

# Climate Protection

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**Abstract:** The voice of the social sciences in climate research and in climate policy discussions, except for interventions from economists mainly about the costs associated with policy options driven by climate science research, has been muted if not altogether absent. The absence of the social sciences from climate research and policy not surprisingly has coloured climate discourse in peculiar ways. We are making the case for a greater involvement and importance of the social sciences in interdisciplinary climate research.

It is not space but the structuring that comes from the soul that has social significance.

*Georg Simmel ([1908] 1992)*

Soil and climate together determine the natural fertility of a country and of its people who are led either to indolence or to activity.

*Werner Sombart (1938)*

## 1. Introduction

Throughout much of their history, the social sciences have been torn; as the quotes from Georg Simmel and Werner Sombart demonstrate between those who advocate either incorporating “nature” into social science discourse or displacing any reference whatsoever to natural forces from social science. It is evident that *contemporary* social science discourse has generally ruled out environmental or physical (as well as biological) factors as directly relevant to sociological, economic, historical or, anthropological “explanations”. There are good reasons that account for the differentiation of cognitive agendas in science, chief among them the following:

- biological and cultural evolution are not identical,
- the natural environment of society is for the most part independent of human action,
- societies have succeeded in emancipating themselves from many environmental constraints.

Nonetheless, the ecosystem, refashioned to a lesser or greater extent by social action by way of appropriating its resources, remains a major material source and constraint for human conduct. Social scientists today have, for the most part, accepted the firm dichotomy of nature and society. The social sciences have their own distinct domain of inquiry, their own methods and theories: a world of objects and subjects that constitutes therefore a reality *sui generis*.

The upshot of these intellectual developments in social science has been that the voice of the social sciences in climate research and in climate policy discussions, except for interventions from economists, mainly about the costs associated with policy options driven by climate science research, has been muted if not altogether absent.

In the following brief remarks about “climate protection” we would like to show how the absence of the imagination of the social sciences from climate research and policy discussion sustains in scientific and political discussion about global climate change a singular focus on mitigation efforts in response to the threat of global warming. We begin with the case of tropical diseases that are widely anticipated to move northward and that are seen to constitute one of the major health risk associated with climate change. The threat of tropical diseases moving into regions of the world now mostly unaffected by such health hazards is often used to make the case the reduction of emissions, i. e., dealing with the cause of anthropogenic climate change would be the only meaningful approach. This argument neglects the fact that better adaptive measures have made many areas free of such diseases, to begin