



oikos

Transforming Education for a new Economy

A strategic pathway
of oikos International



oikos

Strategy in context: the role of oikos in the world & why transforming education

At oikos, we have been coming together as a global community of student change agents for over 30 years. Sustainable development is at the core of our purpose – and more specifically the sustainable development and transformation of the higher education system and how we understand, teach, learn and use economics and management for the good of people, and the planet. Spread in over 25 countries and 50 cities worldwide, we organize on campus to raise awareness for sustainability and transform our own education. As we work towards the change we want to see in the world, we explore and practice the leadership our world needs in the 21st century.

How do we want to live, lead and learn together for a thriving, sustainable tomorrow?

What are **student change agents** and why do we want to support them in the ways we do?

The common definition of change agents or sustainability leaders (used interchangeably) aligns with our own understanding: They are “people who through their own initiative [...] engage in complex societal issues with an aspiration to contribute to systemic change on some scale level: in local communities, regions, countries, the global society” (Jordan 2011, 48). The value-based actions of our students follow the aim of collaboratively fostering visions and taking action towards sustainability and resilience. oikos creates spaces for people to step into this way of seeing the world and put it into practice. We nurture the leaders of tomorrow.

Leading in Complexity

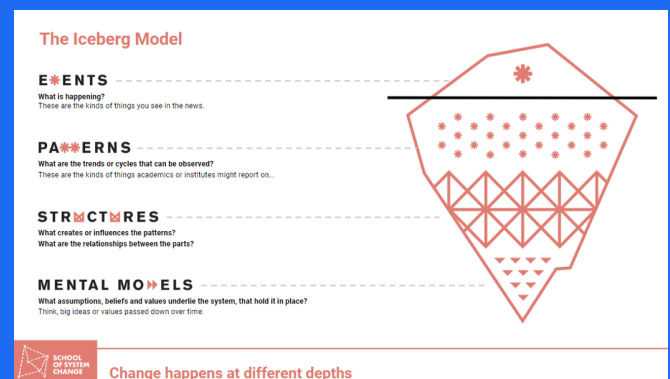
Change-oriented leadership is relational, non-hierarchical and contextual with an ecocentric perspective (Goffee and Jones 2009). It was found to be essential to develop creative, constructive solutions to our complex organizational and societal issues (Senge 2015, Bendell et al. 2017). There is a need to foster this kind of leadership to guide society in addressing the sustainability challenge and recover the health of our planet (Koskela and Goldman Schuyler 2016). Through our own leadership, our programs and local initiatives, we foster this kind of leadership with oikees all over the globe. The collective experiences hold the community together – for over 30 years.



The philosophy of change agents doesn't only guide our actions, but also the **direction** where we see the system shifting towards: to support individuals in becoming sustainability leaders, education has to focus on fostering students to have "an enhanced understanding of themselves, their abilities and desires, as well as a more profound understanding of their fellow humans and the world they inhabit" (Bodinet 2016, 21). The learning and development environment requires creating more space for reflection and interactive learning through seeing, listening and sharing. The curriculum as a tangible structure is a good place to start removing obstacles and designing more human-centered, sustainable spaces.

Shifting the whole iceberg

The iceberg model is a well-known framework to understand systemic change – and it can also show how our initiatives contribute to a transformation in the world out there. Whereas many change initiatives remain on the surface level of creating short-term action, and rarely touch upon the underlying patterns, oikos has a history of diving deep & touching people at the level of beliefs and values – and fueled by this, initiating truly transformative change in the re-design of system structures like the curriculum. Change agent by change agent, chapter by chapter, university by university, and carried by a strong support system, we contribute to a more diverse, resilient, reflective, joyful education system.



Our work at oikos International is focused on supporting and tending our change agent community for exactly these reasons.

We empower and encourage student change agents in their development and actively co-facilitate shifts in the way curricula are structured and developed, while fostering a strong support network that enables all of this.

Learn more about our strategic pathway in the field of transforming education on the following pages!

