Transformative Pathways to Sustainable Future: Conflict and/or Cooperation?

Draft Agenda
Alpbach-Laxenburg Group
27-29 August 2017

SUNDAY, 27 AUGUST 2017

AM	Arrival of participants / opportunity for bilateral meetings	Alpbacherhof
12:00-12:15	Welcome by Prof. Dr. Pavel Kabat, Director General & CEO, IIASA Dr. Heinz Fischer, former Austrian Federal President & Honorary Chair, Alpbach-Laxenburg Group	Alpbacherhof
12:15-14:00	Welcome Lunch *During dessert participants will be invited to join a game related to the theme of conflict and/or cooperation.*	Alpbacherhof
14:00-18:00	Working session on "*Transformative Pathways to Sustainable Future: Conflict and/or Cooperation*" The session will be divided into 3 thematic blocks, to be held in plenary: 1) Social and societal transformation 2) Cognitive and behavioural transformation 3) Governing and institutional transformation *Each participant will be allocated to one group and be asked to contribute to the discussion in his/her group. The participants in each group will be mixed across academia, government, business, civil society and arts. Each group will be introduced by a speaker summarizing the major aspects and putting up the key challenges.*	Alpbacherhof
14:00-15:00	Social and societal transformation	Alpbacherhof

15:00-16:00	Cognitive and behavioural transformation	Alpbacherhof
16:00-16:30	Break	Alpbacherhof
16:30-17:30	Governing and institutional transformation	Alpbacherhof
17:30-18:00	Wrap up of the first day and outlook to second day	Alpbacherhof
20:00-22:00	ALG working dinner	Alpbacherhof

MONDAY, 28 AUGUST 2017

08:00-10:00	ALG "hike pensant" (reflection walk) to mountain cottage Böglalm (08:00) or shuttle (09:30) from Alpbacherhof for those who will not be walking	Alpbach => Böglalm
09:30-11:30	Parallel group sessions: This time the three thematic groups will be rearranged, meeting in parallel, and will focus on the interlinkages between the topics discussed on the first day: 1) Social and societal / Cognitive and behavioural transformation 2) Social and societal / Governing and institutional transformation 3) Cognitive and behavioural / Governing and institutional transformation *Each session will be moderated/introduced by one moderator who will put up the challenge for the day. The main question will be to identify the connectivity and weakest links between the domains, but also the best opportunities for both short- and long-term changes ("low hanging fruits").*	Böglalm
11:30-11:45	Break	Böglalm
11:45-12:15	Reporting back from the group sessions and introduction to game	Böglalm

12:15-13:15	Serious game "How to build cooperative solutions"	Böglalm
13:15-14:15	Lunch/arrival of participants from Impact Hub	Böglalm
14:15-14:30	Reporting back from gaming groups	Böglalm
14:30-17:00	Workings session together with the Impact Hub *The Impact Hub network, connecting local and global communities of entrepreneurs, practitioners and people interested in real solutions, will contribute to the ALG group discourse and challenge the participants with practical concerns connected to the barriers they are experiencing in promoting and implementing solutions and projects for change. The group will debate and respond in 3 consecutive thematic sessions.*	Böglalm
17:00-19:00	Reflection walk downhill back to Alpbach (shuttle at 17.00 for those who do not want to walk).	Böglalm => Alpbach
20:00-22:00	Dinner reception hosted by Impact Hub, IIASA and European Forum Alpbach *Opportunity for networking with participants of the Political Symposium.*	Böglerhof

TUESDAY, 29 AUGUST 2017

Closing Plenary of the Political Symposium of the European Forum Alpbach: Conflict & Cooperation *Venue: Elisabeth-Herz-Kremenak Saal; Congress Center Alpbach (Alpbach 279, 6236 Alpbach*		
09:00-09:05	Video introducing and featuring the Alpbach Laxenburg Group in its past and current deliberations (~3 min). This will also help to answer the question: Why are we all here	CCA
09:05-10:20	Impact Hub pioneers will feature, in an interactive way with the audience, four success stories of promoting and implementing transformative solutions for change.	CCA
10:20-10:50	Break	CCA

10:50-11:20	Science & arts: a collaboration for transformations	CCA
11:20-12:20	Final panel under the chairmanship of Honorary Chair Dr. Heinz Fischer: *Transformative Pathways to Sustainable Future: Conflict and/or Cooperation?*	CCA
12:20-12:30	Dr. Franz Fischler closing the political symposium	CCA

Narratives for the working sessions on Sunday afternoon

Working Group 1: Social and societal transformation

We are the most social species on Earth, able to cooperate across continents and over generations; this is the basis for our stupendous impact on the planet. As a result, our problems are mostly man-made. The really critical challenges of today are of a societal rather than technological nature: in particular, how can we enact transformative social change towards enhanced sustainability and equity?

