

# Jean Monnet Network Conference: *Time is Running Out!* *Systemic, Disruptive Innovation to Achieve the SDGs*

Hosted by RMIT European Union Centre of Excellence



## DATE, TIME & VENUE:

26- 27 June (Wednesday & Thursday)  
1:00pm – 7:00pm

RMIT University, City Campus  
Building 80, Level 10, Room 17  
445 Swanston St, Melbourne

\*Afternoon tea provided

## REGISTER BY 15 JUNE VIA EMAIL TO:

[irini.vasilakakos@rmit.edu.au](mailto:irini.vasilakakos@rmit.edu.au)

\*\*please indicate if you are registering for in-person attendance or to join via the online stream – a link to join online will be sent individually to those that RSVP\*\*

## PRE-READINGS:

A range of materials will be shared with participants in advance and will provide evidence about the urgency of the crisis, and examples of initiatives already under way. These resources will underpin key themes and provide a focus for the dialogue at the conference.

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

Jean Monnet Network on Social and Scientific Innovation to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals



The RMIT EU Centre is co-funded through grants from the European Union (EU) Jean Monnet Programme & RMIT University

## Why this Conference?

With less than 6 years to 2030, the ambitions of the United Nations Paris Agreement and the SDG Agenda for Transformation are at grave risk. Time is running out! It is apparent that the taken-for-granted modes of business, policy making, crisis management, governance and knowledge production are deeply inadequate, and new initiatives are necessary if there is to be any chance of achieving the world's climate targets.

It is now well recognised that both scientific and social innovation are required. Examples exist of their sensible and productive interaction, whether in using open data to encourage more equitable lifelong learning, or complementing the roll out of more environmentally sustainable technologies with a new conceptualisation of human behaviour and how to influence it. However, if we are to achieve the transformational outcomes needed, we require more effort to accelerate the pace and character of innovation itself: in short, more systemic, structural, radical and disruptive. Business as usual will fail!

The question, then, is what does systemic, disruptive social innovation involve at the everyday level; how does it relate to ordinary, local scale experimentation and adjustment? In the field of climate change adaptation, there is growing awareness of the need for transformational as compared to incremental adaptation. How do the two relate, and does 'everyday adaptation' matter? Across various domains, ordinary adaptability, incremental reform and individual level change appear in some settings as a barrier to transformation, but in other settings as a small but vital demonstration of local agency, creativity and learning.

When it was first developed, the SDG policy agenda was an attempt to capture some of the complexity and drive positive Social Tipping Points of various sorts. But it is now in danger of being superseded and overwhelmed by the very issues it lays out and others it failed to anticipate. Efforts to implement the agenda are widespread across government, industry, and not-for-profit organisations at multiple scales. Yet in aggregate the outcomes fall far short of what was envisaged and needed. Hindsight reveals policy makers' overconfidence in existing institutional, organisational, and administrative forms and practices.

In the last 4 years, support from the European Union has enabled the Jean Monnet Network on Social and Scientific Innovation to Achieve the SDGs to explore these questions. This conference provides an opportunity for dialogue between the Network researchers and those associated with the Latrobe University Climate Adaptation Lab, and other colleagues concerned about the urgent need for transformative action. The idea of Tipping Points will be central to rethinking the framing of innovation and change, and the blurring of human and natural phenomena. What does this mean for the SDGs and their capacity to inspire urgent engagement in the next 5 years?

The conference will bring together Australian and international scholars working on different aspects of this challenge. Through a curated program of reading and discussion, it will try to make sense of the contemporary context to help orient our research and innovation for the rest of the decade. The Latrobe University Climate Change Adaptation Lab and the RMIT EU Centre of Excellence project on Social and Scientific Innovation to Achieve the SDGs (supported with funding from the EU) will lead this event, along with input from groups including Planetary Civics and Regen Melbourne. The conference will run from 1.00-7.00pm each day, providing opportunities for European colleagues to connect. It will be structured to learn from key thinkers as well as enabling extensive participation amongst all attendees.