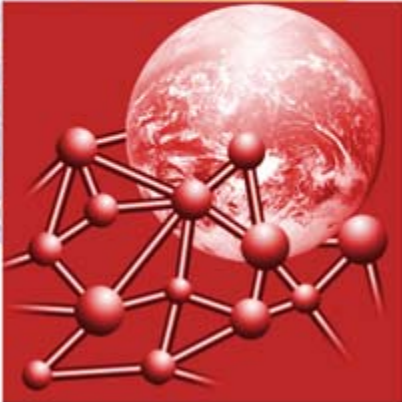


## What will 'Sustainable Universities' look like in the Knowledge Society?

Sustainable Dev  
Economy  
Comm  
Ecolog  
Cu  
Educatio



Towards a Knowledge Society: Is Knowledge a  
public good?

12-13 June 2007

ESSHRA International Conference in Berne (CH)

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- ☑ journeyman's certificate as carpenter
- ☑ Studies of Applied Cultural Sciences
- ☑ PhD in Educational Sciences (*Dr. phil.*)
- ☑ Many projects in the context of sustainability & environmental/social sciences
- ☑ Now: research co-ordinator of the "Sustainable University" project at the University of Lüneburg

- ⇒ Sustainability in Higher Education
- ⇒ Transdisciplinary Knowledge Production in the realm of Sustainability Science
- ⇒ Transformative Education in different contexts
- ⇒ Nature Conservation & Regional Development
- ⇒ ... Odonatology as pet passion

## Key Roles of Higher Education (Institutions)

### Traditional roles

- research (knowledge production), education, and service
- marrows of local and regional knowledge complexes

### Reproductive and/or transformative function

- *“It is important to distinguish between universities that ‘ignite’ change, those that ‘accelerate’ change and those that ‘block’ change.”*

Brennan et al. (2004: 28)



## Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) ...

...never had (and still don't have)

- a monopoly on the disposition of knowledge products

**But:**

- Are IHEs “dumb organisations” with too much ‘human capital but not enough ‘structural capital’?

*Tom Stewart (former Fortune Editor)*

## ‘Globalisation Mainstreaming’ of HE Politics and IHEs?

Tendencies towards de-nationalisation of the political area of higher education

- Towards ‘transnational’ or ‘borderless’ trade with (higher) educational services within the context of “General Agreement on Trade in Services” (GATS) of World Trade Organisation (WTO)

**Global market for HE since early 1990ies**

- 1,9 Mio. students were enrolled at foreign universities in 2002 (OECD)
- prognosis for 2025: 7,2 Mio. students (idp-Australia)





## Adjustment mechanisms of HE Politics and IHEs

### SYSTEMIC LEVEL (HE system as a whole)

- Convergence
  - 'Bologna Process' (European Higher Education Area)
  - Economy driven ('Market')

### INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL (single IHEs)

- Divergence
  - vertical
    - Rankings / benchmarking / 'elite'-institutions
  - horizontal
    - Organisational development / regional focus / network building
  - intermediate → profile building ('flatter' form of institut. diff)

## Commercialisation and Privatisation of Higher Education

- from traditional internationalisation (following the rationalities of cultural, academic, developmental and regional policies)
- towards new economically driven concept of internationalisation  
*“Academic capitalism” (Breton 2002)*

## Commodification of (Academic) Knowledge

- From public good academic knowledge has now reverted to the status of a positional good  
*Steve Fuller (2003)*

**→ Knowledge as a principle of social stratification?!**





Demand for **new ways of knowledge production**  
→ from single- to multi-dimensional approaches:

**from ...**

**to ...**

**simplicity**

**complexity**

**singularity**

**heterogeneity**

**insulation**

**hybridity**

**linearity**

**non-linearity**

**unity**

**unifying approaches**

**consensus**

**agreement**

**fragmentation**

**coherence**

**universality**

**dialogue of the local-regional-global**

*(Thompson-Klein 1994)*



## Reappraisal of Knowledge

### Production → Sustainability Science

- differs considerably in structure, methods and content from science as we know it (→ inter-/transdisciplinarity)
- *eg:* "Research for Sustainability", "Socio-Ecological Research" (Germany)

### Knowledge as a Resource

- access = question of vital importance (admission and availability) for overcoming knowledge asymmetries
- *eg:* Initiative "Charter of Human Rights for Sustainable Knowledge Societies" (Heinrich Boell Foundation)

### Transfer of (academic) Knowledge

- creation of an enabling environment for collaboration among various partners at the local, municipal, or metropolitan regional level (→ aspect of learning/ESD)
- *eg:* Concept "Regional Centers of Expertise" (United Nations University Tokyo)



## Developing the learning citizen at three levels



### 1. the individual level

a learning person who has skills and plays a role in society leading to sustainable behaviour (*new knowledge, new skills*);



### 2. institutional level

within a learning organisation which tries to improve the quality of its own structure and performances in sustainability (*new priorities, new procedures, and new practices*);



### 3. social level

within the learning society in which there is an addition of learning processes of different organisations and individuals with their own perspectives in which there is a cumulative effect (*creating new agendas, new partnerships, new ways of interaction and participation*)

(Goldstein 2005, p.7)





## Governance for Ecology and Equity

### **Jo'burg-Memo "Fairness in a Fragile World" (2002)**

- Environmental Rights for Every Citizen (*eg* Precaution)
- Valuing Nature (*eg* User Fees for Global Commons)
- Markets and Common Goods (*eg* Go for Fair Trade, not Free Trade / Frame WTO sustainably)
- Facilitating Institutions (*eg* World Env. Organisation)
- (...)

### **The "Knowledge Society" Concept (like SD) ...**

- encompasses transnational dimensions and
- development all over the world

**→ Sustainability offers a framework for analysis *and* action!**




# Global Governance for Sustainable Higher Ed?

## Higher education needs to transform itself into a *learning academia*

- Constantly adapting itself to new challenges and comprehending itself as one global player of the world (knowledge society) interacting with others.

## Higher education institutions need freedom

- e.g. to test forms of inter- and trans-disciplinary learning, new forms of participative learning and innovative structures
- !but they are independent institutions – and successful ones, too!



*“It seems to me that this is the most important  
impact of globalisation on universities:  
this order that beckons us  
to rethink the world of higher education  
and make universities participate  
in building a democratic and equitable world  
to live in.”*

*Gilles Breton (2002: 9)*