Stories from our chapters: Transforming Education on the ground

oikos Graz

Students worked together with the Regional Centre of Expertise on Education and Sustainable Development. They established a new interdisciplinary course "Basic Module for Sustainability". It is a free elective course for bachelor students which gives 2 ECTS. It started in 2020/21 with over 370 students registered. They also presented several semesters oikos in the lecture of introduction of management and business, a first semester course for many students. They reached about 500 students.



oikos Vienna

Students started with an email to the rectorate and got a meeting where they pitched their ideas. The university assigned a person responsible for dialogue with oikos students, who gave them a chance to propose a concept. Their concept was to change the online learning platform learning materials of an introductory course to Economics, Business English, including sustainability topics (particularly SDGs). 600 students take this course.

oikos Barcelona

Students helped ESADE business school to implement the sustainability plan and they have been requested by the university to help professors to review the following subjects in order to incorporate a sustainable perspective: Microeconomics (BBA), Macroeconomics (BBA), Managerial Economics (BBA), Financial Economics (BBA), Economic Environment Analysis (BBA), Economia Empresarial (BBA), The Economic Landscape (EMBA), Economics and Global Environment (MIM).



oikos Copenhagen

Students got approval from the study board of one bachelor program to collaborate. They have been working 1 on 1 with the professors to include sustainability topics in their mandatory, pre-existing courses. They offer a free consultancy for professors who want to include sustainability topics but don't have the time.

Transforming Education – Our Vision and Learning Objectives

Transforming education for a new economy by empowering and accompanying student change agents, enabling collaboration with key players in the university ecosystem, and globally promoting powerful and inspiring stories of change.

We envision higher education that prepares youth to navigate complexity, and grow into the leaders of an economic system that generates positive environmental and social outcomes. Students play a key role in this systemic shift: with the sustainability challenge at hand, there now is an open window for young change agents to take ownership of their education and make change happen in real-time. Accompanied by early career researchers, lecturers and together with other allies, students have the capacity to influence the why, what and how of teaching and learning.

Can you envision a collaborative educational context that nurtures intellectually courageous, reflective, and purpose-driven system thinkers, growing into responsible and proactive citizens, business leaders, and policymakers? We can – and we see it happening as we write these lines.

We strive for transformations in business and economics education that go deep in terms of purpose, content and methodologies. At the core of the transformations we envision: **relationships and new narratives** that are driven by student change agents.

How are curricula designed and structured? Do our ways of learning and teaching reflect the needs of the 21st century? We will raise questions about what students are taught in their programs (content) as well as how this is happening (teaching and learning methods) and why (underlying beliefs & power structures). Governance at higher education institutions as well as relationships and power structures between students, lecturers, university staff and other key players are important, context-dependent topics. We want to support a shift from “knowledge accepted by students” towards “knowledge co-created in partnerships, practiced and experienced in the real world”.

We will do so by empowering student change agents and their allies in their joint development and fostering a practice of storytelling that leverages change. In order to not only ponder on the surface, this reform must go beyond the field of business and economics and influence and integrate the perspectives of other disciplines and fields. Such education is engaging, experiential, personal, inclusive, trans-disciplinary, reflective and diverse. Adapted to the given context, we perceive this vision of education as one that is guiding us towards an economic system that allows people and nature to thrive.

Our key objectives

O1: Empowering (leadership + knowledge) student change agents to transform their education

O2: Facilitating the development of mutually beneficial relationships among change agents and allies

O3: Creatively capturing and globally disseminating the transforming education stories in the form of cases, key learnings and strategies



Walking the path: Our core strategy & concrete action towards our objectives

Together with our allies, we focus on **accompanying and supporting student change agents** who work towards transforming higher education. We will help them develop balanced and collaborative partnerships in their context, both by equipping them with the needed competencies and by opening spaces that enable exchange and connection. In these spaces, we hold up **questions about what students are taught** in their study programs (content) as well as **how this is happening** (teaching and learning methods) **and why** (governance, underlying beliefs & power structures). **Effective and wholesome communication** with and among key allies **is key to meeting our objectives**. In practice, this means to further enhance the **Transforming Education Squad**, regular virtual gatherings where students involved in transforming business and economics education share experiences and support each other. We are going to move to the next stage with the **oikos Open Evenings** (blended format) and the **oikos Camp** (onsite). We see how our platforms will help to strengthen our collaboration with key allies like Rethinking Economics, Net Impact or WWF. The competencies of our students themselves will be strengthened through our leadership program **LEAP** and we will further develop our work with early career researchers and their collaboration with student change agents through the LEAP **Researchers' Track**. Finally, **convening and globally disseminating our community's powerful stories of change** are key elements of our strategy. We aim to create a **framework for transforming education cases** together with the students and other involved change agents.

