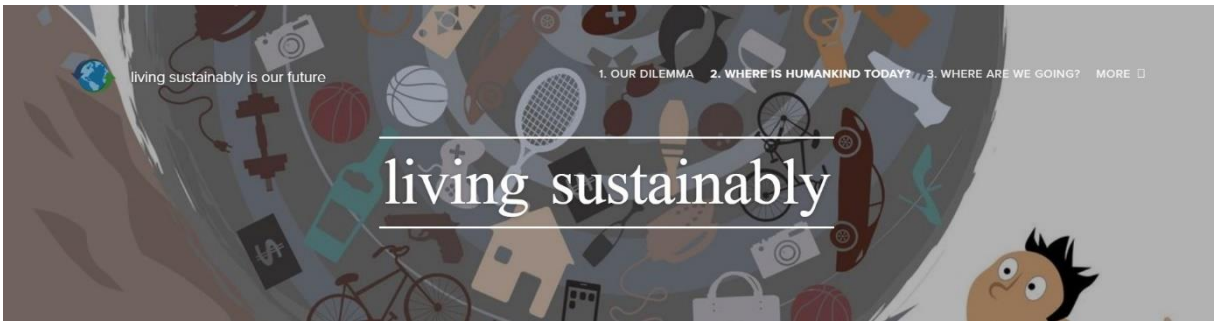

6. What can we do?

First

Align the economy sustainably

The global economic system, with unbridled growth, and a barely controllable momentum by us humans, is increasingly endangering our natural basis of life and living together on earth.

We need to pave the way for sustainable economies *and* rethink our future economics on a Earth overflowing with people.

» Green Economy, Future City, Energy Transition - central systems of human coexistence have been identified, the transformations of which are of fundamental importance for the future viability of our way of life and economy.
Translated from: Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, Germany.

Sustainable development is hardly conceivable without a *consistent circular economy.* But turning away from a predominantly *linear* economy requires many political, economic and social decisions.

Circular Economy Action Plan
EU Commission 2020

Second

Reduce the imbalance between poor and rich countries - Stop the growth of the global population

We need to develop *patterns of thinking* about how to reduce the great imbalance between rich and poor countries.

Probably only *then*, when people in the poorer countries achieve a good standard of living, can large population growth be stopped.

Third

Reduce over-consumption

More and more people in the rich countries realize how irresponsible and selfish we behave and what a large, *unpaid bill* we leave to our children and grandchildren.

Older people are amazed at how quickly and completely the world has changed since their childhood, and not just for the better.

Younger people are amazed at the high price we have already paid for and will still have to pay for our growth-oriented lifestyle, should it continue to grow at the same rate.

» **Have now - pay later**. In order not to be limited by what one can currently achieve by ones' means, the store of future possibilities is plundered in advance.

The further debts are pushed onto the future, the starker the constraints will be on the options and freedoms of future generations.

Niko Paech. 2016. Liberation from Excess - The Road to a post-growth economy.

Excessive consumption is possible because we personally pay the price for it only to a small extent.

The lion's share goes to nature, another part is paid by people in other parts of the world, and in the future, our children and grandchildren will pay for it.

The steadily growing consumption of all of us is the *engine* that drives the steady growth of our economy.

The consequent significant wearing down of nature is now threatening the basis of existence of us humans on Earth. This means that, as fast as possible, we must reduce our *over-consumption*.

Four

Apply clean and efficient technology

Obsolete, polluting and inefficient productions must be rapidly replaced with new technologies.

However, we are falling for a great fallacy if we think that we can continue our lifestyle *without change* with increasing technological efficiency.

After all, the huge impact on our environment caused by our excessive consumption and rapid population growth can only be partially offset by technological improvements.

Five

Put digitalization at the service of global sustainability

It is to be feared that, with digital technology, nature and humans will *first and foremost* merely be exploited even more efficiently - *at least as long as policy is left aside*.

So far there is, figuratively, no algorithm to benefit us humans or algorithm to protect nature.

» The combination of digital progress and capitalist ideology in a fully monetarised society obviously leads to a concentration of power among a few, mostly private, actors [...].

However, digitalization has contributed as much as nothing to solving the really big problems [...]. Because normally only ideas that can be made into money come onto the market. But most urgent problems are problems that affect the poor.
Translated from: Jonas Lüscher, Writer - Interview in the newspaper Tages-Anzeiger, 06.01.2018

» Overall, digitalization processes today tend to act as «fire accelerants», exacerbating existing non-sustainable trends such as the overuse of natural resources and growing social inequality in many countries.
Towards our Common Digital Future. 2019. German Advisory Council on Global Change.

