

Spring Campus, April 9-13, 2018

Opening Day, 9 April 2018

Moving beyond the Ivory Tower: How do Science and Universities Contribute to the Sustainability Transformation?

From April 9-13, 2018 Freie Universität will host the third Spring Campus conference of the University Alliance for Sustainability.

Program focus and objectives

2017 was a year of profound political challenges for sustainable development. Science and research have been especially affected, as they are increasingly met with skepticism and even populist hostility. While the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set the agenda for a societal transformation in nearly all UN member states, scientifically grounded policy decisions like international climate agreements are questioned.

Against this backdrop the Spring Campus Conference of the University Alliance for Sustainability poses the question, how science and universities may contribute to the sustainability transformation.

During the Opening Day we are looking forward to a controversial debate on the following questions:

- Should universities become active stakeholders in the public discourse or would this affect their independence as research and education institutions?
- May the 17 SDGs become a normative compass for research or does this interfere with the freedom of research?
- How do research innovations from different disciplines affect the societal transformation to sustainability?

Science and Society

Science and research lay the foundation for the critical reflection of the SDGs as well as for their implementation. While often associated of being detached from society in an Ivory Tower, scientists' research findings, technological and social innovations shape our world's future. As outstanding places of knowledge creation and educational institutions, universities can play a crucial role in shaping sustainable development.

The Role of Universities

Although the impact of research is evident, science and research are increasingly met with skepticism. Universities as renowned and public institutions often have the opportunity to become a mediator by introducing latest scientific innovation. At the same time, societies have to admit that the answers to a huge challenge like sustainable development are often complex and scientific in nature. In fact, science can offer deliberative approaches, which reiterates the paramount importance of seeking dialogue with the society. University networks like the University Alliance for Sustainability prove the relevance of international academic networks. They can forge international, regional and local links with other

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academic and civil society networks in order to foster the intellectual exchange and the public understanding of sustainable development.

From the ivory tower into the society

Scientists – especially in the natural sciences – are often working on innovative solutions for the challenges society has yet to face. To unfold its full potential research often has to overcome the hurdles of funding, market application and public acceptance. The conference will introduce state of the art research from the natural and social sciences, while engaging scientists of different disciplines in a debate about their research questions and findings.

Program Design

During the conference we will present innovative sustainability research and teaching formats from various disciplines, facilitate inter- and transdisciplinary exchange and foster the dialogue with representatives from the state of Berlin and other public institutions.

The Opening Day features keynote speeches from renowned experts as well as presentations from representatives from UAS partner universities. The talks will be followed by an interactive facilitation format encouraging the discussion of the overall topic, elaborating on sciences and universities contributions beyond the ivory tower.

On Tuesday and Wednesday (April 10-11) we will continue with a program of parallel research and management workshops. We are inviting contributions from all disciplines. Further information will follow shortly.

Additionally, a PhD Conference will be organized, which will complete the Spring Campus with a two-day meeting on Thursday and Friday (April 12-13).

In 2016 and 2017, 120 and 150 participants, respectively, from over twelve countries attended the Spring Campus Conferences. We look forward to welcoming participants from all over the world to once again critically reflect on the role of universities as societal actors and their integral function for the great transformation.

Following a whole institution approach, the Spring Campus will bring researchers, management staff, as well as PhD candidates and students together to contribute to the discussion of the event's topic. Coming from different cultural and professional backgrounds, participants will also share experiences on how international networks can connect communities and trigger engagement in sustainability. In this way the Alliance hopes to contribute to spreading innovative ideas, interesting research and sustainable campus solutions across the globe.

Further information and a complete program of the Spring Campus 2018 will be available on this website soon. Until then we invite you to browse the [documentation of the previous conferences](#).

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Monday, 09 April • Conference Room -1.2009, Fabeckstr. 23-25

<i>Time</i>	<i>Topic</i>
12:30 pm	Registration
1:30 pm	Opening <i>Prof. Peter-André Alt</i> , President, Freie Universität Berlin
1:45 pm	Key Note Speakers <i>Stefan Tidow</i> , State Secretary for the Environment and Climate Protection, Senate Berlin: “Climate protection partnerships: Universities contribution to a climate neutral Berlin” <i>Mutual Signing of the Climate Protection Agreement</i> <i>Prof. Dr. Ottmar Edenhofer</i> , Director of MCC - Deputy Director and Chief Economist of PIK: “Facing the Challenges of International Climate Policy: The Role of Science” <i>Dr. Maja Göpel</i> , Secretary-General of the German Advisory Council on Global Change: “The Sustainable Development Goals as a Normative Compass for Science?” Q&A with speakers, Caroline Paulick-Thiel, nextlearning
3:25 pm	Coffee Break
3:45 pm	Key Note Speakers <i>Andreas Wanke</i> , Freie Universität Berlin: “University Alliance for Sustainability – A Holistic Approach to Strategic Academic Collaboration” <i>Prof. Sergey Aplonov</i> , Vice-President, St. Petersburg State University, “International Collaboration for Sustainability: Achievements and Future Goals of St. Petersburg State University” (working title) <i>Prof. Murali Chandrashekar</i> , Vice-Provost, University of British Columbia, “University-city collaboration to foster resilience” <i>Prof. Brigitta Schütt, Prof. Thomas Borsch</i> , Freie Universität Berlin “Making Interdisciplinary Research Happen: Biodiversity Research in Columbia”
5:30 pm	Interactive Discussion Format Moderation: Caroline Paulick-Thiel, nextlearning
6:30pm	Reception and Get-Together