

**Growth in Transition  
in Local Communities  
A Key to Success  
Conference in Dubrovnik  
October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2014**

**BACKGROUND PAPER**

**Authors: Harald Hutterer, Friedrich Hinterberger and Christine Ax  
SERI – Sustainable Europe Institute, Vienna**



**With the support of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry,  
Environment and Water Management**



**MINISTERIUM  
FÜR EIN  
LEBENSWERTES  
ÖSTERREICH**

[www.growthintransition.eu](http://www.growthintransition.eu)

## Table of Contents

---

1	Preface.....	1
2	Growth in Transition (Wachstum im Wandel).....	2
2.1	The Initiative in Austria .....	2
2.2	The History of Wachstum im Wandel (WiW).....	2
2.3	The Second Book.....	3
2.4	Conferences .....	3
2.4.1	First Conference in Vienna 2010.....	3
2.4.2	Conference in Finland 2010 .....	5
2.4.3	Second Conference in Vienna 2012 .....	5
2.4.4	Outcomes of the Conferences in Vienna .....	6
2.5	Dossiers .....	7
2.6	Corporate Identity, Folder, Newsletter.....	7
2.6.1	Folder of the initiative .....	7
2.6.2	Newsletter .....	8
2.6.3	Events “under the umbrella” of Growth in Transition.....	8
2.7	Further Current and Future Activities of Growth in Transition .....	8
2.7.1	WiW-Surveys.....	8
2.7.2	WiW-Events in Austria .....	8
2.8	Policy Papers .....	8
2.9	Next Conference in Austria .....	9
2.10	Remarkable Quotes of Speakers and Participants at the Conference 2012.....	10
3	International Networking .....	11
3.1	Conference in Brussels 2014.....	11
3.2	Conference in Dubrovnik .....	11
4	The Conference in Dubrovnik.....	12
5	Regional Fairness in Times of „Growth in Transition“: Some Food for Thought and Discussion at the Dubrovnik Conference.....	13
5.1	Quality of Life .....	13
5.2	Work and Human Capital .....	13
5.3	Regional Economies .....	13
5.4	Resources: Natural Capital.....	13
5.5	Cultural and Social Capital .....	13
5.6	Visions and Strategies are Key .....	14
5.7	Monitoring is Crucial: You Can’t Manage what you Can’t Measure .....	14

## 1 Preface

*“Every community wants to grow its local economy and achieve greater prosperity. Every community desires to be a location where people want to live, engage in meaningful work, and pursue their passions. In short, every community wants to be a vibrant, safe, and livable place.”*

Source: <http://growinglocaleconomies.com/>

“Our economy is going to grow at a rate of 1.7 percent next year”. Politicians like to publish such announcements. Is economic growth an objective in itself? Or could the objective rather be a good life for all? Normally such questions are discussed in an „either/or“ fashion. We probably need visions which open up paths to the “as well as”.

Visions are important. To develop visions collectively based on facts and figures and at the same time in ease and joy evidently long-term thinking and clarity about (immaterial) values are needed. A majority of decision- and policy-makers tends to focus on short-term thinking, because the systems these people are acting (or caught) in are wired that way.

If one asks people as individuals and in collectives the majority does neither have clarity about his/her/their values nor individual and collective long-term visions.

Growth is a way of development. In our cultures the majority of people asked about growth understand that as economic growth, promising jobs, wealth, social security, entertainment, convenience and so on. Media and politics created and sustain this view on growth. On the other hand thinking of or even knowing the notion of sustainable development seems to be of concern only to a minority.

For a majority economic growth is an end in itself without limits and in all future. The obvious fact that infinite economic growth on a

finite planet is evidently not possible is suppressed by the “prisoners of the system”.

The “vision” of short-term thinking is to continue business as usual forever. To maintain that, increasing efficiency concerning the use of resources and/or yet unknown technological innovations are envisaged. The sister of efficiency, called sufficiency, is almost not part of considerations, because for a majority sufficiency is associated with sacrifice. Simplify your life and step by step get out of consumerism are not yet very popular.

Individual and collective development and growth are closely entangled. This requires new ways of co-operation between individuals, small collectives and decision-makers, between bottom-up and top-down. Local communities offer many options to put the “bottom-up” into reality.

