

1st International Conference
INTEGRAL GREEN ECONOMY
FOR A BETTER WORLD
Slovenia, 17th - 19th September 2013

Conference Report

The first international conference **INTEGRAL GREEN ECONOMY FOR A BETTER WORLD** took place in Slovenia from **September 17th to 19th**. The first two days, 17 and 18.9., we met in the premises of the Rectorate of the University of Maribor and the last day, 19.9., at the Biotechnical Centre Naklo near Kranj. Conference participants had the opportunity to interact with key contributors to an integral economy from around the world. The main organizers were Biotechnical Centre Naklo and Center for Integral Development Trans4m in Geneva, with the assistance of a number of co-organizers and supporters (total of 26), and in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment and the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology of the Republic of Slovenia.

The global economic crisis has lately been uppermost in our minds. It's not only economic and financial but a crisis of values, interpersonal relations and living as a whole. Modern economics has failed and the crisis Europe faces today is the result of an outdated economic approach that, for many, doesn't work anymore. This economic doctrine has affected countries all over the World – among such Slovenia, a small country of 2 million in the heart of Europe. Slovenia as well as other communities in the globalised World urgently need new approaches to address global and local challenges and to develop sustainable economies and societies. What we need is therefore an alternative approach that involves more integral thinking and practices than hitherto. A fresh alternative approach is Integral Economics developed by Professor Ronnie Lessem and Professor Alexander Schieffer from the Center for Integral Development Tran4m in Geneva. It represents a holistic model of economics that builds on many practical and successful sustainable economic models, inclusively building upon the nature and culture of a particular place, like in this case Slovenia, thereby serving to sustainably develop individual and community, enterprise and society, accordingly.

Because of its ecological nature, small size, central geographical position in Europe, rich historical and cultural background, and because of its traditionally self sufficient and versatile people Slovenia has all the prerequisites to develop as a model country for integral and green economy. First steps in this direction have already been made, and the result is also the First International Conference on Integral Green Economy, which was held last week in Slovenia. Conference hosted speakers that introduced the Integral Economy Model and draw the first steps for their implementation in Slovenia – together with participants to build on and co-create real life cases.

The conference therefore, in duly transdisciplinarity and transculturality terms, encouraged people to participate and to build an inclusive community – thereby involving co-creation.

DAY 1 : INTRODUCING THE INTEGRAL GREEN SLOVENIAN ECONOMY

The First International Conference on the Integral Green Economy for A Better World, held in Maribor, Slovenia from 17th to 19th of September, was opened by Andrej Kranjc, MSc, Andrej

Kranjc, MSc, National Focal Point for UNFCCC and IPCC, Dr. Andrej Fištravec, the Mayor of Maribor, Prof. Danijel Rebolj, the Rector of the University of Maribor and Dr. Darja Piciga, Chair of the Organising Committee, inviting participants to contribute actively, through innovative theory and practice, to a new sustainable economic paradigm for Slovenia that can serve as a role model for the European Union.

This invitation has been strengthened by positive messages of a pioneering meeting organised by "SOS - Moči Slovenije / Strengths of Slovenia" in August 2013, focusing on the co-creational revival of Slovenia. It had provided answers to the questions: What is the creative DNA of our country and people? What is the essence, from which we can draw when crisis strikes? How can we restore our unique DNA? The responses, introduced at the opening of the conference, contributed a ray of sunshine into Slovenia, otherwise flooded with negativism.

In the conference's opening keynote, the framework of Integral Economics was presented by its originators Professors Ronnie Lessem and Alexander Schieffer from Trans4m Center for Integral Development, Switzerland. Subsequently, it was embodied in the pioneering and world renowned Egyptian case of Sekem, a sustainable community in the Egyptian desert, introduced by its founder Prof. Ibrahim Abouleish. This was followed, again in integral economic guise, by UK's commercial bank Virgin Money, presented by its founding CEO Jayne-Anne Gadhia, aiming to "make everyone better off" by promoting human flourishing. This set the global stage for what was locally to follow. Starting with an inspiring articulation of Slovenia's moral core by conceptual artist and author Marko Pogačnik, a wide range of impressive social and economic initiatives followed ranging from Solar Mobility, CAAP (Center for Alternative and Autonomous Production), BC Naklo, Development Cooperative eTRI, sustainable development model of Solčavsko, to Slovenia's Biodynamic Association, Demeter. Finally, and perhaps most significant in a Maribor context, was the envisioning of Maribor as Slovenia's first prospectively integral city. That set the opening stage for what was to follow.

