



**Universität
Zürich^{UZH}**

**Right
Livelihood**
CENTRE ZÜRICH

Sustainability Now!

**Inequalities as an Obstacle to Achieve
Sustainable Development**

«Global Migration in the Mediterranean
Sea»

Veranstaltungsbericht

Julius Kickler

Pablo Anton

16.05.2024

The course "Sustainability Now! – Inequalities as an Obstacle to Achieve Sustainable Development" explores the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and the challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and social inequality. It focuses on addressing inequalities as barriers to sustainable development and highlights the work of the Right Livelihood Foundation. Through interdisciplinary approaches, students will enhance their knowledge and competencies by learning from the Right Livelihood Award winners known for their human rights and environmental protection efforts. It allows students to push their boundaries by moderating an evening that contains an introduction to the event, a speech from the Laureate, a panel discussion with additional experts from academia and civil society, and questions from the audience. The interdisciplinary course is a collaboration of the Right Livelihood Centre UZH and the Sustainability Team UZH and is organized by Dr. Aline Steinbrecher Frei, Dr. Jeannette Behringer, and their assistants Marina Menz and Valeria Casty.

On the evening of May 16. the theme was the global migration in the Mediterranean Sea. The primary guest was the winner of the Right Livelihood Award 2023: SOS Méditerranée (represented by Caroline Abu Sa'da). In addition, Kijan Espahangizi and Fabian Schmid were invited to join a panel discussion with Caroline Abu Sa'da after her speech.

Dr. Caroline Abu Sa'da:

She is the founder and the Executive Director of SOS Méditerranée Switzerland. She has led multiple humanitarian programs in the field for Oxfam GB, the United Nations, and MSF (Doctors Without Borders). She holds a PhD in Political Science and International Relations from Sciences Po, Paris, and has recently been awarded a doctorate honoris causa by the University of Lausanne.

Dr. Kijan Espahangizi:

He holds a doctorate (Dr. sc. ETH) and is a recognized expert in migration history. He currently works as a lecturer at the University of Zurich (UZH). Beyond academia, Dr. Espahangizi is a co-founder and co-president of the Institut Neue Schweiz (INES), a Swiss think tank focused on migration issues.

Fabian Schmid:

He is a specialist speaker (European Politics) for the Swiss Refugee Council and holds a Master of Arts in European Global Studies from the University of Basel. SOS Méditerranée isn't just a single European non-governmental organization (NGO) focused on search and

rescue missions in the Mediterranean Sea, but an international network of NGOs present in several European countries including France, Germany, Italy, and Switzerland.

SOS Méditerranée operates in the central Mediterranean Sea, with a focus on the area north of Libya. Their primary mission is to locate and rescue migrants and refugees who are trying to cross the Mediterranean in often unsafe and overcrowded vessels. They then transport these rescued people to a safe harbor where their basic needs can be met. Their search and rescue efforts are founded on the legal obligation to assist people in distress at sea. SOS Méditerranée also engages in advocacy efforts to raise awareness about the dangers migrants and refugees face on the Mediterranean route, and to push for solutions to the ongoing refugee crisis. Although their work received a lot of international recognition and credit, their work has been met with resistance from some governments who argue that their presence encourages migrants to make the perilous journey across the Mediterranean. Legal battles over docking rights and accusations of aiding human trafficking have also created obstacles.

The evening contained so many different topics, also because of the good questions from the audience. Still, two things stood out. On the one hand, the harsh reality SOS Méditerranée is facing every day out there on the sea. Caroline gave the audience quite a vivid picture in her speech as well as in the following discussions with the other panellists. Everybody got the message, to be aware of the amount stories and their individuality.

On the other hand, the discussion between the three guests showed how complex the topic is. There are many different stakeholders with different interests. There are different perspectives through which one can analyze the issue and justify different proposals to address the obvious problem in the Mediterranean Sea.

Being part of such an event provides us, as the facilitation group, with too many learnings to count and probably even more that we don't realize yet. First of all, something that stood out to me was that expertise on the topic isn't as helpful as expected, as long as you're not responsible for fact-checking. I would spend more time preparing myself by studying other moderations and public speaking in the future. Second, I once more learned how important clear and efficient communication is and not to think about what is probable but only build on the things I know for sure. Lastly, it was a humbling experience that helped me realize that everybody is human, and one must not be shy about their work, experience and mistakes.