In order to move towards our vision, we want to make sure that all actions we take are:

- always part of a process, and in line with the long term vision of oikos
- possibly hosted and co-created by a chapter
- possibly online/ blended format if beneficial
- Aligned and strengthened by outcomes/ learnings/ activities of other oikos Initiatives

Qualitative and quantitative outcomes related to objectives and activities

01 Empowerment: At least 5 oikos student chapters and/or PIR students newly starting their work on transforming education each year (2022,23), at least 80% of the oikos student chapters and/ or PIR students continue working on transforming education and increase impact of their projects, early career researchers (10-15 participants each year) & students (min. 50) develop & practice competencies for leading in complexity & participatory process design (evaluated by reflection & quality of student projects)

02 Relationships: Frequency and quality of collaborations among oikos students as well as early career researchers who transform education (quality of interactions, actions, experience sharing), quality of platforms and events where oikos members learn and collaborate with key allies (evaluation, testimonials)

03 Dissemination: Team & initiative participants successfully acquired competencies in storytelling, case writing or similar harvesting practices (number of trainings & attendance, evaluation & reflection), at least 20 innovative stories co-developed (10 each year) by students, ECRs, and university staff, at least one article/ paper on key learnings per year co-created and published with key allies, at least one conference contribution on key learnings per year together with key allies (direct reach of min. 50 higher education representatives and other potential allies)

In need of a more concrete **action plan** Here is a list of the initiatives we wish to weave into our work



oikos LEAP

Advanced & Researchers' Track : Two blended 9 months leadership journeys for approx. 50 student change agents & 15 ECR to develop their competencies and support the oikos student community in transforming their education. One onsite meeting is included. (O1, O2, O3)



oikos Open Evenings

Annual, blended event to convene student change agents, ECR and experts around topics relevant to transforming education. Focus on learning and exchange. (O1, O2, O3)



Transforming Education Cases

Developing strong transforming education stories. The student community has the leading role. Workshops and training will be offered in this context. (O3, partly O1, O2)



oikos Camp

In-person event (laboratory) to progress in and co-develop concrete projects. Space for the student community and other key allies (especially partners) to meet and work together. (O1, O2, O3)



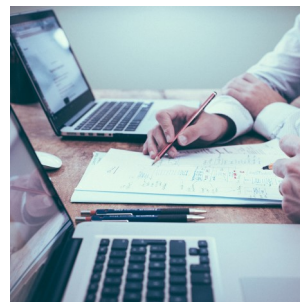
Transforming Education Squad

Ongoing, virtual/ blended space for oikos community and PIR members to interact, exchange, prototype together. (O1, partly O2, O3)



Creative dissemination

External events/ conference participation, relationships building, publications Sharing our learnings globally while tracking the impact of such dissemination activities. Publish in a scientific journal to increase credibility with several stakeholders. (O3)



Ongoing evaluation, strategy development and fundraising

Constant learning with our allies and partners, mapping the landscape, strategizing, engaging in financial and nonfinancial partnerships. (O2, O3)

Building Bridges: Links and levers to other oikos initiatives

This initiative would not exist nor thrive in a context without all other oikos Initiatives. Moving ahead, we wish to be more aware and leverage the different interlinkages and synergies. Together, we learn from our experiences and can become more conscious of what benefits our community the most.

oikos LEAP – Our prestigious leadership program offers the platform to support students in their development of competencies for navigating complexity and bringing about deep change in their local environments. A basis that is highly needed in transforming education. Our transforming education initiatives create spaces and applicable cases to practice new competencies and build capacity.

oikos Community Gatherings – Our platform events for the whole oikos community are well-known spaces of transcontextual learning and community weaving. It is in these spaces where seeds for new collaborations and initiatives find healthy ground and support. Adding the topic of transforming education to the mix and raising the awareness of the students' own power is one of our favorite roles.