Are there visions and practical solutions for something like sustainable growth, meaning a different kind of growth? And in case, what should grow then? What can be the crucial role of local communities?

The primary goal of the economic system is to deliver to people goods and services which they demand and to aim for development toward an increase in individual and collective well-being. So, one might conclude, the main thing that should grow should be individual and collective well-being assisted by a flourishing economy. Is this a utopian dream or can we achieve that?

If we want to move into that direction we need change. Growth in transition is about change. The level of local communities offers many valuable options.

## 2 Growth in Transition (Wachstum im Wandel)

### 2.1 The Initiative in Austria

The [Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management](#) in co-operation with [SERI - Sustainable Europe Research Institute](#) in the year 2008 started a process dealing with the question, “which kind of growth is compatible with sustainable development?” The Initiative “Growth in Transition” (“Wachstum im Wandel”) constantly tries to involve as many institutions and persons as possible in a dialogue, how we can frame a process of transition towards sustainability.

From the beginning “Growth in Transition” in Austria was aiming at including all kinds of stakeholders, the whole range from innovative and critical toward business as usual to conservative and preserving business as usual. In the meantime “Growth in Transition” in Austria besides the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management and SERI has 21 other [partners](#) actively participating in the process:

- Federal Chancellery
- Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection
- Federal Ministry of Finance
- Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy
- Office of the Provincial Government of Lower Austria
- Office of the Styrian Provincial Government
- Office of the Provincial Government of Vorarlberg
- Municipal Department for Environmental Protection in Vienna (MA 22)
- Federal Institute of Agricultural Economics
- UniCredit Bank Austria
- B.A.U.M. – Austrian Network for Sustainable Management
- Austrian Chapter of the Club of Rome
- Austrian Chamber of Agriculture
- Oesterreichische Nationalbank

- Eco-social Forum Austria
- REWE International AG
- schülerInnen.gestalten.wandel
- Environment Agency Austria
- Austrian Federal Economic Chamber
- SOL (People for Solidarity, Ecology and Lifestyle)
- European Environmental Office

More information about the Austrian process can be found in these websites: <http://www.wachstumimwandel.at/> and <http://www.growthintransition.eu> respectively. The mission statement of the initiative is:

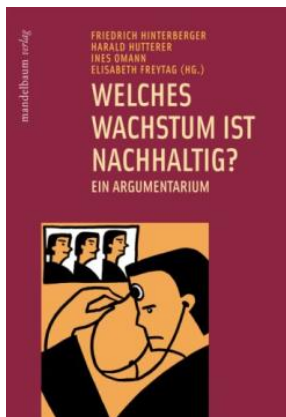
“Just now – in the light of the current financial and economic crisis and intensive efforts for achieving economic growth – the question emerges which kind of growth we want for the future and which goals are targeted with it.

The project “Growth in Transition” intends to trigger a dialogue among institutions and people about how we can shape this transformation process towards sustainability. It also aims at contributing to current EU and international processes and at informing the Austrian public about them (e.g. the EU initiative “[Beyond GDP](#)”).”

### 2.2 The History of Wachstum im Wandel (WiW)

The process started in 2008 with the working out of a compilation of arguments for the question “What kind of growth is sustainable?” – an alternative growth which complies with sustainable development. This compilation of arguments became the core element of the book “Welches Wachstum ist nachhaltig?” which was published in spring 2009.

Besides the compilation of arguments contributions of 13 selected experts were collected and form the rest of the book. A short version of the presentation of arguments in English can be found [here](#).



**Figure 1: The first book (in German)**

In 2011 a second book, this time in English, was published (see 2.3). It is not a translation of the first one, but was completely rewritten with international contributors.

