



Bonn Symposium 2009

Sustainable Development
in Times of Crises
Opposition or Opportunity?



Workshop E

From Research to Policy Action – Ways towards Enhanced Sustainability

Organised by: European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI)

Chair: Dr Andreas Rechkemmer (UNCCD)

Report: **Charline Köhler**, Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf

The workshop discussed constructive ways to bring in research knowledge into policy-making.

Key questions were:

- How to organize research in order to strengthen the link between research and policymaking?
- How to present scientific knowledge so as to make it more accessible to the policy community of state and non-state actors?
- How to act on the basis of the current knowledge stock ensuring that all options for eventually further policy corrections are kept open and new insights can be fed into ongoing policy processes?

Dr **Cornelia Nauen** (DG Research, European Commission) asked how to use the knowledge that we produce for an alternative course of action with regard to demographic as well as environmental challenges. She estimated that 80% of our knowledge has been generated during the last forty years and that we therefore are not fully capable to absorb all this new knowledge. Beyond the necessity to organize knowledge it is also salient to consider its social implications. According to Dr Nauen we should also pay more respect to traditional knowledge and connect the local stock of knowledge to the best scientific solutions. Moreover, with the differentiation of knowledge experts tend to overstate the relevance of their expertise instead of considering reality's complexity and, thus, the interdependencies of knowledge disciplines. Therefore Dr Nauen referred to new requirements with the rising importance of transnational cooperation: "We have to be sensitive to each other and able to translate between different realities respectfully". When asked about the role governmental and intergovernmental organizations should play for organizing research, Dr Nauen replied that short-term, solution oriented research demanded by governments often leads to perverted results. Rather, the questions to be dealt with in research should be generated by disputes inside the scientific community.

Dr **Inge Kaul** (Hertie School of Governance, Berlin) postulated that governments still have not adapted to the fundamental changes of the world order brought about by globalization: "We have left behind the Westphalian system of sovereign nation states and separate national economies, but we still have a widespread non-understanding of the new order." According to Dr Kaul governments behave as if policy-making is still nationally bounded: "When states meet on international arenas, state representatives act like private actors do on the national level." Against this background Dr Kaul advocated responsible sovereignty as a new concept of sovereignty. States should be made accountable for the

spill-over effects they create. In this way, the meaning of national interests should be redefined. The costs of cooperation should no longer be counted as aid, but rather as investment. The state should accept the role of an intermediary between external expectations and national concerns. Dr Kaul suggested that a leadership group out of the UN General Assembly should formulate a notion of responsible sovereignty, not to be confused with R2P, and thus launch a commitment also by other countries to this notion of sovereignty.

Nick Perkins (Institute of Development Studies, Brighton) asked how to strengthen the policy-practice-research nexus and how to make research relevant. In order to maximize the impact of research he mentioned the importance of sticky messages, the concept of networking (or knit-working – as he called it) among identified knowledge champions and transmitters as well as strategic opportunism in the presentation of ideas. According to Mr Perkins it was important to focus on sustainable relationships instead of widening only the distribution of research. Finally, any assessment of research impact should keep in mind that probably only one in ten research projects will deliver transformatory results.

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