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(Vortragsmanuskript)

Scenarios of Human Driving Forces. The Role of Alternative Lifestyles

- Some Preliminary Notes and Some Results of a Recent Study -

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Stern's Proposal on the Human Dimensions

If one reads Paul Stern's, Oran Young's and Daniel Druckman's famous text book on the foundation of the international human dimensions program "Global Environmental Change – Understanding the Human Dimensions" carefully there seems to be a certain gap in regarding societal alternatives to an existing, in the last decades grown up, way of living – a way gone at least in the industrialized countries "of the North" but a way also on the agenda of many developing countries. The mentioned text is very clear and lucid and also still actual at present on the one side, however on the other side this gap seems to prevent necessary research on (utopistic but also on existing) alternatives to the present way of life.

Why Alternatives?

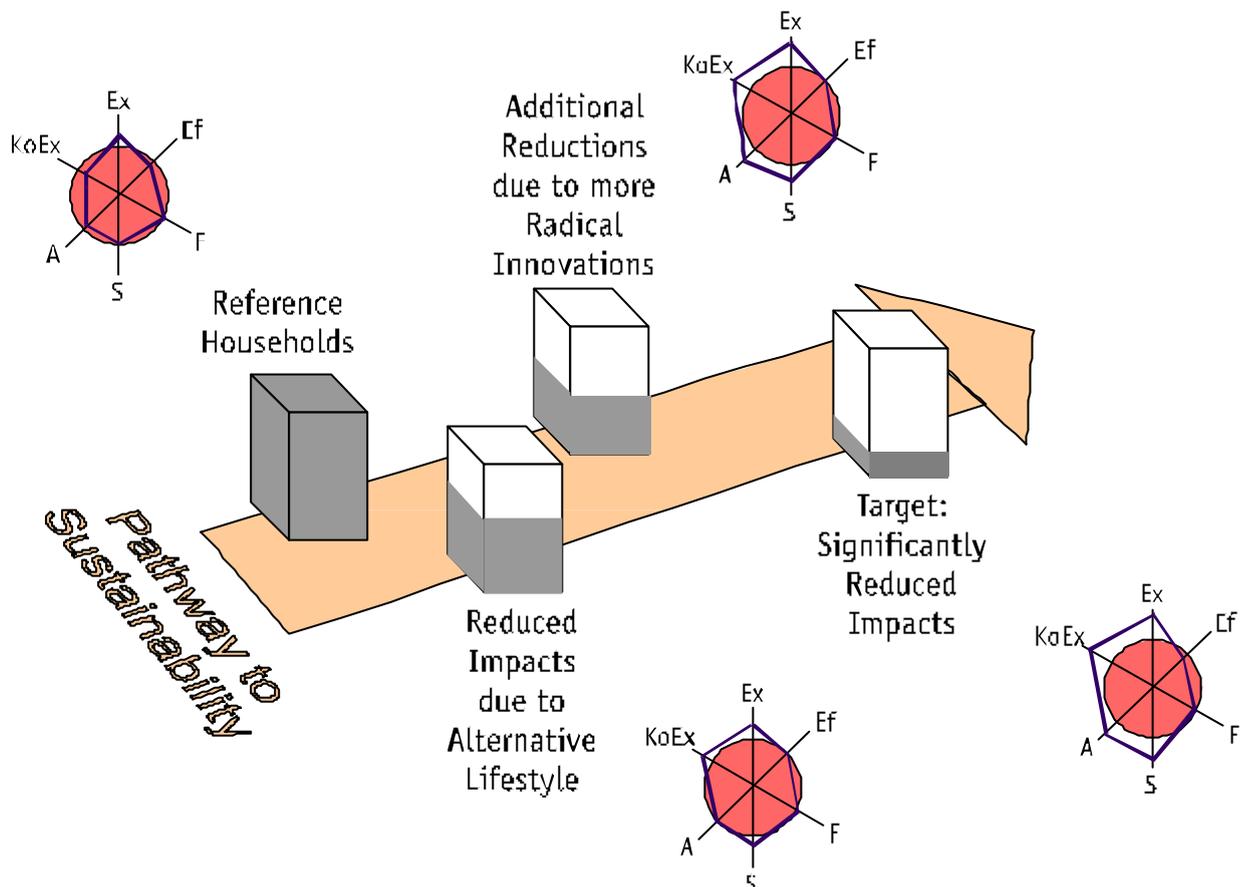
Alternatives, their characteristics are described below, are an important argument in the discussion about problem solutions in the context of global change because they offer a sharp contrast to existing "main-stream" processes and developments. And this because of radically different attitudes of their participants and consequences of these different attitudes on the level of energy and material fluxes within the supply systems.

In general, such alternatives are experimental in character and anticipate (to some extend) future, more sustainable social arrangements

The advantage is that we can refer to existing (and in part surviving for decades) projects

Characteristic of Scenarios

It is not an mere coincidence that scenario techniques provide now a strong basis for research in the global change area. Many of the researchers have recognized very early that



we have to deal in this area with many uncertainties, sudden changes, bifurcations etc. where it is helpful to look for descriptions of different paths of development and analyse several of such possible pathways simultaneously.