The key issues the first book is dealing with are:

- Money and the Financial System
- Growth and resource use
- Social justice and poverty
- Sustainable Production and Consumption
- Regional aspects
- Macroeconomics for Sustainability
- Quality of Life & Measurement of Prosperity
- Work
- Governance
- Sustainable Leadership

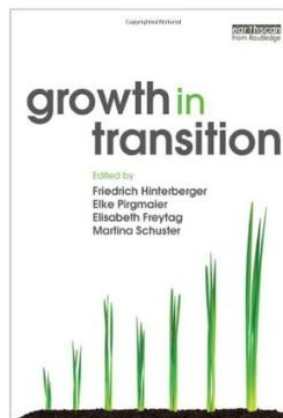
These key issues later on were the central topics of two conferences, of other events and of a series of policy papers.

From the beginning of the process finding and inviting partners and networking started and are continuing permanently.

## 2.3 The Second Book

In 2011 a second book – this time in English – was published. It is not a translation of the first one, but a completely new one dealing with the topics at hand. The book includes twenty international contributions of e.g. Herman E. Daly, Tim Jackson, Jo Leinen, Juliet Schor, Yang Cuihong, Erik Assadourian, Gian-

franco Bologna, Robin Miége and other highly qualified experts concerning growth and sustainability.



**Figure 2: The second book (in English)<sup>1</sup>**

## 2.4 Conferences

Besides permanent networking conferences and creating policy papers in stakeholder dialogues represent the core elements of the process. Recent developments are described in chapter 0 of this paper.

### 2.4.1 First Conference in Vienna 2010

The first international conference “Growth in Transition” took place at the Auditorium of Science in Vienna at the end of January 2010. Within the framework of the ten thematic issues mentioned above there were key-note speeches, discussions and ten partly parallel sessions. The conference was fully booked attracting more than 500 participants.

For the first conference a discussion paper was published (in English and German): [http://www.wachstumimwandel.at/wp-content/uploads/discussion\\_paper\\_GiT.pdf](http://www.wachstumimwandel.at/wp-content/uploads/discussion_paper_GiT.pdf)

[Here](#) details concerning this conference like the video archive, the conference programme, photos of the conference, the list of participants, key note speakers and parallel sessions including presentations given there can be found.

<sup>1</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/q6zs8m6>





question what a good life beyond quantitative growth looks like?

The second conference had less key note speeches and was more focused on panel discussions and workshops. Two famous key note speakers of this conference were:

- Helena NORBERG-HODGE - Alternative Nobel Prize winner, International Society for Ecology and Culture, Sweden
- Peter SENGE - Management Expert, Senior Lecturer, Leadership and Sustainability, MIT Boston, USA

In this conference the international experts mainly appeared in panel discussions and in workshops.

[Here](#) more details concerning this second conference can be found.

#### 2.4.4 Outcomes of the Conferences in Vienna

A comparison of the areas of society the participants of the conferences came from can be seen in the following table.

Conference participants in %	2010	2012
NGOs, Associations	17,48	20,34
Enterprises/Economy	20,26	15,02
Politics	0,43	0,95
Public Administration / Ministries	33,69	25,67
Citizens / Students / Pupils	2,13	23,00
Science / Research	26,10	15,02

**Table 1: Conference participants, shares in percentages from different areas of society**

It is interesting to see that the shares of participants from NGOs and from “citizens / students / pupils” increased. This shows that the second conference reached a broader public audience, which was intended and thus is also seen as a success.

There was and is an ongoing discussion concerning the conferences about dealing with a

broad and global (process-oriented) view or going into depth in specific areas. So far the conferences tried to offer both approaches. The feedback of the participants – depending upon their personal views and interests – showed that both approaches have their individual preferences. This is an ongoing challenge for the process to create a balance of offering both the broad view and going into depth in specific fields in the most conducive manner.

One core feedback of participants of both conferences was that the first one spanned and focused topics, while the second more took care of process, participation and opening of spaces.

For going into depth in specific areas a process of creating policy papers in stakeholder dialogues for the different areas is under way (see chapter 0)

An important success of the second conference was the enormous increase of young participants (students and pupils). Many of the “older” ones regarded this as a very important achievement.

A main objective of the conferences (and the process as a whole) is to create and provide spaces for stakeholders to discuss topics, which are delicate or even loaded with potential for conflicts. This shall include stakeholders who “have no voice yet” as well as highly ranking decision-makers who partly face difficulties to scrutinise some of their positions. This needs spaces, where laymen, experts, decision-makers etc. have the freedom to discuss even delicate topics in an open atmosphere and without taboos. The conferences tried to do that with increasing success.

