



**Universität  
Zürich** UZH

## **Sustainable Finance – Moving Boundaries and Transforming Teaching Curricula in University Teaching**

**Dr. Annette Krauss, Universität Zürich**

Workshop at Conference

“Transformation of Teaching in  
Economic Sciences”

Zürich, 13 September 2024



# Why this workshop

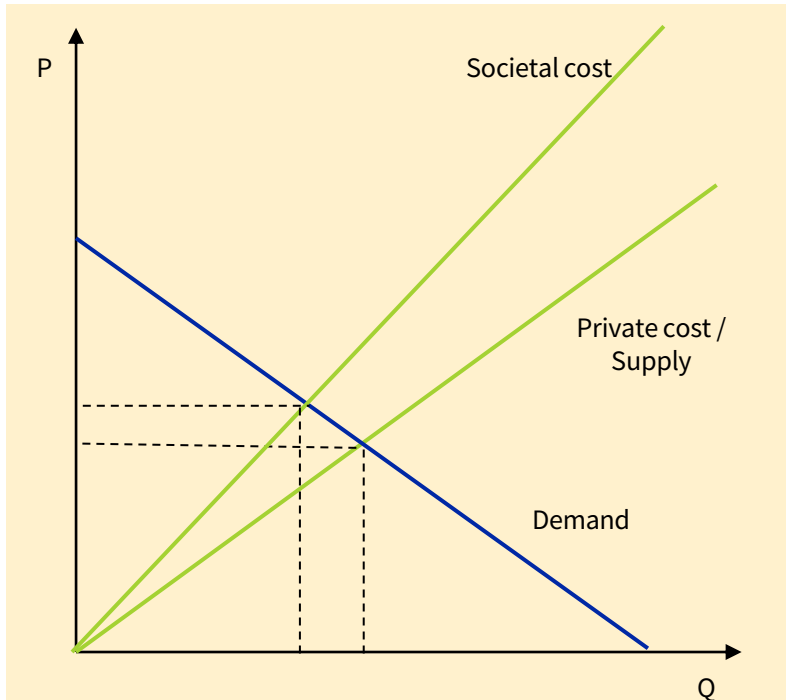
- Sustainable Finance teaching & research has moved closer to center stage at University of Zurich since 2016
- University teaching is embedded in academic research institution and thus comes with specific conditions and opportunities
- Our in-house experiences and curricula built as jigsaw puzzle with many pieces
- Workshop offers opportunity to reflect on big picture & benefit from critical exchange, learning and feedback



Images: UZH Executive Education / Zellweger

# The challenge

## Sustainability as a topic in traditional economics:



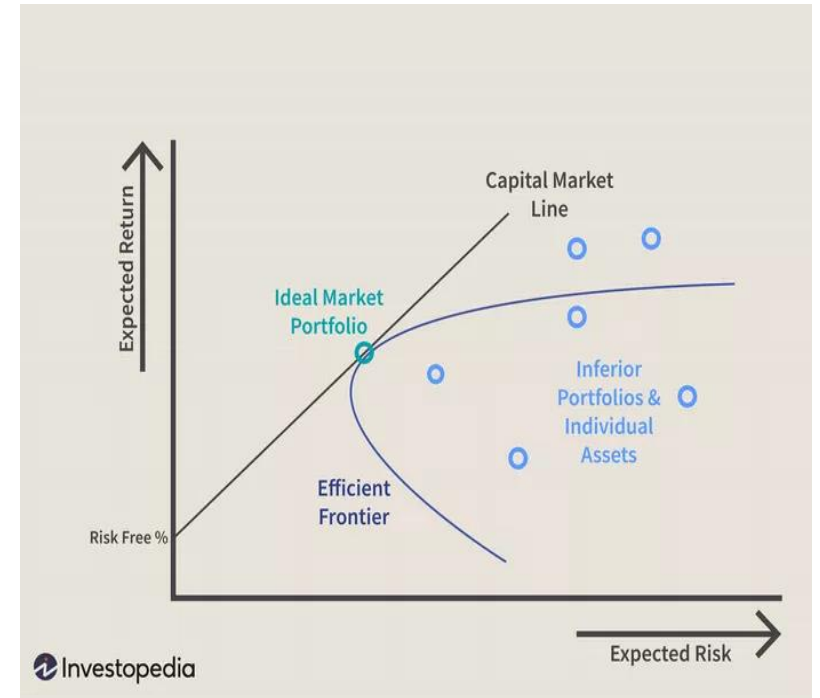
## Sustainability in economics and finance:

