

# Foreword: a shared exploration of 'living laboratories' for sustainability

---

Colleges and universities, as well as corporations with significant research operations, are shaping the world of tomorrow. Sustainability is an increasingly vital component of viable solutions for the future, and thus must be a key focus for organizations that want to be innovation leaders.

In the past, leaders in research and higher education tended to think that their only relevant sustainability contributions were scientific and technical developments and education. However, it is increasingly clear that sustainable solutions imply linked changes in the material world and in the social world. The best technology is of limited value if people are unable or unwilling to use it. As explored more deeply in this volume, sustainability requires reinventing every dimension of the place we live in: place as physical, informative, normative and institutional space. Since sustainable innovations must address these multiple dimensions in order to be viable, they are ultimately developed best in a 'living laboratory' for sustainable change. For a campus setting, this means that not only research and education should emphasize sustainability topics but also daily lives in laboratories, lecture halls and dormitories should embody sustainable principles.

This 'living laboratory' concept was at the heart of the International Sustainable Campus Network (ISCN) Symposium, 'Better Campus, Better City', held at the Shanghai 2010 World Expo. This meeting was the inspiration for and the beginning of the development of this volume. It was the fourth annual meeting of the ISCN, a consortium that fosters an international experience exchange on sustainable campus initiatives. The ISCN is directed by EPFL and ETH Zurich, and receives additional support by ISCN member organizations from around the world, including the universities that host the annual ISCN conferences. We are grateful to the many colleagues that joined this endeavour, and for the seed support that 'Novatlantis – Sustainability in the ETH Domain' contributed to the development of the network.

The ISCN approaches international knowledge exchange on campus sustainability through an integrated programme featuring the ISCN-GULF Sustainable Campus Charter, three working groups, the ISCN Sustainable

Campus Excellence Awards and regular international conferences. The ISCN-GULF Sustainable Campus Charter provides the framework for this endeavour. The Charter was developed and is managed in collaboration by the ISCN and the Global University Leaders Forum (GULF), which is convened by the World Economic Forum and currently consists of 26 heads of leading universities from nine different countries ([www.weforum.org/gulf](http://www.weforum.org/gulf)).

Organizations become ISCN members by endorsing the Charter and thereby committing to set their own, concrete targets against shared Charter principles addressing

- the sustainability impacts of campus buildings
- campus-wide planning and sustainability target-setting
- the integration of research, teaching, facilities and outreach into a living laboratory for sustainability.

Member organizations are required to report regularly and transparently on their progress against their targets in these areas.

The three Charter principles provide a framework for campuses to become 'living laboratories' for sustainability innovation, and this book offers a wealth of experience for how this can be achieved in practice.

Bernd Kasemir (ISCN Program Manager and Director of  
sustainserv Inc.) and Roland Stulz (ISCN Founder and  
Director of the Swiss 2000-Watt Society Program)