DAY 2 : BUILDING ON LOCAL SLOVENIAN STRENGTHS IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

The Pro Action Café in the morning of Day 2 released a burst of entrepreneurial and developmental energy, centered around educational, agricultural and community based initiatives with a strong ecological orientation, e.g.: LIFE+ 5.000 Young Captains of Planet Earth, EKOCI The eco-civil initiative of Slovenia, REUSE Network in Slovenia, green development model of Municipality Šentrupert, Seed Guardians from Maribor Urban Furrows, The ecological focus was then complemented by a cultural orientation, as Slovenia's master violinist and cultural ambassador Miha Pogačnik exposed the audience to a personal development journey via musical dynamics, which they aligned with human and even community dynamics. That was therefore followed, orchestrated by Pogačnik and his co-creator Elena Begant by an immersion into Terra Parzival, a prospective Slovenian and European development project, which would build on such dynamic cultural, as well as natural, forces. Moving from Slovenia to Sri Lanka, Dr. Vinya Ariyaratne, General Secretary of the Sarvodaya Movement, introduced one of the world's most significant, integrated community based development programs, spanning over 15.000 villages, engaging them in individual, family- and village based, as well as overall societal awakening. The civil society contribution and policy planning aspects to Integral Green Slovenian Economy were subsequently highlighted by Dr. Peter Tancig (Umanotera), Jernej Stritih (principal author of the Draft Strategy for Transition of Slovenia to a Low Carbon Society by 2060) and Dr. Darja Piciga (Implementation of IGSE through the Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment). The concluding panel of local and global experts affirmed the potential – despite the current socio-economic problems Slovenia is facing – for the

local creation of an integral green economy where the growth and proliferation of financial instruments is replaced by new approaches to diversity, inclusion, sustainability and integrity.

DAY 3 : TOWARDS A CENTRE FOR INTEGRAL DEVELOPMENT

On the third day, the conference moved from the urban setting of the University of Maribor to BC Naklo, a secondary and tertiary educational institute, grounded in local and regional rural communities, where participants were also welcomed by Mr Marko Mravlje, the Mayor of Naklo, and Mrs Nada Mihajlović, the Deputy Mayor of Kranj. BC Naklo introduced, together with others, a newly conceived Center for Integral Development, to further evolve the theory and practice of an Integral Green Economy in Slovenia. Trans4m, as a global Center for Integral Development, based in Switzerland, then intimated how such a center in Slovenia would simultaneously engage in research, education, catalysation and activism. The educational impulse was picked up by various Slovenian expert presenters, lead by Prof. Barica Marentič Požarnik, all with a focus on education and training for sustainable development, including eco-schools, and creating new green jobs. This was enriched by a broader focus on ecovillages, specifically illustrated by the inspiring case of Polšnik, a knowledge creating and sustainable village community in the Heart of Slovenia. BC Naklo's Director Marijan Pogačnik, together with conference chairwoman, Dr. Darja Piciga, concluded the conference with an affirmative outlook in taking the Integral Green Slovenian Economy movement further, supported by the new Center for Integral Development. This was warmly received by the active group of conference participants. November 14 – 15, 2014 was announced as the date for the 2nd International Conference on Integral Green Economy for a Better World, based in Slovenia.