- Sustainability issues = results of market & public policy failures
  - “Asset pricing” incomplete
  - More recent asset pricing and other finance research incorporating certain sustainability aspects (risks, expected returns)

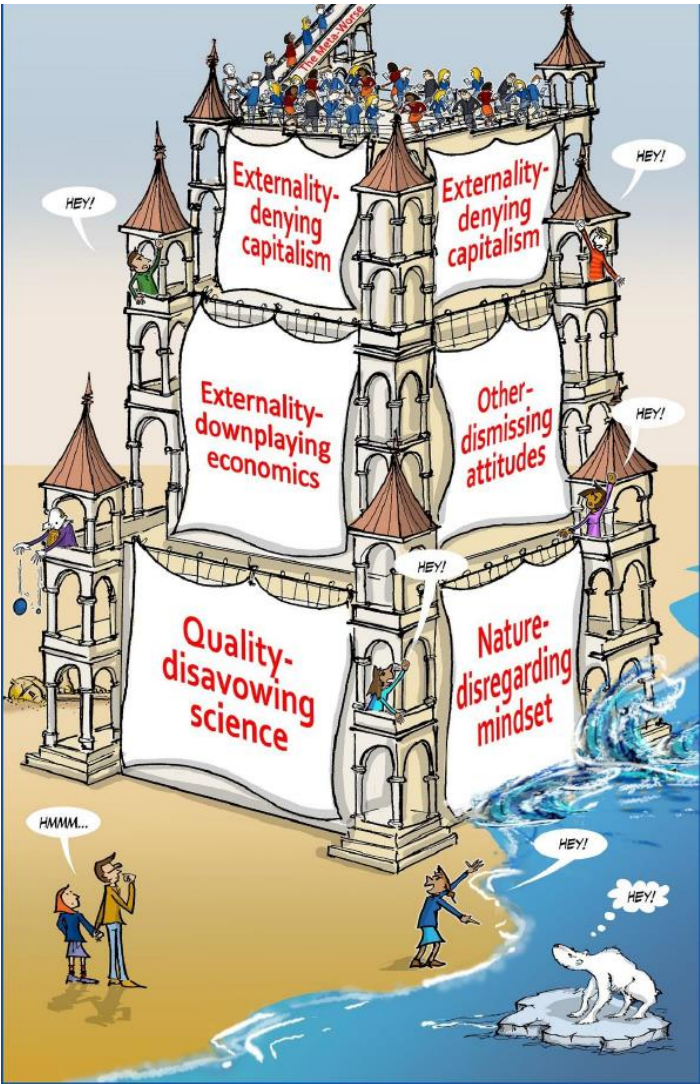
## Open questions about:

- Who are the of participants and the rule-setters in (financial) markets regarding sustainability?
- Rules of the game in (financial) markets
- Strategies and rewards in (financial) markets
  - Need to bridge gap between piece-meal treatment of sustainability in classes and broader, comprehensive and solution-oriented teaching

## Sustainability as a topic in traditional finance:



But...



Source: Austin / Tweed, 2022, The Towering Problem of Externality-Denying Capitalism, therein image (left) after M.C. Escher, bothbrainsrequired.com

Author of *MORE SEX IS SAFER SEX*

Steven E. Landsburg

# The Armchair Economist

Economics & Everyday Life



*"A wide ranging, easily digested, unbelievable contrarian survey . . ."*  
— *The Wall Street Journal*

“Most of economics can be summarized in four words: ‘People respond to incentives.’ The rest is commentary.”

