



EINFACH BESSER BUSINESS-ENGLISHCH



Business Spotlight

4  
19

# Business Spotlight

Interview with  
Eamonn Fitzgerald

## TECHNOLOGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT



## TECHNOLOGY

### Technology and the environment Interview with Eamonn Fitzgerald MEDIUM

**Meredith Hoffmann-Thomson:** Welcome, Eamonn. Your latest English 4.0 column begins with a train journey in Switzerland. Where does it start and where does it end?

**Eamonn Fitzgerald:** It starts in Zermatt and it ends in St Moritz. And this is the famous Glacier Express. It's an eight-hour trip through the Alps mostly used by tourists, but it's one of those marvellous scenic experiences. And I begin my column with this anecdote and this picture because I use the train as a metaphor for all the industrial revolutions, beginning, of course, with the First Industrial Revolution, where the train, which is powered by steam, which is created by burning coal, heating water and turns the wheels.

And I also give an example of a new type of train, in Western Australia, which is completely autonomous. No humans drive these trains. And they deliver iron ore to several ports in Western Australia, and that iron ore is then shipped to China. And, of course, iron ore is used for making steel. And so we have these constant elements of all the industrial revolutions: we have coal, we have iron ore, we have steel. And it shows that modernity is created by

— whether we like it or not — the use of natural resources.

**Hoffmann-Thomson:** Coal, iron, steel, oil... For many people today, these are “dirty” words because of their impact on the environment. But there's an even “dirtier” word, isn't there, that begins with “p” and ends with “c”?

**Fitzgerald:** That's right. The word is “plastic”. And listeners might be interested to know that between the coast of California and Hawaii, there's something called the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. And this is just masses and masses of plastic: bottles, containers, bags and, incredibly, it is three times the size of France. And there's this young Dutch guy, 24 years old, Boyan Slat, and he has created a mechanism which is attached to ships, works a bit like a net, and this will be able to collect the plastic and, in that way, solve some of this problem. Because it looks like, as we go forward, there will be more plastic in the oceans than fish.

**as we go forward**

► in (der) Zukunft

**attach sth. to sth.**

► etw. an etw. befestigen

**garbage patch**

► Müllstrudel

**glacier** ► Gletscher

**guy** ifml.

► Typ, Kerl

**impact**

► Auswirkung(en)

**incredibly**

► unvorstellbar

**iron ore**

► Eisenerz

**marvellous**

► herrlich, großartig

Now interestingly, this is a relatively new phenomenon, because if we go back a generation, when our mothers and fathers went shopping, they never used plastic bags. They used bags made of cloth and it was a Swedish engineer, Sten Gustaf Thulin, who came up with the idea and designed the first plastic shopping bag. And he got a patent for this in the USA in 1965.

And interestingly, one of the most inspiring voices in the new environmental movement is Greta Thunberg, a young woman, a teenager, from Sweden. And I'm not saying that there's any guilt involved in this. We cannot blame Mr Benz or Mr Ford for what cars may or may not have done, and we cannot blame a Swedish engineer for creating something new. But there is this fascinating element, some irony perhaps, that Greta is the figurehead and the face of this dramatic new movement.

**Hoffmann-Thomson:** You mentioned Greta Thunberg there. Does her Fridays for Future movement have a future?

**Fitzgerald:** Well, when the kids are doing nothing but taking selfies, older people and politicians say: "Oh, why aren't they interested in politics?" And then, when they get interested in politics, older people and politicians say: "Ah, but they don't really know what they're talking about." So, what we see with the Fridays for Future movement is an expression of

idealism and it is also an example of something we're seeing recently that I call the triumph of emotion over expertise. If we have, for example, a meeting in a big public space and in one corner, we have Bjørn Lomborg, the Danish climate expert, and in the other corner, we have Greta Thunberg, well Bjørn might have today 100 people listening to him and Greta would have 10,000.

So, while I think it's a very, very good idea, and I am very supportive of their ideals, I also think realism is needed. Because the demand of many in the Fridays for Future movement that we stop using fossil fuel, if we take that to its logical conclusion, what's going to happen? If, for example, a country like Nigeria, with 190 million people, is not allowed to sell its oil, the country is either going to implode or explode.

If we take a very troublesome actor on the global stage like Russia, if it cannot sell its oil, well, what's going to happen there? If Saudi Arabia, which is also a very problematic coun-

#### conclusion

- Schlussfolgerung

#### expertise

- Fachwissen

#### figurehead

- Galions-, Leitfigur

#### fossil fuel

- fossiler Brennstoff

#### guilt

- Schuld(gefühl)

try, if it cannot sell its oil and natural gas, what's going to happen in the Middle East? So, I think, yes, idealism but also realism.

