

## Panel Discussion Summary

This year's Forum has gathered many distinguished intellectuals from worldwide organizations that are keen to share their experiences to greening of the economy through various methods. The bright, interactive discussion left few stones unturned, and the audience was able to obtain a bigger picture of how many concepts, ideas, phenomena are interlinked and can be simultaneously used to trigger change. University of Freiburg's Vice-Rector Prof. Dr. Heiner Schanz opened the event and welcomed the audience and participants. The audience of about 200 individuals was made up of University students, DAAD Scholars and MEG Alumni as well as members of the public.

The panel discussion began by identifying the most important questions about the green economy that have yet to be asked. Issues such as internalizing costs, inherent features of capitalism and how we could change it, as well as what each individual can do to make things better, came to the fore.

The panelists further explored and discussed the roles of corporations, governments and grassroots communities in creating opportunities for change and how this could be done. The panelists answered the often asked question of "Can corporations be ethical vehicles for change?" by emphasizing the current system that focuses on monetary profitability (in terms of accountability to shareholders), but there also exist small scale companies that focus more on production methods, which could be the pioneers towards change. This was linked to the responsibility of the governments to intervene – to achieve "tipping points" by which the system is altered enough to support alternative means of sustainable growth, for example, agro-forestry communities.

And the question of how to make this change - through drastic revolution or step-by-step action – was addressed. There would be a cultural revolution towards rationality in decision-making processes that would originate from the grassroots level. It would also be about the reduction in comfort levels as technology improves efficiency, and we could obtain more for less (e.g. passive housing). However, a drastic change in perception would be needed.

Finally, the panelists talked about the most hopeful event in this decade. The world has moved significantly on since the first environmental report – the mainstreaming of environmental issues in international circles due to climate change; the interdisciplinary collaboration in academia to reframe concepts and ideas for alternative solutions; and many local level changes – in cities and in rural areas. And from the technology side, there has been great improvements made in energy efficiency and storage. It is now a statement of YES, WE CAN!