

## "Sustainable Development in Historical Perspective"

by Prof. Dr. Verena Winiwarter, University of Klagenfurt, 12 Dec 2017, 12:30 p.m.

The next Science Talk, organized by the Institute of Systems Sciences, Innovation and Sustainability Research, will be given by **Prof. Dr. Verena Winiwarter** (Institute of Social Ecology, Centre for Environmental History, Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt / University of Klagenfurt) on the topic

### "Sustainable Development in Historical Perspective"

Her talk will take place on Tuesday, 12 December 2017 at 12.30 pm in the **meeting room of SIS (Merangasse 18, 1<sup>st</sup> floor)**.

Duration: **Approximately one hour** including discussion.

The institute usually organizes three guest talks in each semester, covering its main research fields, i.e., systems sciences, innovation and sustainability research. There is no need to register for the "SIS Science Talk" and the participation is free of charge.

### Bio-sketch

Verena Winiwarter is Professor of Environmental History at Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt/University of Klagenfurt since 2007. First trained as a chemical engineer, she holds a PhD in Environmental History from Vienna University, where she was granted the *venia legendi* in Human Ecology in 2003. Her research interests comprise the history of rivers, landscapes, tourism and its images, and the environmental history of soils. She led two interdisciplinary projects to reconstruct the Danube and the smaller Viennese Rivers and trace their history over more than 450 years and one to study the evolution of Alpine Ski Tourism in Austria. As a full member of the *Austrian Academy of Sciences*, she has published numerous articles and edited several books. In 2014, she was "Austrian Scientist of the Year", and her popular book „Umwelt hat Geschichte-60 Reisen durch die Zeit“ (2014) was awarded ‚Umweltbuch des Jahres‘ (‘environmental book of the year’) in Germany.

### Abstract

With the adoption of the 17 SDGs, the United Nations have set the course for the international community for the next decades. Environmental historians can contribute to this joint endeavour by looking into the past. Looking into the past, it quickly becomes clear that sustainable development does not start from a blank slate. Side-effects of earlier interventions compromise our freedom of choice for future options. Environmental historians suggest to view the course of history as a risk spiral. The sources of energy and therefore the abundance of materials lead to side-effect-prone arrangements. Using river regulations, agriculture, Venetian forest regulations, tsunamis and the history of Guano extraction in Peru, arguments for a historically informed view on the possibilities and challenges of sustainable development will be laid out.