



CULTURES OF CONSUMPTION PUBLIC LECTURE SERIES

Sustainability Reinvented

Gerhard Scherhorn

ABSTRACT

The study of sustainable consumption patterns offers two conflicting insights. First, in some way or other they show an affinity to the authentic needs of both human people and their natural environment. This may explain the popular hope that industrial societies would certainly shift to a sustainable course if only the mass of consumers would prefer goods from sustainable production. Second, sustainable consumption patterns survive in niches. There is no chance that the mass of consumers would adopt them autonomously, while guided by unsustainable production. Putting these two insights together the lesson should be evident: Sustainable development can arise only from a joint move of production and consumption, where production's part is to adapt its methods to certain procedures of nature, in particular to the *Upcycling*-principle. Sustainable consumption, then, would be quite different to what we are accustomed to. It would be less strictly separated from production, more concentrated to basic needs, more satisfying, and even enable growth without rebound effects.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Gerhard Scherhorn, Professor emeritus of Consumer Economics at Hohenheim University, Stuttgart, Germany. Co-director of the Research Group on Sustainable Production and Consumption at the Wuppertal Institute of Climate, Environment, Energy, Wuppertal. 1974–79 Member of the Council of Economic Advisors to the Federal Government of Germany. 1972–82 Member of the Council of Consumer Advisors to the Federal Ministry of Trade. 1975–84 Member of the Board of Stiftung Warentest, Berlin. 1977–95 Co-Editor of Journal of Consumer Policy.