



CAN SOCIAL JUSTICE BE ACHIEVED GIVEN THE THREAT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE?

SKOLL WEEK

Ecosystem Event

April 9, 2018, 4-7 pm

Environmental Change Institute, Gilbert Room
Oxford University Centre for the Environment
South Parks Road, Oxford

Background:

In 1990, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published its first assessment report. It warned that human emissions were substantially increasing greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere, bringing the threat of global warming on a scale unprecedented for human civilization. The following year, the Rio Earth Summit highlighted unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, while putting in place mechanisms intended to preserve biological diversity and combat climate change and desertification. 25 years later, the environmental challenges facing the planet have intensified. The planet faces a convergent and interacting combination of challenges in energy, water and food security, ecosystem degradation, and climate change. The impacts are spilling over into all aspects of society and the economy, through resource scarcity, the impacts of natural disasters, forced migration, and conflict. There is potential for a coming together of multiple crises over the next 10-20 years that only intensifies in the years beyond, but this potential is heterogeneous across the world.

The response by human society to the intensifying threats facing the planet appears to be significantly lacking in scale, urgency, inspiration, and leadership. The reasons for this are complex – obstacles to sustainable management of the Earth's systems abound in governance, society, and the economy. Decisions are being made with insufficient attention to the scientific evidence about the environment, its complex interrelationship with society and the economy, and the potential for systemic changes in the future. Through a combination of ignorance, apathy, denial, short-sighted self-interest, and lack of scientific evidence at spatial and temporal scales relevant for decision making, the Earth's life support systems risk becoming irreversibly over-exploited. Avoiding catastrophic consequences of global environmental change is a complex problem to which there are no simple solutions. It will involve myriad difficult choices for which there are no obvious right answers – just contested and negotiated trade-offs and compromises. Context matters and sustainable outcomes will be achieved through sequences of

difficult choices – decision pathways that have to be adapted in the light of new knowledge and changing circumstances. Making those choices through unreformed decision-making processes without the benefit of interdisciplinary scientific evidence is a dangerous gamble. Governments and entities working on human development and poverty alleviation, and social justice need to incorporate interdisciplinary science in their decision-making, as well as a willingness to innovate their approach and strategies based on evidence. As we all work to improve our management strategies for coping with future environmental change, we also need to become a cohesive force that creates the appropriate conditions for the process of change that is required to see progress in the environmental front.

Organizers:

This event is co-hosted by:

The **Environmental Change Institute** was founded in 1991 in Oxford University in England "to organize and promote interdisciplinary research on the nature, causes and impact of environmental change and to contribute to the development of management strategies for coping with future environmental change."

Earth Day Network is the largest recruiter of supporters to the environmental movement and is looking to engage 50,000 organization globally in 2020, the 50th anniversary of the first Earth Day, to once again elevate environmental issues to the top of the political, social and financial agendas.

Agenda:

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| 16:00 pm | Registration |
| 16:15 pm | Welcome remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr. Friederike E. L. Otto, Deputy Director, Environmental Change Institute (ECI)• Valeria Merino, VP for Global Earth Day, Earth Day Network (EDN) |
| 16:30 pm | Panel: Can Better Environmental Management Improve the Return on Investment on Human Development Alleviation and Social Justice? |

Water Security for the Poor

Panelist: Dr. Peter Walton

Living in poverty often means a struggle for water security. The panelist will discuss the findings of the research focusing on understanding changing risks of drought in Ethiopia and Kenya and the wider east African region which are relevant for scaling up and adapting to other countries and contexts.

Improving the governance of fisheries, forests and land.

Panelist: Dr. Emilie Parry

The panelist will discuss different forms of community-based natural resource management and the role of intermediary organizations that can help build trust between resource users and government actors.

The true cost of food: can we afford it and how do we change it?

Panelist: Dr. John Ingram

The panelist will discuss the true cost of our food once its external impacts on nature, society, and individual health are taken into account. Can we afford to continue to pay these hidden costs? Can taking these externalities into account bring about change in the way giant food companies operate and in the way we make our own food choices?

The exceptional value of intact forest ecosystems

Panelist: Dr. Robert Dunford

The panelist will argue that retaining the integrity of intact forest ecosystems should be a central component of proactive environmental strategies, alongside current efforts aimed at halting deforestation and promoting reforestation. How does this global need collide with national policies to support the poor?

Moderator

- Dr. Friederike E. L. Otto, Deputy Director, Environmental Change Institute (ECI)

Q&A

17:30 pm

Break

17:45 pm

Can social entrepreneurial organizations take advantage of the 50th celebration of Earth Day in 2020 to elevate environmental issues in the global agenda? What type of global intervention could turn the tide to prevent catastrophic global environmental changes that threaten their work?

Conversation in small groups and open discussion in a plenary session.

Moderator: Valeria Merino, VP for Global Earth Day

18:30

Mobilizing the World for 2020

Participants will be given 15 minutes to answer a short online questionnaire about key things they learned from the event and ways in which they would like to continue this conversation leading to action and commitments for 2020.

18:45

Closing remarks