**Hoffmann-Thomson:** Final question. Can the Fourth Industrial Revolution develop new technologies that will help the world to deal with the very real environmental challenges we now face?

**Fitzgerald:** Well, I am a tech optimist, and when we look at many of today's great cities, life in those cities would not be possible without high-rise buildings. But high-rise buildings would not be possible without elevators. And through human ingenuity, we have created skyscrapers and we have created elevators. So, I'm a great believer in our ability to solve problems.

Yes, we create problems all the time, and I talked about the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, for example; human waste and human carelessness has created that. But, with the use of sensors and drones and 5G, we will be able to monitor pollution, we'll be able to monitor food production and we will be able to feed far more people in the history of the world than ever before. And also, we must not shy away from the fact that we will need genetically modified food to feed seven or eight billion people. We have to be realistic again about what technology can do but we must be aware

of its downsides. However, I am very much in favour of, and I believe in, the upsides.

**Hoffmann-Thomson:** Thank you very much, Eamonn.

**Fitzgerald:** You're welcome.

*Business Spotlight 4/2019, pp. 68–69*

#### billion

- Milliarde(n)

#### challenge

- Herausforderung

#### downside

- Kehrseite, negativer Aspekt

#### elevator

- Lift

#### face sth.

- etw. gegenüberstehen

#### genetically modified

- gentechnisch verändert

#### ingenuity

- Erfindergeist

#### natural gas

- Erdgas

#### pollution

- (Umwelt-)Verschmutzung

#### shy away from sth.

- sich vor etw. scheuen

#### upside

- Vorteil, positiver Aspekt

#### you're welcome

- gern geschehen

## IMPRESSUM

**Chefredakteur:** Dr. Ian McMaster

**Geschäftsführende Redakteurin (CvD):** Maja Siroła

**Audioredaktion:** Dr. Ian McMaster (verantw.),

Hildegard Rudolph, Ken Taylor

**Gestaltung:** Georg Lechner

**Fachredaktion:** Margaret Davis, Hildegard Rudolph, Michele Tilgner

**Onlineredaktion:** Susanne Krause

**Übersetzungen:** Ina Sinning

**Produktion:** Dorle Matussek

**Produktmanagement:** Ignacio Rodriguez-Mancheño

**Anzeigenvermarktung (Chief Sales Officer):**

Áki Hardarson (DIE ZEIT, V.i.S.d.P.)

## SPRECHER:

**Meredith Hoffmann-Thomson (US):** Anmoderation

**Eamonn Fitzgerald (IRE):** Technology

**Produktion und Ton:** Karl Braun

**Tonstudio:** Cebra Studio, 82194 Gröbenzell

**Titelillustration:** Si-Gal/iStock.com

**GEMA**



## EAMONN FITZGERALD

writes daily at [www.eamonn.com](http://www.eamonn.com).  
He uses social media to build  
relationships for organizations.  
Contact: [eamonn@eamonn.com](mailto:eamonn@eamonn.com)

## Verlag und Redaktion

Spotlight Verlag GmbH

Kistlerhofstr. 172,

81379 München

Tel. (089) 8 56 81-0

[www.business-spotlight.de](http://www.business-spotlight.de)

## Geschäftsführer:

Jan Henrik Groß

Amtsgericht München

HRB 179611

USt-IdNr. DE 265 973 410

Der Spotlight Verlag ist ein  
Tochterunternehmen der  
Zeitverlag Gerd Bucerius  
GmbH.

## Kundenservice:

[abo@spotlight-verlag.de](mailto:abo@spotlight-verlag.de)

## Redaktion:

[business@spotlight-verlag.de](mailto:business@spotlight-verlag.de)

# BUSINESS ENGLISCH IM PAKET.

8 Ausgaben des Sprachmagazins + Übungsheft und Audio-Trainer.



## IHRE VORTEILE:

Für bestehende Abonnenten  
auch als **UPGRADE** erhältlich

Für Sie zur Wahl: als **PRINT-  
ODER DIGITALAUSGABE**

**LESEN, HÖREN,  
ÜBEN**

▶ **JETZT GLEICH ONLINE BESTELLEN UNTER:**

**BUSINESS-SPOTLIGHT.DE/PAKET**

Oder telefonisch **+49 (0) 89/121 407 10** mit Bestell-Nr.: Print 1665270 | Digital 1667308

**Spotlight** Verlag