A. Hammond says in „Which World“ about the „Power of Scenarios“: *Scenarios are not prognoses or predictions – they rather refer to crossroads at which change processes could become real.*

With the help of scenarios we can doubt attitudes that are so deeply rooted that we are not aware of them – therefore they help us to leave beaten tracks ... (and) enable us to adjust to a future which will certainly be different from today's reality.

(my own translation from the German edition of the book – sorry for that)

Therefore there seems to be more or less an obligation to question existing trends, to experiment with “trend breaks”, and to look for alternative modes of development.

Our Object of Investigation

That is what we want to do with respect to the dynamics of consumption pattern, one important aspect of human driving forces in the analysis of global change – because of severe consequences for resources depletion, environmental stress, social inequalities etc.

In our study we deal with communes and eco-villages.

Communes, in the international literature titled "intentional communities" are characterized by Shenker in the following way:

- People live together voluntary
- At least 5 persons
- In part common burse / "common economy"

In essence, an intentional community is a group of people coming together in a place they create to live in some particular way. The variety of intentional communities is nearly infinite: some are religious, some are not; politics run the gamut; they are large and small, rural and urban, ecologically minded and materialistic. They include monasteries, communes, anarchic squatter houses, cooperative housing, co-housing, kibbutzim, Christian activist communities, Shaker communities, and many other kinds of groups.

(Luc Reid, 23 April 1999)

The Relevance of that Mode of Living

No question, in contemporary industrial societies that mode of living is more or less marginalized (in Germany far less than 1 per thousand)

A recent survey revealed around 3.700 projects comprising around 53.000 people in Germany living in such type of "households".

However, societal dynamics seldom follows (in the long run) a linear line of development: trends are changing, (cultural) cycles and waves occur, the future will be different from the present ...

Referring to that openness, some authors (like Schehr) refer to catastrophe theory to talk about possibilities of societal change with alternative lifestyles as important sources for change

The Object of Investigation as Related to Sustainability

Our starting hypothesis was: Due to the very special personnel composition of the communes and due to structural properties (like integration of commercial undertakings – food production, small manufactures – and common use of devices – automobiles, kitchen) a significantly lower impact on the environment results (compared to the average household, for example) and therefore a significant contribution to a more sustainable society can be attributed to the communes projects.

The root of the close connection between intentional communities and sustainability efforts has two elements: There are the individual attitudes of the members of the community and then there are the community's organization principles or structural essentials.

There are at least four structural elements that characterize intentional communities and determine their relationship to sustainability. Some of these elements may also characterize ordinary households, but only in a rudimentary form, or as a side effect without much societal impetus.

The first structural element is optimization and resource sharing.

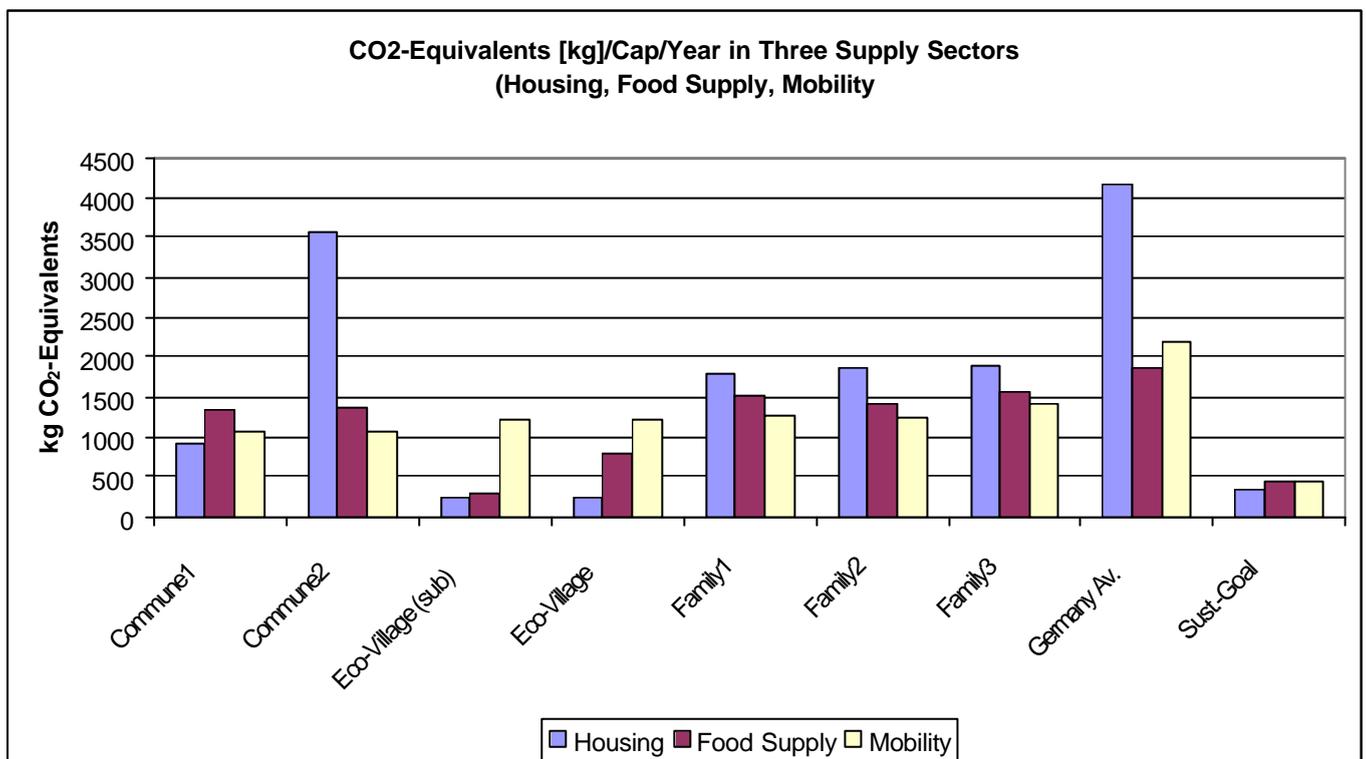
The second structural element is closing cycles.