From local to global scales, our social organizations are a response to the need of having self-interested agents engage in cooperative actions. In the words of Nobel-Prize winner Elinor Ostrom, this is achieved by social institutions providing incentives to collaboration. Ideally, such institutions rely on social contracts: "mutual coercion, mutually agreed upon." These outer constraints are mirrored by inner propensities towards obedience and the commitment to prevailing social norms and moral standards of fairness and solidarity. Humans have shown great inventiveness in developing such institutions and norms; today, this inventiveness is challenged to an unprecedented degree by technological and social developments.

Sandwiched between the limitedly rational behaviors of individuals and the regulating environments created by governing institutions, social and societal changes drive policy agendas and determine policy acceptance. Yet, our capacities to understand, predict, or even influence, these changes are severely restricted, as collective dynamics are fraught with uncertainties and tipping points. What is required is a systems approach informed by cross-disciplinary insights and spanning multiple networks of communicative interactions.

- Can we regulate, or overcome, the anarchy between states by higher-order social contracts?

- Can human activities on a global scale be incentivized without unduly suppressing individual freedom?

- Can deliberations within and among societies benefit from discourse ethics and be guided, e.g., by striving for ideal speech situations?

- Can we use the new tools provided by the internet to empower, rather than to distract, the new generation?

- Can public debates withstand mounting threats of hate speech and an anti-liberal zeitgeist?

- Can campaigns aiming at awareness building and behavioral change legitimately promote transformative social change?

Working Group 2: Cognitive and Behavioral Transformation

The first attempts at setting up an internet platform for auctions in the web failed miserably. An exchange system between anonymous agents on a global scale seemed to present unsurmountable problems. Then a young programmer named Pierre Omidyar had an idea: he introduced a feedback forum where the rating of each user was displayed. In his homely words: "Give praise when it is due; make complaints when appropriate." Thumbs up, thumbs down.

The rest is history: a multi-billion market emerged almost overnight. In Omidyar words. "eBay, like your favorite grade-school teacher, recognizes and rewards good behavior. As your feedback grows, eBay posts stars next to your rating, each color signifying a feedback milestone." Economists had a new object for their studies: online reputation mechanisms. Human behavior is largely influenced by praise and blame.

We may expect that other behavioral cues can be triggered with similar ease. This raises a host of opportunities for positive and negative action.

- Reputation is based on information. How can this be promoted without falling into the trap of a Big Brother society?
- How can reputation mechanisms be set up in large-scale societies – eventually on a planetary scale – to promote trust and fairness? How can they be channeled away from destructive uses (such as mobbing, witch hunting, nosy neighbors, feuding based on honor codes etc)?
- How to avoid fraud in information media, and manipulation in reputation mechanisms?
- More generally, how to use deeply ingrained behavior, developed during millennia of living in small groups and villages, to tackle the challenges of global economic interaction? For instance, can we make humans care more about their reputation in the eyes of future generations?

Working Group 3: Governance and institutional transformation

How can our governing institutions shape a transformation toward sustainability? How can a transformation toward sustainability shape new forms and strategies on governance? These questions grow increasingly important as the human impact on the environment increasingly exceeds planetary boundaries, and as nations struggle to reach their sustainable development goals.

Governance is more than government. It is about how societies organize themselves, whether through markets, civil society actions, or through the vast systems of governing institutions. With growing global complexity, governments at all scales have in many ways lost their authoritative position, replaced by networks of social actors. Yet, networks – including especially civil society organizations and markets - cannot be effective or sustainable without the state. Nor can the state, arguably, be effective without including voices from civil society and market actors. Cooperation among the many actors is the crux of governance; and conflict is arguably an equally essential element of democratic societies.

The most fundamental problem of government is the crisis of political institutions in charge of brokering cooperation and managing the transition. The organizational and institutional tools of governments are insufficient or inadequate for this task. Furthermore, the crisis of governance is a crisis of political legitimacy, characterized by increasing distrust of citizens with regard to their representatives. Both crises threaten with political paralysis and open the way for authoritarian regimes.

This discussion focuses on government at all scales, from municipal, national to the United Nations, and examines the potential for institutional transformation in order to foster cooperation, and manage essential conflict, in the pursuit of sustainable development. Among the many questions for discussion are:

- Can democratic governance systems resolve planetary problems where the impacts manifest only in the distant future? Can the solution lie in making democratic systems more transparent and inclusive, or in more authoritarian regimes?
- How can societies address the crisis in political legitimacy?
- Do entrenched practices of sovereignty constitute a barrier to achieving governance transformations? Do we need a new norm of 'responsible sovereignty'?
- Where are examples of successful transition (e.g., electric vehicles in Norway; poverty reduction in SE Asia; solar energy manufacturing in China; prohibition of the airport runway in Austria (not yet resolved)), and what can we learn from the governance institutions (government, market, civil society) that brought about these transitions?