

POLITICAL ECOLOGY AND SUSTAINABILITY

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**POLITICAL ECOLOGY AND
SUSTAINABILITY**

**A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF
THE HEINRICH BOELL FOUNDATION'S
PROJECTS ABROAD**

Edited by the Heinrich Boell Foundation

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FOREWORD

This study was commissioned not quite two years before the World Summit in Johannesburg – the global conference in the summer of 2002 that hopes to constitute a breakthrough for the model of sustainable development, which is a focus of the Heinrich Boell Foundation’s international cooperation on environmental policy.

The goal of the study was to analyze the structures of the Heinrich Boell Foundation’s partners in its ecological activities in terms of their framework conditions, policy fields and strategies, both in the South and in the transformation countries of Eastern Europe. It thus offers opportunities for reflection as well: for the Foundation itself, for its partners, and for other institutions working on international cooperation.

The study was carried out at the same time as another program organized by the Heinrich Boell Foundation, involving preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg and designed to strengthen civil-society participation in the international preparation process, as well as to provide new impulses for the continued development of the international discourse on sustainability. Examples of this include the Jo’burg Memo (www.joburgmemo.de) and the Foundation’s support for the Women’s Action Agenda for a Healthy and Peaceful Planet 2015.

This study includes the partner organizations’ activities in the Rio+10 Program. But it focuses primarily on the societal framework conditions under which the partners develop their specific political strategies, and what effects and results they have achieved. A broad-based study of this type cannot claim to be a comprehensive analysis of effectiveness, but it does describe a number of experiences gained in various policy fields. These “lessons learned” may serve as the points of departure for additional analyses and monitoring processes.

The results of the study are to be used for an intensive dialogue among the partners during and primarily after the *World Summit* in Johannesburg. Following the conclusion of the Rio+10 process, the key is to continue to develop the strategic dialogue on the regional and global levels. Blending local and global political approaches was tested for the first time in the Rio+10 process, and was taken up by the partner organizations in quite varying manners. The Heinrich Boell Foundation continues to face the challenge of developing a common political agenda in the North-South political dialogue.

This is complemented by the new challenge of increasing the significance of the ecological dimension in the worldwide debate on shaping globalization. For example, ecological issues and the paradigm shift from copycat to sustainable development were integrated into the debate on the UN Conference on Development Financing (Monterrey) only at a very late date and in a very limited scope.

We would like to thank the three consultants for their outstanding work. The entire process of evaluation, with its specific participatory methodology, placed great demands on all participants. Thanks also go to all colleagues within the Heinrich Boell Foundation, both in Germany and abroad, as well as to the participating project partners. One conclusion of the study is clear: we have an impressive panorama of competent partners as well as innovative project approaches of which we are rightly proud!

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Ten years following the World Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the conclusion is clear: despite a large number of initiatives at the grassroots level and approaches to policy reforms in specific departments, we have not made major progress toward worldwide sustainable development, as we were charged to do by the World Summit in 1992. The ever-worsening global ecological crises, such as climate change, desertification and the loss of biodiversity, show that we are far from finding a solution to ecological problems. The Rio Conference did result in increased participation by civil-society forces. But powerful interest constellations still stand in the way of an ecological transformation in politics, society and economics, as does the non-sustainable lifestyle in the countries of the North and elite population groups in the South and the East.

The World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD, Rio+10) in August and September 2002 in Johannesburg hopes to provide new impetus and create a political will for transforming the globalization process and making it sustainable. The Heinrich Boell has Foundation participated intensively in the preparation process, with the goal of returning the issue to the top of the political agenda. In this context, the Foundation and its partners are currently in a process of reflection, assessment and further development of their concepts in the field of ecology and sustainability.

The Heinrich Boell Foundation functions as an environmental policy actor both within Germany and abroad, thereby following the concept of “political ecology” in that it makes environmental topics into political issues. With the Foundation’s support, environmental organizations, civil-society forces and political institutions have been searching for models, alternative approaches and political regulatory instruments to counter the problems on a local, national and global level, and to develop approaches to solutions.

Approximately 30% of the budget of the Heinrich Boell Foundation's international activities is spent annually for activities in the issue complex titled "Ecology and Sustainability." The supported projects and programs, as well as short-term activities for the most part carried out by the regional offices, are significant examples of environmental policy activities and exploratory learning by civil-society forces. The purpose of this study is to undertake a documentation and comparative analysis of this extensive treasure of experiences and innovative approaches, from practical environmental protection to the development of constructive alternatives; from protest against major projects to influence on law and policy.

A total of 67 projects were studied. In addition, 242 smaller measures, which were primarily carried out by 12 regional offices, were included in the analysis. Between 1997 and 2000, a total sum of approximately DM 18.6 million (approx. € 9.5 million) flowed into these 67 projects, of which approximately half (approx. DM 9 million or € 4.6 million) went to Latin America. An additional approx. DM3 million (approx. € 1.5 million) were spent annually for the smaller-scale ecological activities undertaken by the 12 regional offices.

The projects that were funded in the past years in the regions of Central, Southern and Eastern Europe, Thailand, the Middle East, Western Africa, the Horn of Africa, Southern Africa, Central and South America, and on the international level, have been subjected to a detailed analysis to systematize and comparatively evaluate substantive, organizational and strategic approaches and experiences, as well as to define the needs for additional learning and changes in future activities.

Core questions included: Has the Heinrich Boell Foundation thus far been successful in implementing the concept of "political ecology" in its programs? In what policy fields and with what strategies are the partner organizations active? Where are the strengths and weaknesses of the programs, and were do the partner organizations

- 15 encounter obstacles? How can the Foundation and its partners contribute to overcoming these in the future?

The study concludes by identifying points of departure for a discussion of how existing potential as well as concepts and strategies may be further developed, so that the effective but isolated initiatives of today develop into real progress toward the fundamental “ecologizing” of societal structures on a global scale.

The authors would like to express their thanks to all those who participated in completing this study and who contributed to its success with their active listening, patient responses, explanations and reflections. This analysis would not have been possible without them.

Bonn, Spring 2002

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