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**Franz Gatzweiler**

## **The Changing Nature of Economic Value**

Indigenous Forest Garden Values  
in Kalimantan, Indonesia

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## Preface of the Editors

What is the value of nature? In their famous study Constanza et al. (1997) estimate the economic value of the world's ecosystem services and natural capital to average US \$ 33 trillion per annum, compared to the global annual national product of US \$ 18 trillion. The authors conclude that their study "makes abundantly clear that ecosystem services provide an important proportion of the total contribution to human welfare on this planet. We must begin to give the natural capital stock that produces this services adequate weight in the decision-making process, otherwise current and continued future human welfare may drastically suffer. (p 259)" Nobody would really disagree with this statement but some may argue that the concept of value used in this study is too narrow, and that the value of nature is much more than just a number. Nature and its protection may belong to the fundamental values of a society, like freedom, justice, prosperity and peace (e.g., Kasper and Streit 1998: 70-89). Advocates of this view may argue that for preventing ecological degradation nature has to become part of the fundamental values of society instead of just assigning a monetary value to it. The question of the value of nature, therefore, also raises the opposite question: What is the nature of values?

Like head and tail of one coin, the value of nature and the nature of values build the theme of this book by Franz Gatzweiler. The study develops interesting insights by starting from the question , which seems rather simple at first glance, whether contingent valuation methods could be applied to value tropical rain forests in indigenous societies of Dayak people in Kalimantan, Indonesia. Problems of applying this technique in the cultural context of Dayak people leads Franz Gatzweiler to very fundamental questions regarding the concept of value in different disciplines, the interaction between values and culture, and different valuation techniques. The discussion shows that values and valuation techniques are culturally defined and depend on fundamental institutions of a society. These fundamental institutions, however, are not constant but have been changing slowly, and with them also the value concepts have changed. Contingent valuation methods were developed in Western societies where values are mainly, but not solely, expressed on markets. Valuation techniques for non-market goods, therefore, try to simulate markets to value these goods and services. Applying these methods to other societies may, however, lead to inconsistencies and contradictions. In the context of Dayak society, Franz Gatzweiler discovered that contingent valuation methods can be applied, but the results do not enable us to understand the behaviour and values of the Dayak people. The values of the Dayak society are, according to Franz Gatzweiler, better understood by examining the institutions that are developed at the interface between nature and society in order to achieve sustainability. He

characterizes the Dayak society as a moral economy where the values of nature are embedded in its culture, tradition and norms. Applying contingent valuation methods in such an economy certainly leads to some monetary value but the consistency and reliability of this number is highly questionable. Franz Gatzweiler concludes that we have to treat values as culturally defined ones, and that valuation techniques should take this fact into account to achieve reliable results.

In view of this conclusion, it is important to keep in mind that market economies are never purely market-oriented but also moral economies that are based on some fundamental values. Valuation studies of whatever kind are therefore part of a process of institutional change that shapes the fundamental values of modern societies. Nature protection is increasingly conceived of as an important element of the fundamental values of modern societies that are more and more reflected in their norms and institutions. Modern societies may therefore have much in common with traditional indigenous societies, e.g. the changing nature of economic values. Looking for solutions for sustainable development, modern societies may even learn from indigenous societies – this is the most interesting and fascinating evidence that is revealed in this study by Franz Gatzweiler.

Berlin, October 2003

Volker Beckmann & Konrad Hagedorn

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Next, my thoughts are with the Dayak people of Mabit, Sg. Daging, Seturan, and other villages in West and East Kalimantan. This book would not have been accomplished without their hospitality and patience in answering so many questions. Special thanks go to Pak Nonor from Sungei Daging, who took me on numerous walks through the forest gardens of his village and explained every possible and impossible function of the plants and their components during endless evening talks on the terrace of our wooden bungalow. It has often been stressed that indigenous societies have a lot to learn from modern societies and that modern societies have an obligation to transfer knowledge and technology to those societies with limited means to achieve development. Modern societies in general and economists in particular, however, have a lot to learn from indigenous societies. This is not in praise of wilderness or the glorification of the past, when we managed to live in a sustainable way for centuries on not much more than subsistence level. What modern society can learn from many indigenous societies today is that, unless our Western culture's underlying worldviews and belief and value systems change, we will continue to have a destructive impact on nature and, ultimately, on ourselves. From our fellow man living as a hunter-gatherer or subsistence farmer in the forests of Borneo we can learn that "economic man" -- as typified in Western societies -- is for the most part nothing short of fiction.

Dr. Tom Tomich from the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF), now the World Agroforestry Centre, supported my work in the field during my frequent stays in Indonesia and during my stay in Bogor. As research fellow at ICRAF, I had the chance to profit from the work of a professional and very dedicated team of researchers. Eric Penot, who at that time established field trials for rubber intercropping in Sanggau, West Kalimantan, introduced me to several village leaders and farmers whom I was able to interview.