The Positive Impact Rating (PIR) – a student-led rating of business schools. In the 2021 Edition of the PIR, the voices of 9000 students evidenced the need for change and stimulated students as change agents in 47 schools. The PIR is highly interconnected with oikos and thus provides leverage for the impact and scope of our actions. PIR students, both from oikos chapters and others, we already started involving in our activities (oikos Camp) and want to continue in this direction. We'll accompany PIR students through our Transforming Education Squad and involve them in co-creating the stories.

Alumni & the wider network – Over 30 years leave us with a big community of oikos Alumni, spread across the world in a diversity of fields. Connecting back, especially to the alumni who remained active in the world of education and/or leadership can be a big lever for our plans.

Key actors and allies along the path: Partnerships, collaborations and fundraising possibilities

At oikos, we make sure to never walk alone –and there are several good reasons for this. First and foremost, it is because our work is enabling change through supporting our student community; secondly: we need diverse perspectives and approaches, and we need collaboration to move ahead with our aspirations for a more sustainable and just, thriving world. And: it's more fun to share the path! Beyond this, we believe in a dialog with stakeholders with different perspectives as a source of generative development.

Student change agents: oikos student community, including the PIR students

Our global student community members are important players in their university ecosystem and their influence has been growing over the past decade. By student community we mean mainly students involved in local oikos chapters (1000 students) and students involved in Positive Impact Rating – PIR (9000 students from 47 schools joined the PIR survey in 2021), a student-led business school rating closely connected to oikos. We want to encourage student change agents to step into their power and invite their allies to collectively transform business and economics education. We will provide them with support in development of knowledge and leadership competencies for educational transformation and navigating the complexity of our days. We will accompany them in building balanced and just relationships with university stakeholders. We will ensure that students, and their universities perceive and acknowledge the value of their work (e.g. ECTS credits for transforming education engagement, curric-

-ulum change projects embedded in lectures and assignments, other appreciation by university institutions or job opportunities)

Our global student community is at the core of our work. Students are important players in their respective university ecosystem and their influence has been growing over the past decade. By student community we mean mainly students involved in local oikos chapters, operating in 50 universities all over the world. In addition to this we plan to further engage students involved in Positive Impact Rating – PIR, an initiative which is highly interconnected with oikos and thus provides leverage for the impact and scope of our actions.

How we interact with this group:

We encourage them to step into their power and invite other important change agents to collectively transform business and economics education. We will provide them with support in the development of key leadership competencies for educational transformation and the practical know-how to navigate the complexity of our days. We will support them in building balanced, equal and just relationships with stakeholders at their university. We envision seeding more collaborative ways of learning and education in general while ensuring that students, and their universities perceive and acknowledge the value of their work. This can be for example through finding pathways towards concrete and clear benefits for student community members involved (e.g. ECTS credits for transforming education engagement, joint curriculum change oriented projects embedded in lectures and assignments, other appreciation by university institutions, job opportunities, etc.). It is an important role for us to help point out and raise awareness for power structures and key questions within the given context, and enable the exchange and mutual learnings about the across cultures and regions.

Derived considerations:

- Communication is key: through frequent exchange and a coaching-relationship, as well as invitations to tell and share their stories, we can show them how much power they (may) have, how relevant they are and what they can achieve
- Providing support in development of key leadership competencies for educational transformation and the practical know-how to navigate complexity is highly needed

Lecturers for the future: Early career researchers (ECRs)

Open-minded researchers (PhD students) are sparring- and learning partners to students, helping them develop their competencies and strategies for effective work on education transformation. They teach or will start teaching soon, therefore immediately innovate their institutions. They can also help us understand the evolving landscape and development on the ground. We wish to further develop competencies of ECRs through coaching relationships and other training formats. Our plan is to work on a smaller, representative scale, connect with and support some very committed ECRs with a link to oikos. We will guide ECRs in the process of supporting the oikos student community in their transforming education efforts.

Open-minded researchers (PhD students) are potential sparring- and learning partners to students, helping them develop their competencies and strategies for effective work on education transformation. They teach or will start teaching soon, therefore immediately innovate education and governance at their institutions. They have another perspective on and access to university structures and therefore can also help us understand the evolving landscape and development on the ground.

