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## A fourfold approach to environmental challenges by both East and West

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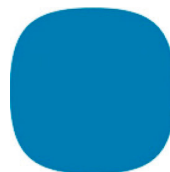
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# A FOURFOLD APPROACH TO ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES BY BOTH EAST AND WEST

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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. ■