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Berlin, August 2003

Franz Gatzweiler

# Contents

Preface of the Editors .....	v
Acknowledgements .....	vii
Contents .....	ix
List of Figures .....	xiii
List of Tables.....	xv
Abbreviations and Translations.....	xvii
<b>1 The Changing Nature of Economic Value .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Reductionism and Holism in Science.....	6
1.2 Mainstream Economic Theory - Assumptions and Objections.....	9
1.3 The Physis of Economics .....	14
1.4 Philosophical Aspects of Physics and the Change of Paradigms.....	16
<b>2 Reductionism, Holism and the Fuzziness of Real-Life Economics –     (Meta-) Physical Aspects of Value in Economics .....</b>	<b>19</b>
2.1 Introduction .....	19
2.2 Thermodynamics and Economic Value .....	26
<b>3 Culture and Economic Value .....</b>	<b>33</b>
3.1 Introduction .....	33
3.2 Complex Adaptive Systems, Cognition, and Values .....	34
3.3 Currents in Economic Thought .....	38
3.3.1 The Coevolutionary Perspective.....	38
3.3.2 The Systems Perspective.....	39
3.3.3 Analogy Thinking .....	40
3.3.4 The Humanistic Perspective .....	43
3.4 From Natural to Social Value - The Compulsive Shift? .....	45
3.4.1 Natural Value .....	46
3.4.2 Social Value .....	52
3.5 Belief and Knowledge Systems.....	59
3.5.1 Judeo-Christian Traditions of Belief.....	60
3.5.2 Buddhist Traditions of Belief .....	62

3.5.3	Traditional Ecological Knowledge .....	63
3.5.4	Dayak Economic Traditions .....	66
3.6	An Evolutionary Perspective on Dayak Value Systems .....	70
3.7	The Evolution of Value Systems.....	73
<b>4</b>	<b>From Market to Social Process Valuation .....</b>	<b>77</b>
4.1	Overview and Discussion of Environmental Valuation Methods.....	78
4.1.1	Market Approaches.....	79
4.1.2	Stated Preference Methods .....	84
4.1.3	Social Process Approaches for Valuation.....	92
4.2	Selecting a Technique for Decision-Making.....	96
<b>5</b>	<b>Foundations and Limitations of Market Valuation .....</b>	<b>101</b>
5.1	Compensation Variation and Equivalent Variation .....	102
5.2	The Contingent Valuation Method (CVM).....	104
5.3	The Cost-Benefit Analysis .....	107
5.4	Problem Areas in Cost-Benefit Analysis.....	108
5.5	Discounting and Ethics.....	109
5.6	Complexity and Uncertainty.....	113
<b>6</b>	<b>An Investigation into Tropical Forest Garden Values .....</b>	<b>115</b>
6.1	Money and the Morality of Exchange.....	118
6.2	Global and Indonesian Forest Resources .....	122
6.2.1	Deforestation and Institutional Disintegration.....	124
6.2.2	Indonesian Land Use Policy vs. Dayak Land Tenure and Property Rights .....	125
6.2.3	Building Institutions for Sustainable Tropical Forest Development.....	127
<b>7</b>	<b>The Rubber Forest Gardens of Sanggau, West Kalimantan, Indonesia .....</b>	<b>131</b>
7.1	Introduction .....	131
7.2	Location and Description of the Research Villages .....	133
7.3	Methodology.....	136
7.4	The Ecology and Management of the Rubber Forest Garden System.....	137
7.4.1	Composition, Structure, and Functions.....	137

7.4.2	Management.....	141
7.4.3	Habitual Patterns of Consumption.....	142
7.4.4	Economic Transactions and Prices .....	143
7.4.5	Determinants of Value .....	145
7.4.6	Values and Uncertainty.....	146
7.4.7	Values and Local Customary Law Regulations.....	147
7.4.8	Willingness to Accept Compensation (WTA) for Ecosystem Components .....	150
7.4.9	Valuation of Forest Products by Market Prices and Barter .....	162
7.4.10	Valuation by Ranking .....	164
7.4.11	Comparing Advantages and Disadvantages of the Garden System.....	164
7.5	Results from the West Kalimantan Case.....	165
<b>8</b>	<b>The East Kalimantan Case - Development of a Comprehensive Method for the Valuation of Ecosystem Functions.....</b>	<b>167</b>
8.1	Objectives and Constraints.....	167
8.2	Location and Description of the Research Village.....	168
8.3	Methodology.....	168
8.4	Results from the East Kalimantan Case .....	179
<b>9</b>	<b>Conclusions .....</b>	<b>183</b>
	References .....	187
	Appendix .....	203