How we interact with this group:

With a focus on competency & personal development. Our plan is to work on a smaller, representative scale, connect with some very committed ECRs with a link to oikos, and help them develop their capacities through the LEAP Researchers' Track (around 15 participants each year). We will connect them with oikos student community members to pass on and practice their learnings through coaching relationships and other formats. We will guide ECRs in the process of choosing their way of supporting the oikos student community in their transforming education efforts.

Derived considerations:

- Involving ECRs in the oikos community does not only set a tone for the transforming education landscape, but also leverages our chapter's initiatives on the ground
- Listening & learning from the ECRs can give us fundamental insights and open doors
- When working with ECRs we draw from our experience in leadership development and thus meet their needs

Networks and organisations working on transforming business/economics education

Next to student movements like Rethinking Economics, Network for Pluralist Economics or Net Impact, we see PIR, WWF Switzerland, UN PRME or the GRLI as our key allies. We collaborate, learn and strategize together, develop mutually beneficial and honest partnerships. They inspire the oikos community with experience and knowledge, with oikos they learn about leadership and education transformation. We support each other's community building efforts.

We also count our key donors as a part of this group, enabling and challenging our work in transforming education. Examples: P4NE, Hans Boeckler Foundation, European Youth Foundation and movetia.

Derived considerations:

- Dedicating capacity to relationship building and spending time together to deepen our collaborations with our key allies is key
- Our partners are inspired by our strong leadership work, which we should share more accessible in the future
- We benefit from our partners' knowledge and experience while providing the outcomes of their work to the oikos community

Local education innovators at universities (lecturers, administration representatives, etc.) who want to shape their institutions, have the power to open doors and willingness to collaborate with students. They are based at institutions where we have oikos chapters or show other connections to oikos. We will work with few committed lecturers on a representative scale, involve them in our activities and learn together about the education transformation landscape. The PIR and other oikos initiatives provide platforms for this effort.

Examples: University of St. Gallen, University of Vienna, ESADE Business School Barcelona, University of Graz, Copenhagen Business School

Derived considerations:

- This group is fundamental to understand developments on the ground and gain new perspective
- Our role can be to share & inspire new perspectives, in return; eg. through sharing stories & pointing out opportunities

Experts in innovative story-telling, participatory leadership and effective communication are new allies to strengthen our story-telling and communication practice. They can train the oikos International team as well as our community to leverage the impact of our stories in the world. Examples: [Art of Hosting](#), [Story Dojo](#)

Derived considerations:

- We need the financial ability to get the support of these networks and start developing our own competencies in the field

Capacity & Competencies for Acting on our Strategy

In order to realize our strategy, we need to ensure that the transforming education team (TET) has the capacity to thrive in their initiatives with a sustainable workload. We envision that each core team member commits to min. 50% in order to have a deeper understanding and ability to make crucial connections and contributions. We are ready to work with a few of our colleagues on a purely project based (lower percentage) level. Student change agents: oikos student community, including the PIR students

TET Structure Timeline

2021

4 staff team members with different roles & capacities, 2 core-team members, 1 new team member joining October with 50%

2022

6 staff team members with different roles & capacities, 2 core-team members, Increase of core team capacity to ideally 80 – 100% each

2023

6 staff team members with different roles & capacities, 2 core-team members, Re-evaluation of capacity & future team development

5 Key responsibilities of the TET

- Empowering & encouraging student change agents through individual support and clear, regular communication (internally and externally)
- Hold, steward and map spaces where powerful relationships of our target groups can evolve and enable solid, proactive, longterm and balanced relationships between students, ECRs, teachers and university staff that set a tone for other cases.
- Ensuring that these relationships are perceived as valuable and equal for all parties: all people involved should benefit from this connection and no one feels misused or overwhelmed in a long term
- Attentively and systematically tracking the developments and impact of the change work and skillfully telling the story about it in an interactive, engaging way
- Embedding our efforts in the oikos community life (events, projects, strategies, team) and drawing leverage and lessons from related initiatives
- Effectively communicating and globally disseminating key learnings and results of our work

We consider the following **competencies** as fundamental for our work and want to ensure that all team members get the chance to practice and evolve

- oikos context: Experience with the oikos student community and their culture, needs, and potential for development; good understanding of all oikos initiatives to effectively interconnect and find synergies
- Facilitation & hosting: Ability to host and steward spaces where powerful relationships of our target groups can evolve
- Communication & storytelling: Personal and proactive approach in internal and external communication; the ability to simplify complex topics & wrap them into stories
- Transforming education: Knowledge & practice in (or high motivation to learn about) education & learning innovation for sustainability
- Systemic, innovative and creative way of thinking

Creating the path – voices from our initiatives & other encounters that informed our strategy

Gathering voices: An insight into our strategy process with our allies

Guiding Questions to find our strategic path

How do we contribute to transforming higher education through empowering student change agents and early career researchers?