# Discussion round: Introductions and Brainstorming

**What do you experience (or observe) as opportunities and challenges in university teaching on sustainable finance?**

Here's my personal list....

- + Students expect to learn scientific approaches to a question
- + Direct links between research in academic discipline and university teaching (“Humboldt’s ideal”)
- + Scientific frameworks (theories, empirical approaches)
- + “Mandated” independence of short-term fashions, market trends, and vested interests (“biases”)
- +/- Plurality of approaches, large bodies of faculty making important decisions (10+ professors in our faculty)
- +/- Disciplinary boundaries
- Students don’t know what to expect / don’t fully learn what the scientific approach to a question means
- Medium to high speed of innovation in academic research (examples relating to Sustainable Finance: extension of classical finance models, behavioral finance, empirical finance...); slower speed of innovation in academic teaching
- Medium incentives to innovate in teaching content, lower incentives to innovate in teaching formats
- Prioritizing academic excellence in hiring decisions and promotions => individual instructors’ motivations affect degree of university programs with regards to innovations and expansions of teaching content and formats

# Developments in Sustainable Finance teaching at UZH

## Teaching:

- Since 2010: executive education courses, since 2016: executive education programs (MAS / DAS / CAS) in Sustainable Finance
- Since 2010: Individual master and bachelor courses in topics related to sustainable finance at Department of Finance (DF) (Faculty of Economics, Management Science and Informatics) including courses from other disciplines or co-taught disciplines
- Since 2019: Selected sustainability topics covered in mandatory BA classes
- Since 2019: Specialization (“Minor Sustainable Finance”) in Master studies in Finance, Economics, Management Science or Informatics
- Since 2018: Irregular offer of specialized seminars for PhD students

***Note: direct responsibility for decisions on a teaching program lies with the official faculty body in a discipline***

## Research:

- Since 2008, various “centers” on sustainability-related topics within Department of Finance & strongly increasing number of professors, senior researchers & PhD students focusing on sustainability topics
- Since 2017, interdisciplinary Center of Competence with faculty and research members (individuals) from several faculties
- Since 2021, professorship for Sustainable Finance at DF; Professorship for Sustainability Economics currently in hiring process at Department of Economics

## Overarching:

- University-level Sustainability representative and Sustainability Team / Hub
- University-level Sustainability Policy and Sustainability-related implementation frameworks for Teaching and for Research
- Inter- and transdisciplinary offer of classes by dedicated university units, e.g. “Studienwoche Nachhaltige Entwicklung” (Master)

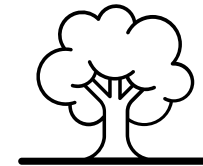
# Experimenting with teaching formats

## Usual teaching formats:

- Lecture
- Lecture with exercises (assignments)
- Seminars
- Bachelor / Master thesis

## Experimenting with teaching formats: some examples of classes and innovations that focus on sustainable finance

- Lecture series alternating guest lecturers and practice speakers
- Lectures incorporating group work assignments
- Game-based learning: developing games on sustainable finance; incorporating sustainability criteria into portfolio management game
- Seminars and lectures offered for students from different disciplines
- Transdisciplinary course (co-teaching of researcher & practitioner teams on applied topics)
- Research seminars presenting new research open to (advanced) master students
- “Demand-based teaching”: students asking for new topics and classes



Images source: UZH Game-Based Learning Seminar, HS 2024





## Open question / food for thought

How to activate a university's strengths to engage instructors / researchers *further* for sustainable finance related teaching?

Thank you for your inputs!

### Contact

Dr. Annette Krauss  
Senior Academic Associate  
+41 44 634 51 68  
[annette.krauss@df.uzh.ch](mailto:annette.krauss@df.uzh.ch)