The third structural element grows naturally out of the second: It is a reliance on regional products rather than products from farther afield.

The fourth structural element is responsibility. Holding property in common demands that people be more responsible with regard to everyday resource use, waste disposal, the environmental conditions in the community, and so forth, than they would have to be otherwise.

We can illustrate that hypothesis in a graph where the ultimate sustainability goal is remained open, however the direction - where to proceed - can be shown. And the idea is that the analyzed projects have already gone some steps in the right direction.

Methodological Background



As well quantitative as also qualitative aspects are analysed:

- **Method 1:** Combining models about life-style dynamics with calculation of greenhouse gas emissions ("eco-balances", life-cycle assessment).

Numerical results help to discuss systematically further possibilities for improvement and where we stand with respect to the target that has to be approached.

- **Method 2:** Evaluation using Bossel's Orientors Approach.

In addition to numerical results a more qualitative evaluation method is applied in a second step. There, six dimensions covering aspects like adaptability, security, efficiency etc. are used to assess the state of a system, in our case production structures and consumption patterns.

Preliminary Results

On the whole, the hypothesis can be proved as correct: Communes show important differences compared with smaller households and these differences often express some

progress with respect to a convergence to sustainability. However, there are also counterexamples, which fortunately are not questioning the hypothesis as such.

Example 1: Mobiliy

Not significantly lower mobility is given in the communes – however the total environmental impact is much lower. That difference is due to a divergent mix of means to realize mobility (a higher share of public transportation system, bicycles, etc.) and the mentioned structural element: common use of resources- in the case of mobility 50 people share 7 cars – with benefits, for example, with respect to (resource-related) deduction of manufacturing costs.

Example 2: Food

The food supply differs at lot between the observed systems due to special preferences and local circumstances. However, the analysed communes are not living on a low standard and cannot be classified as renunciation groups. Neither related to mobility, nor food supply (amount an quality), nor regarding other supply sectors they have a significantly lower consumption. But also with food supply there is a reduced environmental impact as compared to people living in average households in Germany. Sources of reduction here are: Reliance on local products (which reduces transport), integration of production into the commune itself, a central kitchen which provides most of the meals (with energetically optimised devices) etc.

A note on the included sustainability level: Discussions from environmental science (under the premise of the environmental space framework) give us a yearly limit to greenhouse gas emissions of around 1.8 tons per capita. In our study we have documented around 80 % of consumption therefore we can share out 1.4 tons to the analysed supply sectors

Lifestyles as a Refinement of Cultural Types

To come back to the application of scenarios: With the results about possible and existing alternatives we have a powerful tool to build scenarios in a systematical way. The idea of cultural types (which was developed by Wildavsky and others and adopted by the TARGETS team) expresses a similar attempt – however as an artificial classification scheme – even in there seems to be some empirical evidence that such orientations are part of the social and political world.

An interesting interrelationship exists between cultural types and Bossel's orientors scheme (after adding two further types). The particular types correspond to one of the orientors dimensions as the preferred or primary goal, the essential for organizing the social group's own life.

Fatalist	Existence-oriented
Organizer	Effectivity-oriented
Individualist	Freedom-oriented
Hierarchist	Security-oriented

Innovator	Adaptability-oriented
Egalitarian	Coexistence-oriented

Scenarios Building with Lifestyle Types

To sum up:

Without any doubt Cultural Types are one possibility to bring into focus a variety of lifestyles with – on a first level different views on nature and the environment, and – on a second one – a different shaping of consumption patterns. Therefore, they can be used to draw a helpful multi-faceted picture of future consumption situations in scenarios of future development as are used in many of the contemporary global change studies.

However, the method relies on a rather artificial classification and needs an empirical backing.

Such an empirical backing is given by analyses of life-style types (as used in marketing studies, empirical social research, correlations between income, education and attitudes). However we quest for a supplementation of these schemes by an analysis of real and possible alternatives in lifestyle, in living, in economic activities, in social and individual relationships, in order to produce “realistic” contrast scenarios. With such an empirical backing and its supplement we will be able to improve scenario definition and evaluation – a really decisive problem in global change research.