

ABSTRACT

THE NEXT TRANSFORMATIONS

The imperative of transforming economy, society and lifestyles isn't a unique challenge for our time – it's a condition of existence. It's not a question of *if*, but *how* our society will change, and how we want it to change. We have to accept major changes in the next 100 years, but know that the last 100 years had an equally massive transformation – as did the 100 years before that.

Going back, the history of the human race is driven by transitions to yet more complex types of societies. Some argue that this movement is one of increased prosperity and improvement of living condition, while others see it as an ever larger detachment from nature. But the transitions aren't a question of dynamic growth versus harmonic sustainability. The transitions are an ongoing effort to adapt to changing circumstances and figure out new patterns of living that comply with the demands of the surroundings.

We are the survivors. While many cultures collapsed or failed to adapt, we are the descendants of those who did change their energy sources, developed new technology, new economic systems, new lifestyles and new ideas. Hereby we overcame the limitations imposed by the finite natural resources.

The only way to successfully change to something that is yet unknown is by trial and error. Trial and error marked the transition to agriculture, where countless experiments gave us the finely bred crops and stocks we enjoy today. Trial and error gave us the multitude of governance models we observe throughout history. Trial and error gave rise to the industrial revolution, and error played a large part in this – countless experiments went wrong, and countless cultures collapsed.

These days, the challenge of climate change, financial crisis and the conflicting debate between sustainability and economic growth may seem insurmountable, but a look back through history reveals that it always seemed that way. And yet here we are, the survivors, the descendants of those who managed to adapt. That gives hope that we can manage too. When we look at the long term perspectives of the future, we do also need to acknowledge that the way we understand the past points our direction into the future.

