



## A brief history of the „origin“ of EcoSan Club

*This paper (humorously) describes EcoSan Club's origin.*

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*„He's a real no-where man, sitting in his no-where land, making all his no-where plans for nobody ...“ (John Lennon and Paul McCartney, 1968)*

During the years 2000 to 2002 a committed and radical (or even naive) group of engineers at the Institute of Sanitary Engineering at BOKU University was busy to collect the experiences of recent years that they had made in projects within the Austrian development cooperation (ÖEZA) and to challenge themselves: Water supply is not so bad but what about sanitation? Can it go on like this? If not - how should it go and what can we contribute?

The environment in the year 2000 was good; the development cooperation group of the Institute was active in Uganda, Mozambique, Cape Verde, Kenya and Palestine on behalf of the Austrian Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Internationally it was the time of the HIPC (Heavily Indebted Poor Countries) Initiative and SWAp's (Sector-Wide Approaches), when fundamental changes from project to program approaches appeared among donors and partner countries and even sector policy was developed in order to discuss the direction and set up of development in a sector.

Already at the beginning of the year 2000 it was clear that in the area of sanitation something must happen to assure that activities of international and development cooperation and the sector activities of partner country governments will meet the opportunities and needs of the local population.

The first milestone became apparent as Uno Winblad, the „grandfather“ of Eco-sanitation, was invited to a workshop at BOKU and even our young students in the student union named and landmarked this event as „SHIT HAPPENS“. It was the beginning of a series of EcoSan events showing the permanent development of this topic until today (see also the article on awareness rising activities of EcoSan Club). This has fuelled fantasies and discussions - and the

advice of Uno Winblad encouraged self-confidence and creativity.

In 2001 we expanded our team and our sphere of impact in a strategic way - we infiltrated an employee in Water and Sanitation Programme (WSP) of the World Bank with a focus on EcoSan and embodied this theme in the programs of the Austrian development cooperation especially in Uganda, Mozambique and Kenya. It is very important to mention that the intense and close cooperation with the ÖEZA at all levels, both in Vienna at the headquarters and in the coordination office enabled us to go ahead in this progressive way. Without this mutual trust and even without the intensive professional dialogue the development would certainly not have been possible.

In particular, the experience in Uganda and Mozambique in the programs SWTWS (Southwestern Towns Water and Sanitation) and Paars (Projecto de Abastecimento e Agua Rural e Saneamento em Sofala – Programme for rural water supply and sanitation in Sofala Province, Mozambique), respectively, showed us the need to increase support for the sanitation and to develop it in a conceptual way. The first concrete activities were held in Uganda in SWTWS program, where we also started collaboration with the university and even an umbrella was prepared as a model for the local organizational development. In Mozambique, lost experiences have been revitalized by local experts and with local partners an implementation plan has been developed.

In 2001, the idea grew up to focus our activities and to form their own group; once clubs were just modern and ecological sanitation was the idea, we decided after long sessions rather humorous to us for

the preparation and establishment of the "EcoSan Club". The first entries are to be found in October 2001, the observations of these notes show our humour as well as many of our experiences that we could make and had to make as well as some funny ideas.

Towards the end of the year 2001 activities became more intense - there was the Nanning Conference on EcoSan, where the SWTWS program was represented, there was an EcoSan workshop in Uganda, there was the Bonn „World Water Vision“ conference, and we were there all right in the centre of activities and dialogue. Additionally, the IWA (International Water Association) Specialist Group on „Resources Oriented Sanitation (EcoSan)“ was established during the Berlin World Water Congress in October 2001.

This intensive cooperation with institutions in our partner countries, our clients, but also international organizations, of course, had to be found in our organization set up and so at the end of 2001 an intensive meeting took place to prepare the establishing EcoSan Club. In the records appear as naturally not only our substantial considerations, of course, now we had to discuss vital topics and we can find topics with big question marks - financing?; Promotion?; ... but also the interesting note: what do we really want? How can we develop our coordination and communication?; etc. etc.

The year 2002 started with a fixed date as 20.02.2002 as the constitution day for EcoSan Club, naturally embedded in hectic and intense activities for the programs in Uganda, Mozambique, Palestine, a gender event „He / She Water“ at BOKU University, lectures on tropical water management, etc., just to avoid to slip into a too cosy club feeling.

Founding members of EcoSan Club and their current affiliations:

Thomas Ertl (Institute of Sanitary Engineering, BOKU University), Nikolaus Fleischmann (independent consultant), Helmut Jung (Institute of Sanitary Engineering, BOKU University), Andreas Knapp (UNICEF Nepal), Günter Langergraber (Institute of Sanitary Engineering, BOKU University), Markus Lechner (ESC Consulting KG), Hans Schattauer (Austrian Development Agency, Kampala, Uganda), and Kirsten Sleytr (BOKU University).

***„No-where man don't worry, take your time don't hurry; leave it all till somebody else lends you a hand.“ (John Lennon and Paul McCartney, 1968)***

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