Another very important objective of the process is to build effective bridges to policy-makers and politicians. Usually high-ranking politicians give introductory key-note or welcome-speeches and leave the event immedi-



ately afterwards. Especially young participants, who had not experienced this before, did not expect that and criticized this behaviour of politicians.

Growth in Transition wants to look for and create “spaces of tension”, where even confrontations and conflicts are welcome. It is important to foster stakeholder-dialogues in which uncomfortable questions are discussed like: “Where are we already suffering? How is our mental and physical health? What does not run properly? How can we create a culture dealing with mistakes and crises? What shall decrease?”



**Figure 5: Conference 2012 (Source: GiT)**

## 2.5 Dossiers

Stimulated and/or created by the process a number of dossiers were worked out. All except the last one on in the following list are in German. The last one is in English.

1. Dossier „[Wirtschaften jenseits von Wachstum](#)“ („Economic Activity Beyond Growth“): January 2010, by Hans Holzinger (Robert-Jungk-Bibliothek für Zukunftsfragen);
2. Dossier „[Zur Zukunft der Arbeit](#)“ („The Future of Work“): July 2010, by Hans Holzinger;
3. Dossier „[Alternative Wirtschafts- und Gesellschaftskonzepte](#)“: October 2012, by Elke Pirgmaier

4. Dossier „[Vom Wachstumsparadigma zur Beziehungskultur](#)“ („From the Paradigm of Growth to a Culture of Connectedness“), Paper for Inspiration by C. Lechner, October 2012
5. Future Dossier (in English) „[Alternative Economic and Social Concepts](#)“: October 2012, by Elke Pirgmaier

## 2.6 Corporate Identity, Folder, Newsletter

In early 2009 the initiative created a brand, in German “Wachstum im Wandel” and “Growth in Transition” in English and a logo in both languages.



**Figure 6: Current logo of Growth in Transition**

Besides that the conferences used additional graphic representations like one shown in Figure 7.

The corporate identity of “Wachstum im Wandel” (= “Growth in Transition”) is in a permanent process of optimization. A working group of partners of the process is taking care of that and of improving and intensifying communication of the initiative in general.



**Figure 7: Conference logo of the conference 2012**

### 2.6.1 Folder of the initiative

A folder describing the initiative has been developed by the communication working group,

which also includes people of partner institutions and PR-professionals. The folder can be found here in [English](#) and in [German](#).

### 2.6.2 Newsletter

Starting in January 2014 Wachstum im Wandel started publishing a regular newsletter, which is so far only available in German. This newsletter can be ordered [here](#).

### 2.6.3 Events “under the umbrella” of Growth in Transition

A steadily growing number of events was and is happening under the umbrella of Growth in Transition. This also shows that the network is spreading.

Since the first conference and the publication of its outcomes many events organized by a variety of institutions took place using the brand of the initiative and its logo. In these cases the logo had the wording “AN EVENT IN THE FRAMEWORK OF” on top of the logo.

Some examples:

- Prosperity without growth - a workshop in the framework of “Growth in Transition” with Tim Jackson, 2010
- “Resources – A View of the Whole. Perspectives of Resource Use – National and International”, June 2013, Vienna
- Participation in Forum Alpbach 2010 – 2014 (<http://www.alpbach.org/en/>) e.g. Workshop „Working group 16: Alternative sustainable economic concepts“

## 2.7 Further Current and Future Activities of Growth in Transition

### 2.7.1 WiW-Surveys

Starting in the year 2014 regular surveys are carried out aiming at:

- Raising the awareness of a wider public for the topic.
- Directly address people who deal with questions concerning growth.
- Provide content-oriented input for the activities of the initiative.
- Maintain and expand the existing community.
- Create contents useful for media relations, web, publications etc.

Every two to three months on the one hand the wider public (500 persons) and on the other hand an experts-panel (ca. 1,000 people) are asked questions concerning topics relevant to growth and sustainability.