We must act swiftly but keep a cool head. We need a prudent policy without *doomsday scenarios*, without *ideologies* and without *individual interests*.

The concrete building blocks for sustainable development mainly consist of the following adjustments to our way of living, which are all closely linked:
Source: Uwe Schneidewind. Die Grosse Transformation - Eine Einführung in die Kunst gesellschaftlichen Wandels.

- **Turnaround in prosperity and consumption**
  The question is how sufficiency - a "Culture of Enough" - is possible and how the formation of such a culture can be supported by politics with the introduction of framework conditions.

- **Energy turnaround**
  The goal of a revolution in our energy systems can only be achieved if the switch to renewable energy goes hand in hand with energy efficiency and energy sufficiency.

- **Resource turnaround**
  Only if resource consumption per capita is reduced by a factor of 4 to 5 will humanity remain within planetary boundaries in the long term.

- **Mobility turnaround**
  The change in mobility is closely linked to the energy turnaround and the resource turnaround and therefore needs more than just technological developments.

- **Nutrition turnaround**
  Today's food production is responsible for an important share of the burdens placed on global resources as well as CO2 pollution. 30% of consumer-related environmental impacts in Europe are caused by our eating habits. Our consumption of meat and fish needs to be significantly reduced.

- **Urban turnaround**
  By the middle of this century, around 80% of the world's population will be living in cities. The nature of urban development is therefore of central importance for sustainable development as a whole.

- **Industrial turnaround**
  Two goals are paramount here: Decarbonisation [CO2 - emissions stopping] and the recycling economy. This requires technological innovation, cooperation, and an innovative policy framework.

How urgent is it?

» ***It is very urgent. System collapse is a real danger.*** (...) We face tremendous challenges due to rapid population growth, the overuse of resources and associated pollution, the loss of biodiversity, and overall we are experiencing a gradual loss of our basis of existence.
Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker and Anders Wijkman - Come on! 2017

The 1972 *Limits to Growth* report to the Club of Rome dealt with the future of the world economy and, at that time, voiced the grim forecast according to which »the absolute ***limit of growth*** on Earth will be reached within the next hundred years if the current increase in world population, industrialisation, pollution, food production, and the exploitation of natural resources continue unabated».

Emergency Climate

For 30 years, we have ignored the results of scientific research and its forecasts regarding climate change.

Now we know for certain that climate change, and its effects on us humans, can no longer be stopped.

If we act now and *halve* greenhouse gas emissions worldwide by 2030, we may be able to prevent the worst.

We will be confronted with a hostile climate. Millions of people worldwide will have to leave their homes because they are flooded or no longer habitable due to prolonged drought. For the people affected it means untold suffering.

Time is running out

Environmental and climate protection will probably achieve a breakthrough only if the pressure from below - from us citizens - on politicians and decision-makers increases.

The Challenge for a Small Country - Switzerland for Example

What can Switzerland do?

Even if everyone in Switzerland reduces their greenhouse gas emissions to zero, that would still only represent a reduction of 0.2% of global emissions. Does that mean we should give up? - No!

Indeed, Switzerland, as a small but rich country, has far more options than just reducing its own greenhouse gas emissions.

The idea: let's create a Swiss factory for strategic and global climate solutions. From there, promising to work on the most effective from a global view. It's about leading the way from a capable small state - and doing what we do best: developing pragmatic solutions - together with other states and cities.

And what can I do on a personal level?

Let us separate from things that we can do without. That way, we can save a few tons of CO2 emissions a year - that's right. But we cannot fix the climate issue through individual actions only.

Which is why we are committed to make Switzerland take on a collective responsibility in a clever way. For example, by encouraging politicians to set up a climate factory.
Translated from: Eine helvetische Klimawerkstatt von Ivo Nicholas Scherrer im Online-Magazin REPUBLIK. 06.03.2020

The transition to a *sustainable* society in Switzerland could mean for example:

- Reduce **CO2 emissions** from an average of 6 tons at home [+ 8 tons abroad] today to 1 - 2 tons per capita and year by the year 2050.
  Here calculate my CO2 emissions with the CO2 Calculator.
- Reduce **resource consumption** from an average of 30 tons to around 8 tons per capita and year in the longer term.
  Here calculate my ecological backpack with the Resources-Calculator.
- Reduce **energy consumption** from an average of 5,000 watt continous output per capita to around 2,000 watt in the longer term.
  [it corresponds to an energy consumption of 17'500 kWh per person per year].

The question is not *how*?

The question is, *when* do we start to live sustainably?