We believe that a focus on relationships with space for knowledge and experience sharing, personal development, coaching and reflection will foster competencies needed to run successful initiatives on campus. In turn, collaboration of students and researchers with like-minded peers and allies will contribute to a shift towards “collaborative learning”. It will increase diversity of content and methods within the field of business and economics education.

How can stories of student-led change on campus generate narratives of education for a new economy?

Stories of transforming education show that bottom-up, context-specific change in business and economics education is possible. Well disseminated story-telling goes beyond the oikos community, and inspires those who hesitate to take similar action. The collaboration with key allies in developing these stories will invite the experience of culture and power shifts that reach beyond business and economics education



POSITIVE IMPACT
RATING FOR BUSINESS SCHOOLS

Business student's requests for change from the PIR

The [Positive Impact Rating 2021 Report](#) results show over 9000 student voices globally showed that the main issues were the teaching of more relevant and sustainability-related theories, topics and practical skills.

What my school should START doing:

01	Putting sustainability at the core of teaching on economics and business;
02	Providing practical sustainability competencies;
03	Engaging with NPOs for courses, projects, and career options;
04	Creating social impact initiatives with local and global communities;
05	Empowering and supporting students to act for sustainability;
06	Educating all b-school staff in sustainability topics.

Some example, anonymous student responses from the survey of 47 Business Schools include:

"Start to provide a more in depth knowledge of what sustainability is, why it is beneficial and what are its practical barriers as of now, as well as future objectives. Classes should integrate diverse perspectives. Depth is important, as well as history and actuality: window-dressing leaves no impact."

"We have to start to include some of the societal consequences on the core classes of every program, so the students don't see the world impact as something external to businesses."

"I am taking CSR and I feel it is an important topic but I feel like it is really surreal and doesn't face real world situations."

"Let's start to guide students in other professional areas than consulting or finance. We hear of ethics

What my school should STOP doing:	
01	Teaching outdated theories and models of economics and business;
02	Using single use plastics on campus;
03	Employing staff with no knowledge, experience, or passion in sustainability;
04	Unsustainable food and catering services on campus;
05	Practices that continue to create waste;
06	Offering degrees without mandatory sustainability courses.

and purpose a lot at the beginning of the course but not really when it comes to finding internships or a job. The potential of having a positive impact shouldn't be an option but inside the core courses, culture and mind of the school."

"We want our school to stop offering only very classical courses at the entrance to L3 (accounting, financial markets) that do not encourage students to question their commitment to positive management and positive impact in the world."

A transformative experience – The LEAP Researchers' Track

The LEAP Researchers' Track has really boosted my personal development in research and teaching. Monthly meetings, 1:1 coaching, and advising university students on curriculum reform are just a few examples of this program where participants can create real impact towards greater sustainability.

–Jakob Knauf

The oikos LEAP researcher's track was a thought-provoking and creative journey that inspired me in many different ways. It is a great leadership program that offers space for dialogue, co-creation, and personal development. For me, it was an excellent place to connect with like-minded people and explore new ideas together. I am very grateful for all the insightful sessions about leadership, coaching, sustainability (e.g., in higher education), and research topics during the last 9 months.

–Magdalena Rusch

It was a pleasure to get to know fellow oikees from so many different places and to explore with them the meaning and practice of our research in the LEAP Researchers' Track. The self-led group process, the small-group discussions, and the individual coaching reinforced each other and contributed to the success of this program. It inspired my academic work and opened up new perspectives. I was always looking forward to our next meeting in which we reflected on our goals, approaches, and strengths, brought together by the ideals of support for each other, open-mindedness, and care for sustainability.

–Oliver Braunschweig