### 2.7.2 WiW-Events in Austria

Currently four different formats of WiW-events are offered:

- Brownbag-movies
- Breakfast-conversations with special guests
- Conferences
- Presentations of books

## 2.8 Policy Papers

To go into depth in specific areas an ongoing process of creating policy papers for these topics has been started in 2011 and is still under way. The topics in all cases were titled “Growth and ...” These papers present the results of two stakeholder-dialogues each. Starting with an input paper the outcomes of the two stakeholder dialogues were and are included into the final policy paper. The papers reflect the respective area from a scientific point of view and suggest measures for policies and administration. So far more than one hundred stakeholders and experts have participated in these processes and completed nine policy papers.

In September 2012 there was a public presentation of the eight policy papers completed at that point in time.

These are the policy papers completed so far (all in German). Most of them can be downloaded [here](#).

Policy Paper 1: **Growth and Quality of Life:** More quality of life through growth and consumption in transition.

Policy Paper 2: **Growth and National Expenditure:** Which rooms to move have policies of national expenditure in the circumstances of insecure growth forecasts and how can these policies contribute to more sustainability in economy and society?

Policy Paper 3: **Growth and Employment:** Which rooms to move have policies for employment in the circumstances of insecure growth forecasts and how can employment policies contribute to more sustainability in economy and society?

Policy Paper 4: **Growth and Agriculture:** Growth in transition and agriculture as suppliers and users of goods and services of ecosystems.

Policy Paper 5: **Growth and Macroeconomic Resilience:** Resilience in a less, not or differently growing global, European and Austrian economy.

Policy Paper 6: **Growth and Resilience on the Level of Enterprises:** Which structural conditions are needed enabling enterprises to respond to possible crises and weaknesses of the economy in future in terms of sustainability?

Policy Paper 7: **Growth and Leadership:** Sustainable Leadership: Which

contributions can the economy deliver for sustainable growth?

Policy Paper 8: **Growth and Energy:** Sustainable energy system - chance for Austria.

Policy paper 9: **Growth and Distribution:** the stakeholder workshops have taken place and the paper is currently finalized.

Further policy papers could be "Growth and the Health System", "Growth and the Educational System", "Growth and Environment and Resources", "Growth and Demography". These are in planning stages. Further policy papers might follow.

## 2.9 Next Conference in Austria

In 2016 the next international conference in Austria will take place. The planning work is intensively already on its way.

One of the main objectives is to get contributions from the partners of WiW and to find an innovative format offering the best possible mixture of emotionally attractive process-oriented and rationally appealing fact-oriented parts in one event.

There shall be workshops in which bottom up and top down shall work on a par with each other.

Practice-oriented outputs shall emerge which can be directly used in policy-making. Innovative ways of communicating with decision-makers in economy and politics shall be developed to put these into practise and create impact.

## 2.10 Remarkable Quotes of Speakers and Participants at the Conference 2012

“What touched me most was the number of participants. There is obviously a certain desire for change.”

*Unknown*

“The change of our economic and social system towards growing quality of life will only happen, if the citizens become visible in society, if people see benefits for their lives and if policy succeeds to advance the [...] framework conditions in step with scientific knowledge.”

*Elisabeth Freytag*

„Growth is not the target, but the result of sustainable change.”

*Elisabeth Freytag*

“If I look into hall and see that this is really such an inter-institutional network, meeting for the second time at an international conference, then this is exactly the interchange that policy needs.”

*Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek*

“Move away from „TINA – there is no alternative“ towards „TAMA – there are many alternatives“.

*Karin Küblböck*

“On this planet there has never been a generation, who needed so much, so much too much for an often deeply unsatisfied life. This should provide ample food for thought. With the highest consumption of resources quality of life is decreasing, so to say.”

*Josef Ober*

"Talking in complex systems' terms, we might be at the take-off point to a new socio-metabolic regime - all of a sudden, things could start moving much faster"

*Marina Fischer Kowalski*

“If we have a different understanding of welfare we will also have a different understanding of growth.”

*Ulrich Brand*

“If mankind does not respect the limits, the economy (thus the society) will "overshoot and collapse" in the long run. [...] The aim is to "soften" as much as possible a hard landing.”

