Workshop on the Business Opportunities in Advancing Sustainable Lifestyles in Greater Boston

By Vesela Veleva and Philip Vergragt

The IPCC report on climate change clarifies the urgency of rapid decarbonization of the economy. Recent research demonstrates that changes in lifestyles will be needed in addition to a transition to clean energy. According to the EPA, 42% of our Green House Gas (GHG) emissions are associated with the energy used to produce, process, transport, and dispose of the products we use. This is a challenge but also an opportunity for companies to recognize the market opportunities in launching new business models and supporting employees in pursuing more sustainable lifestyles, which are associated with greater engagement and wellbeing.

On May 16, 2019, the Center for Sustainable Enterprise and Regional Competitiveness (SERC), in collaboration with The Sustainable Consumption Research and Action Initiative (SCORAI) organized a workshop with four main goals:
1. Raise awareness among variety of stakeholders about the role of consumption in addressing climate change;
2. Bring together a variety of organizations and people already working in specific areas (e.g., housing, mobility, food, consumer goods, and leisure);
3. Support and promote innovative business models and practices aiming to reduce consumption while improving wellbeing; and
4. Identify high impact areas, actions and indicators for Greater Boston area.

The workshop aimed to build on previous work such as Imagine Boston 2030, Carbon Free Boston, the EU Sustainable Lifestyles 2050 Project, the EU Indicators for Sustainable Cities report, UNEP/One Earth Sustainable Lifestyles in the Workplace, and the IGES study on carbon footprints.

This first of its kind workshop in the Boston area attracted a diverse group of businesses, policymakers, academics, and other professionals, many of whom presented on topics from consumption-based GHG inventory, using surplus food to provide healthy meals to those in need, to an app that can help reduce your carbon footprint. Speakers included Carl Spector, Commissioner of the Environment, City of Boston; Brooke Nash, Branch Chief, Municipal Waste Reduction Program, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection; Sasha Purpora, Food For Free; Paul Eldrenkamp, Byggmeister Builders; and Sanchali Pal, Joro. Break-out group sessions discussed five lifestyle domains where concrete actions taken can promote sustainable lifestyles and carbon emission reductions: food, mobility, consumer goods, housing, and leisure (tourism).

Not surprisingly, the role of consumption, consumers, and consumerism in addressing climate change is rather new in the context of cities. C40, a network of the world's megacities committed to addressing climate change that supports cities to collaborate effectively, share knowledge and drive meaningful, measurable and sustainable action on climate change, has introduced consumption-based emission inventories in a report and is in the process of piloting how cities can implement consumption-oriented policies and practices. Businesses large and small become

more aware of the role they could play in implementing new practices, such as telecommuting and teleconferencing, sourcing local, plant-based food, and donating surplus food and products. We are in an early stage of exploring these opportunities and relationships. This workshop was the first step and will be followed by other activities in the coming year culminating in the SCORAI 2020 conference in June 2020 in Boston. We hope that Boston will join other leading cities globally in taking bold actions to address climate change and consumption while improving citizens' wellbeing and supporting progressive businesses.

For more information or how to participate in future events or research, please contact Vesela Veleva at Vesela.Veleva@umb.edu or Philip Vergragt at pvergragt@outlook.com.

Video recording of the workshop is available at: https://echo360.org/media/9170a227-cdb7-4622-81f0-9638352a8738/public.