A fourfold approach to environmental challenges by both East and West


This Version is available at:
http://hdl.handle.net/10419/112092

Terms of use:
Documents in EconStor may be saved and copied for your personal and scholarly purposes.

You are not to copy documents for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the documents publicly, to make them publicly available on the internet, or to distribute or otherwise use the documents in public.

If the documents have been made available under an Open Content Licence (especially Creative Commons Licences), you may exercise further usage rights as specified in the indicated licence.
Das nachfolgende Dokument wurde zum Zweck der kostenfreien Onlinebereitstellung digitalisiert am Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung gGmbH (WZB). Das WZB verfügt über die entsprechenden Nutzungsrechte. Sollten Sie sich durch die Onlineveröffentlichung des Dokuments wider Erwarten dennoch in Ihren Rechten verletzt sehen, kontaktieren Sie bitte das WZB postalisch oder per E-Mail:
Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung gGmbH
Bibliothek und wissenschaftliche Information
Reichpietschufer 50
D-10785 Berlin
E-Mail: bibliothek@wzb.eu

The following document was digitized at the Berlin Social Science Center (WZB) in order to make it publicly available online.
The WZB has the corresponding rights of use. If, against all possibility, you consider your rights to be violated by the online publication of this document, please contact the WZB by sending a letter or an e-mail to:
Berlin Social Science Center (WZB)
Library and Scientific Information
Reichpietschufer 50
D-10785 Berlin
e-mail: bibliothek@wzb.eu

Digitalisierung und Bereitstellung dieser Publikation erfolgten im Rahmen des Retrodigitalisierungsprojektes OA 1000+. Weitere Informationen zum Projekt und eine Liste der ca. 1 500 digitalisierten Texte sind unter http://www.wzb.eu/de/bibliothek/serviceangebote/open-access/oa-1000 verfügbar.

This text was digitizing and published online as part of the digitizing-project OA 1000+. More about the project as well as a list of all the digitized documents (ca. 1 500) can be found at http://www.wzb.eu/en/library/services/open-access/oa-1000.
A FOURFOLD APPROACH TO ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES BY BOTH EAST AND WEST

Udo E. SIMONIS
member, UN Committee for Development Planning; International Social Science Council

It was Arthur Schopenhauer who defined happiness as a function of expectation and effort: to find happiness, one has the option of lowering one's expectations or else increasing one's effort. Is this what we mean when we speak of the human dimensions of global environmental change? And if so, what are the implications for social science?

Differences certainly exist in the perception of the environmental crisis, and scientists themselves may be an «environmental problem» for non-scientists. The public has become aware of the nature of environmental problems and, because the public favours holistic values and approaches, demands action. Scientists, priding themselves in their rationality, propose changing economic and technology policies by measures such as «resource taxes» and «emission charges» in order to deal with environmental pressures.

All of us — the public, natural scientists, and social scientists — agree that more research and more knowledge are needed, not only to cope with environmental change but with factors such as East-West cooperation.

There are four areas in which the East can certainly help the West advance global knowledge:

— improving the environmental information base (indicators to show what is urgent, what is not); and
— understanding the history of environmental hazards (what we can learn from past experience)
— new evaluation methods (including impact assessment)
— new planning methods (reconciling behaviour with awareness), and
— sectoral and geographic analysis (energy is well known, transport much less; chemistry in eastern Europe is little known).

Social science research needs to focus, too, on the specific discrepancies suggested by these four points, for understanding the sum-total of their significance is what might be called environmental ethics. So research on environmental policy in general is much indicated for the future, especially in terms of the eventual combining of eastern Europe with the European Community.

Alexander King is a staunch advocate of an East-West initiative on energy efficiency, and I would support this, as I would support detailed studies on the effects of large-scale urbanization and the transfer of «dirty» products through export-import channels.

The Standing Committee of the International Social Science Council views combined studies of these kinds as generating extensive knowledge on the human dimensions of global change — how expanding demography, in other words, interacts with the globe's natural systems. Such results should be a true reflection, therefore, of improved collaboration by both social and natural scientists.