*Georg Rebernick*

„My impression is that Austria could really play a leading role in this debate in Europe. That the ministry has supported this is very very important. It feels like that there is a lot of energy and a lot of intelligence and that you (in Austria) still have a relatively healthy economy which gives you that bit of space to discuss the need to change directions. I am feeling very encouraged and impressed.”

*Helena Norberg-Hodge*

“I could imagine within a few years, a dozen of these conferences occurring around the world. Because I think once it starts, it can keep moving. I will be in China now for the next couple of weeks, and you can be sure that I will talk about this conference in China.”

*Peter Senge*

“A radicalism has to arise. Not a destructive, but a constructive radicalism.”

*Pupil*

„If you slow down you gain a lot of things!“

*Tom Sedlacek*

“The most important thing for me being here is the conviction and the extraordinary courage to organize a conference around these very deep issues.”

*Peter Senge*

### 3 International Networking

**The process is very much alive in Austria and wants to increase international networking with institutions or initiatives dealing with the same issues.**

„Growth in Transition” wants to inject itself more intensely into the European discourse. In some member states there are already different initiatives, with which Austrian institutions like SERI are already linked up (e.g. denkwerk zukunft, the Deutsche Enquete-Kommission).

On the level of the EU there are initiatives like “Beyond GDP” with strong content-related overlap concerning the topics at hand. EU-projects like RESPONDER or POLFREE could offer a platform to tie some of the topics worked on internationally and at the same time bring them into the European discourse.

It might also be an objective to encourage institutions in other member states to start similar processes. Maybe it is possible to establish the brand „Growth in Transition” in such cases too. Finally a network using this brand could come into being.

#### 3.1 Conference in Brussels 2014

Following the intention of building an international network Growth in Transition organized a conference in Brussels in January 2014. The main organizer was [ESDN](#) (European Sustaina-

ble Development Network). The [Sustainable Development Observatory](#) (SDO) of the [European Economic and Social Committee](#) (EESC) acted as host.

The title of the event was “International Stakeholder Dialogue Growth in Transition - Sustainable Economic and Social Concepts”. More than 50 attendants from eight nations participated. Ten key note sessions and a world cafe made up the programme.

All of the presentations, attendees’ list and more information can be downloaded at <http://tinyurl.com/pnlofdj>.

One of the outcomes of this event was that the City of Dubrovnik decided to organize the next conference of the Growth in Transition Movement. Main organizer is DURA, the [City of Dubrovnik Development Agency](#).

#### 3.2 Conference in Dubrovnik

After the events in Helsinki and Brussels this conference in Dubrovnik could be seen as next step into that direction.

**Growth in Transition Austria is looking for similar initiatives and wants to investigate effective ways of co-operation. What can we do together, from sharing good practices to increasing impact on decision-making in politics and economy on all levels? Local communities and their networking represent crucial elements for change.**



Source: Association of Network Marketing Professionals ([ANMP](#))

#### 4 The Conference in Dubrovnik

The background paper in hand is meant for this conference. This conference of Growth in Transition is the third one outside Austria.

The focus of this event is "Growth in Transition in Local Communities – A Key to Success".

At the conference in 2012 Günther Humer, thematic manager for "Region und Governance" at the Upper Austrian Future Academy stated:

*"The small units, (...communities on all continents) are the **landing sites of sustainability**. This means: for the big concepts we need landing sites so that we do not produce high fliers in these big concepts. It has to come **straight to the point and come to life somewhere.**"*

As an example community-focused agriculture as farm enterprises selling products directly to consumers or generating income from agritourism activities or both have can be found as successful examples. Networking between communities especially about good (successful) practices is very important.

Real community engagement seems to be a hard challenge. If it were really easy, more people would do it. Even simply finding a starting point is not easy, but it represents the crucial point. The history of the community, its traditions and current and historical assets –

often best known to the elders in the community – may offer well-suited starting points. Also core activists committed to the flourishing of the community are needed. They can create and sustain the momentum.