KEYNOTES OF THE CONFERENCE AS A WHOLE : THE FIRST OF ITS KIND

- **First International** (and also World) Conference on Integral Economy
- Slovenia trying to find a way to become **the first model** of Integral Economy on a national level
- Prominent speakers: authors of Integral Economics, **Prof. Ronnie Lessem** and **Prof. Alexander Schieffer** from Center for Integral Development Tran4m in Geneva – to assist Slovenia in upgrading its existing potentials into a globally unique breakthrough model of Integral Green Economy; practitioners of two globally recognized Integral Economy models: **Prof. Ibrahim Abouleish**, founder of SEKEM, Egypt; **Dr. Vinya Ariyaratne**, co-founder of Sarvodaya, Sri Lanka; video interview with the representative of a new, sustainable banks **Jayne Anne Ghadia**, CEO of Virgin Money. Theory and practice of Integral Green Economy were presented from different perspectives. Speakers from Slovenia: **Prof. Barica Marentič Požarnik**, **Prof. Matjaž Mulej**, **Dr. Darja Piciga**, **Jernej Stritih**, **Dr. Peter Tancig**, **Dr. Aleksander Zidanšek** and **Prof. Mitja Žagar**.
- Presentation of cases that work – e.g. **SEKEM** (Egypt), **Mondragon** (Spain), **Sarvodaya** (Sri Lanka), sustainable company **Interface** (USA)
- Premiere of Terra Parzival project by violinist **Miha Pogačnik**, together with a unique experiential input
- The vision of **Maribor as the first integral green city** in Slovenia
- Presentation of tens of emerging **Slovenian good practices** of Integral Green Economy, co-creating them

ULTIMATELY MOST IMPORTANT FOR SLOVENIA

The Conference confirmed that Slovenia has excellent potentials and a unique opportunity to become a role model for an integral green economy in Europe, enabling the country to overcome within three years its economic crisis in a dignified way. The foundation has been laid for Slovenia to begin to negotiate with the European Union such an alternative economic model instead of merely adopting the austerity policies of "belt-tightening", which have proven to be unsuccessful. On the basis of what was happening at the conference, we can confidently predict that – provided broad multi-stakeholder support – that within three years, the effect of an integral green model on the Slovenian economy would be felt and would demonstrate its relevance for a sustainable, positive future of the country.

And what is the way for Slovenia to become **the first model** of an integral green economy at the national level?

1) In using the conceptual and practical framework of integral economics **to connect, upgrade and expand the number of good practices** that already demonstrate an integral character, thereby co-evolving, in effect, an integral green Slovenian economy practically as well as conceptually; some of those cases were presented at the conference and have already been mentioned. We especially want to point out that there are many successful models arising in a participatory manner at a communal level in our society, linking our natural and cultural heritage, created on a village and small town level. And it is these smaller municipalities - which are supposed to be abolished in near future - that can pave the way for the entire country.

2) To weave integral economy principles in a creative way into EU **development policies**, which are already underway, but not efficient enough. What are these policies? Green economy (material and energy efficiency, low-carbon society, the responsible management of natural resources - in short, the programs of development breakthrough suggested by the civil society led by Umanotera), social entrepreneurship, sustainable tourism, rural development (e.g. local action groups - LAGs), a socially responsible business and banking, programs to increase social inclusion in the European Social Fund, the concept of smart specialization, ...

Additional information on BC Naklo website: <http://www.bc-naklo.si/index.php?id=2525>, including the final Conference Programme.

The Conference has mainly been enabled through contributions by organizers and volunteers, no budgetary funds were received. For funding we have not received no funding from the budget or any other source, to a large extent it is the contributions themselves, the organizers and the volunteer. For emergency financial coverage, a crowdfunding campaign has been set, and we invite everyone to contribute in their own way: either through donations – each counts, even if it is one or five dollars - or through dissemination, sending as widely as possible. These contributions will enable us to publish on the web and to allow free access to lectures, presentations and other results of the conference. Campaign Integral Green Economy for a Better World takes place on the Indiegogo platform: <http://www.indiegogo.com/projects/integral-green-economy-for-a-better-world/x/4709287>.

Prof. Ronnie Lessem
Prof. Alexander Schieffer
Trans4m, Geneva

Dr. Darja Piciga
Chair
Organising Committee

Marijan Pogačnik, MSc
Director
Biotechnical Centre Naklo

In cooperation with other co-creators of the conference.