catastrophes would be the norm and no longer exceptions. The result would be millions of deaths and e.g., wars concerning the distribution of water. In order to circumvent our own apocalypse, we have to take the right measures now! These measures concern all relevant systems in our society, firstly of course the economy, but also the education sector, the media and, of course, politics.

Let's begin with the economic system, which is one of the most important ones, since climate change is caused by a worldwide economic paradigm. Adam Smith in the 18th century proclaimed that if we behave selfishly, this would yield the best result in terms of the public benefit. The so called invisible hand, that is to say the market, would distribute everything in such a way that everyone benefits the most in the end. This is the basic idea of liberalism: Let the market and its participants do what is best for them – and this will be the best for each individual. We would not have poverty and climate change nowadays, if this was true. Thus, if this basic idea is false, we have to question and replace it. What kind of behaviours lead to a sustainable world? Well, as we know for sure right now, pure egoism is not the answer. It seems to be a healthy combination of egoism and altruism that finally leads to the best effects for all of us. That is the concept of social business: I create a business which solves a social problem whilst also making a living. It is a concept of balancing my interests with those of others. This

is why so many people become attracted to it: The economic norms about competition and selfishness have put us into a race with others. However, this state is not natural for us human beings. We are much more keen on cooperation and constructing something together with other people. Social business is a concept of cooperation, and in the words of social business entrepreneur Muhammad Yunus: Making money makes you happy, but making other people makes you superhappy! In our current economic system and its rewarding of selfish behaviour instead of selflessness, we have to turn the page and start a new chapter in our everyday life. The philosopher Immanuel Kant declared in his famous categorical imperative that one should behave in an exemplary way. In our current situation this would simply mean: Behave sustainably! Living and behaving in a sustainable way means making ones decisions with regard to this paradigm – the big ones and the small ones! If we put the obligation on ourselves to behave as sustainably as possible, we live our lives in a new manner. In other words, we also consider the ecological and social aspects in our everyday life and jobs. This is indeed the first step to move into a new direction, to take the responsibility one has to act as a participant in this society. It may result in taking the next journey by train instead of plane; or using the old smartphone longer instead of buying a new one. Every single decision is important and has an impact! We are living in a world in which consuming is said to be good – but actually, every consumption is a burden for the environment. Refuse it, if you can, if you can't, reduce it, recycle, and reuse it, as Yunus said at the last 'Social Business Day'. The concept of the circular economy is essential for not polluting, i.e., our seas with more plastic waste. These are the basic ideas to question: Behaving sustainably means behaving socially and ecologically, as socially and ecologically as you can. The campaign ActNow by the United Nations urges people to use the app Aworld providing a service through which everyone can improve ones decisions with regards to sustainability – i.e. you can easily measure your own ecological footprint. Additionally, one can found a 3zeroclub: 3zero means 0 unemployment, 0 poverty and 0 carbon emissions. If you find four group members to found such a club (always consisting of five people), you can register on the movement's website and become one of currently existing 1.300 clubs worldwide (August 2023). If you are older than 35, you can become a 3zero support person.

Other basic ideas have to be questioned, too: If consuming is bad for our environment, what about the growth of the GDP being considered as a core number with regard to our 'national wellbeing'? Of course this is nonsense, and this form of economic growth number is an indicator of our faulty thinking. It would make much more sense to consider a measure like the Human Development Index (consisting of the GDP, life expectancy, and literacy) and

subtracting the national ecological footprint from this number. Thus, one would have a much broader and valuable depiction of the actual wellbeing and performance of a country – also in comparison to other.

We have applied the norms of the economic system to education as well: Competition, competition, competition among students, for the best grades to apply for the best jobs. This is a rather unfriendly education in terms of encouraging students to become self-employed entrepreneurs. From a sociological point of view, the grade and degree system even manifests in some way social inequality. Therefore, if we want to take bold measures in terms of the transformation to a social-ecological society, we have to question the basic assumptions determining the education sector. Does it really make sense to continue in this way or should we rather offer an education catered to the needs of students, instead of forcing them to adhere to a curriculum they do not really benefit from in the long run. Professors should be more like coaches in my opinion, not masters, who hand out grades.

In terms of the media sector: So much rubbish can be found on television, even during prime time. The media sector has a kind of social responsibility, too, to offer more informative movies about the status quo of our society, in order to draw attention to our society's most pressing issues. Additionally, the media could also provide an input regarding the most practical solutions that exist at the time.

Finally, the political sector is one of the most essential parts in terms of directing us into a sustainable future. For example, it is responsible for setting the right economic incentives for our economy to transform into a social business one by rewarding selfless behaviour. It would be useful to create a legal form for social businesses including the tax exempt status. This would make social businesses visible as such and make it possible for donors and foundations to foster the sector.

Time is running out! We have to speed up our transformation in order to slow down the train of climate change. It is a matter of time, if we survive on this planet!

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