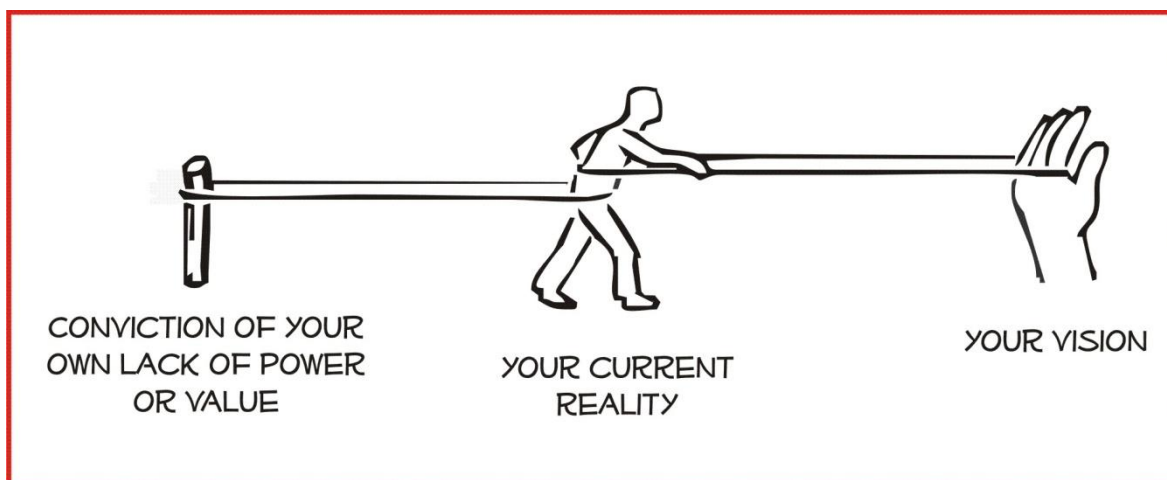
As already stated, clear visions created by communities obviously represent an important prerequisite to empower even small collectives to achieve progress towards a successful future for their community.

Figure 8 tries to show that the most important step is to collectively develop an individual and a collective vision. As Donella Meadows put it:

*"Vision is the most vital step in the policy process. If we don't know where we want to go, it makes little difference that we make great progress. Yet vision is not only missing almost entirely from policy discussions; it is missing from our whole culture. We talk about our fears, frustrations, and doubts endlessly, but we talk only rarely and with embarrassment about our dreams."*

The following quote of Margaret Mead (1901 – 1978, US-American cultural anthropologist) may be the empowering motto of this conference:

*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."*



**Figure 8: Empowerment – individually and collectively**

© Günther Humer - Upper Austrian Future Academy - inspired by Peter M. Senge

## 5 Regional Fairness in Times of „Growth in Transition“: Some Food for Thought and Discussion at the Dubrovnik Conference

Where else can sustainability become real than in the region? When talking about endangered species, about quality of life or our economic future: our lives and the future of Europe will be decided in the regions.

And this is especially true when we cannot rely on further economic growth to meet the challenges we face. Therefore it is important to start thinking what will be needed in local communities to make regional development a success.

### 5.1 Quality of Life

Since the publication of the European Sustainable Development Strategy in 2006, “well-being” or “quality of life” is considered a central value of any societal development. And it is well-known today that economic growth is only of minor importance to the flourishing of humans.

On the other hand, when growth rates decline, increasing quality of life is still possible. Quality of life is always place-based. This starts with the availability and quality of housing as well as food. But it has also immaterial aspects such as neighbourhood and participation in the social life.

The quality of life provided by a region is also determining demographic factors such as migration and birth rates, which in turn influence the economic capacities of a region.

### 5.2 Work and Human Capital

A second important aspect of regional sustainability is the capacity to provide enough good and well-paid jobs. Again, in times of low growth rates it is even more important to secure attractive regional jobs for those living in the local communities.

This secures not only regional purchasing power but also keeps competences, knowledge and abilities in the region, which is the basis for any further economic development.

More and more young people value leisure and the quality of their work as well as the sustainability of what they are doing over the salary they are able to earn. This may also be a chance for regional enterprises in their competition with companies from other parts of the world.

### 5.3 Regional Economies

Traditional forms of competition are often reduced to “buy cheap/sell at high price”. Especially in the regional context, this is not necessarily the best possible strategy, when the economic interlacing of companies and the share of products and services traded within the region is a key factor for joint success.

This again increases the availability, accessibility and diversity of opportunities for creating income. It needs the possibility of regional education and training “on the jobs” to avoid brain drain and loss of human capital.

### 5.4 Resources: Natural Capital

Regional economic circles can also facilitate the creation of a circular economy in resource terms and thereby reduce the dependence of expensive and increasingly scarce resources from global markets.

This links local/regional sustainability with global responsibility, since international trade of resources can be reduced, opening chances for resource-exporting economies to increase their possibilities of value creation and consuming resources closer to where they are extracted.

### 5.5 Cultural and Social Capital

The richer a region is the more important become immaterial factors such as cultural identity and social capital. On the other hand, preserving identities and the capacities of a com-

munity to co-operate enhances the opportunities of regions also in economic terms. This increases the resilience of a community, which is an important factor of success – especially in times of crisis.

### 5.6 Visions and Strategies are Key

Especially in times of crisis and change, it is important for any person, agent or community to develop a clear vision where he, she or it wants to go. These visions need to be realistic but at the other hand also attractive.

Fear and the feeling of being pushed rather than pushing the development further are no good guides into the uncertain future we all face. Coping with these uncertainties need active scoping of opportunities and learning from failures as well as from success.

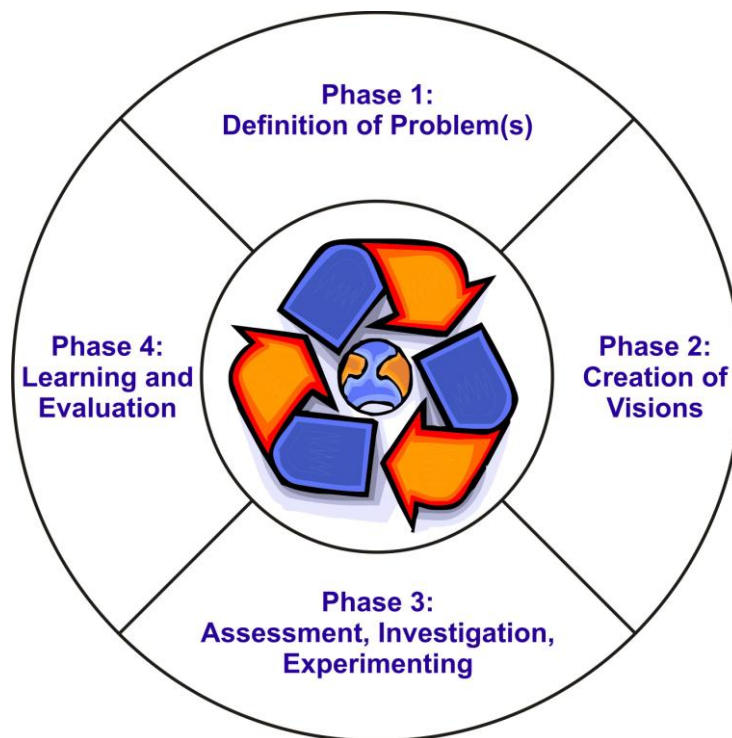
From this, pathways into a sustainable future can be developed that include a balanced development of not just economic capital but also human, natural and social capital.

### 5.7 Monitoring is Crucial: Your Can't Manage what you Can't Measure

To see whether the chosen pathways eventually lead into the foreseen direction, it is important to monitor progress towards sustainable development. For such a monitoring it is important to capture the main dimensions that are decisive for a sustainable development for the region.

Economic performance in terms of regional GDP, i.e. is the economic value created by supply and demand in the region, is certainly an important indicator for such a monitoring.

Other indicators include quality of life, resource use, jobs, distribution of income and wealth, innovation and education. Only with such a monitoring is it possible to reconsider past developments, set targets for the future and start again with visioning, scoping, learning and monitoring the achievements.



Source: Paul M. Weaver, Jill Jäger and Jan Rotmans (Eds.):  
Special Issue on Integrated Sustainability Assessment: Concept, Process and Tools  
International Journal of Innovation and Sustainable Development 2008 Vol. 3 No. 1/2 (<http://bit.ly/1pXUSdv>)