

## THE ECOLOGICAL COMMON SENSE: TRADITION AND DISCONTINUITY

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**Abstract.** *This is only a larger abstract of a work I should like to develop because of the interest its subject raises. For this reason, I consider it rather an invitation to a multi disciplinary international collaboration.*

**Keywords:** common sense, ecology, education.

### Reason of the research:

- the importance of the common beliefs for the general ecological behaviour;
- it is essential to show the rhythm of the appropriation of ecological habits and behaviours by ordinary people and by a progressively larger number of ordinary people;
- the constitution of the ecological community on local, regional and world scale is the result of the rhythm human communities understand and share the ecological principles;
- for this reason, the research has to focus on the local, regional and world cultural (that meaning also political) factors and impulses: for example the role of the impulses made by the European Union (researches, laws, advisors and control, practice) for the member countries;
- the urgency of the practical conclusions is underlined by the system of these economic, political, technical, social, cultural conclusions for the local, regional and world scale.

### Philosophical and multi disciplinary analysis of the concepts:

Common sense:

\* In a time and space, *the dominant images* about the world, humans, nature, the relationships between them, *are considered axiomatic*. The preliminary work definition questions just these dominant images. (There is a popular common sense and also the “common sense” of experts. At the first sight, the difference is that the popular has more inertia and a certain lack of self-critique, while the scientific is based on a conscious process of learning, self-critique and analysis of the context it appeared. The “common sense” of experts is somehow tantamount with Kuhn’s “normal science”, even if sometimes experts, as Agatha

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Christie showed, could not explain their indisputable excellent judgement. But there is also a common tendency of the popular common sense and the conformist scientific views to propose a narrow rectitude and the rejection of the democratic analysis of the basic principles. In this way, a common tendency to intolerance and rejection of self-critique and “rationalism all the way” could happen. Finally here, both have the tendency to not be too pretentious in front of the triviality of life and science.)

◇ In the constitution of common sense there are *initiating factors*—as the cultural and political elites and institutions—as well as *means* to assume, generalise and spread the dominant values and Weltanschauungs in a specific historical moment and cultural area. Thus there are *worldviews*, *actors* and *stars* in the constitution of common sense.

◇ Generally, science puts under question the common sense, i.e. the absolutist views and conclusions concerning society, the domination-submission relationships, the past and future of humankind. But as science develops, it is more critical toward its own perspective about its superiority in front of ancient wisdoms contained within common sense: science develops just through integrating ancient problems solved in ancient common sense use but at the same time surpassing ancient limits promoted in the ancient common sense. In the same manner, the emphasis of some ancient wisdom contained in the ancient common sense does not annul the scientific rationality: rather it provoke it to be more self-critical, more efficient, and more open to the historical character of the evolution of the human knowledge. One could describe the relationship between the common sense and science as an interrupted line: one always has to question and fortify the empty spaces as well as the line (continuity).

◇ For everything in society is culture, common sense is a *complex* of cultural phenomena which move, intertwine, change, advance and fail showing their continuity, discontinuity, the uniqueness and generalisation.

◇ The entire history of sciences as well as the research on the social and cultural development did unveil, argument and demonstrate the *historical* and *social* character of common sense

◇ One could not analyse the common sense without observe the importance of the *interests* of different participants to the constitution and consolidation of that we all consider as a main criterion in the judgement about the human conceptions.

⌘ Ecological:

\* is only a domain of the common sense. There might be a *deep* ecological common sense and a *superficial* one. The deep ecological common sense has developed depending on the historical conditions of the accumulation of negative consequences of the openly or implicit neglect of ecology in the epoch of the first industrial revolution as well as in the late capitalism.

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\* There are, and the modern conscience passed through, three models concerning the relationship economy-ecology: *a.* the model of inexhaustible resources, *b.* the model of renewable resources under free exploitation, *c.* the model of sustainable development.

\* Nowadays there is a confrontation between model *b.* and model *c.*

⌘ Tradition in the ecological common sense means:

- the pre-modern popular ecological common sense,
- the modern, pre-'1970s popular ecological common sense, and
- the modern, pre-'1970s ecological common sense of the political elites.

◇ The influence of scientific elites over the political class that constitutes the dominant frame of the ecological behaviours of ordinary people, and

◇ The direct influence of scientific elites on the ecological conceptions and behaviours of the ordinary people.

◇ The ethnographic researches are sine qua non for the description of the traditional popular common sense.

◇ As preliminary features of the traditional pre-modern and pre-'1970s ecological common sense, one could observe

- the isolated, fragmented approach of the nature-humankind/concrete social community.
- the spirit of domination of human beings on nature, but at the same time.
- a certain learning from the natural processes (for example, to not waste).  
(! Are there and which are the differences between the pre-modern ecological common sense and the modern pre'1970s one from this point of view? Were and are there and which are the differences between the situation within the developed countries of the European Union and the other European countries?)
- the priority of economic interests over the ecological ones (i.e. the separation of these different types of interests),
- the separation between the ecological problems and the problem of war.

\* There are tight relationships between the economical, political, ecological, social and cultural domains of common sense: we have to describe them.

An important problem is the influence of the scientific elite whose works are linked to the ecological principles over the political and cultural elites as well as over the popular common sense.

⌘ Discontinuity in the ecological common sense:

\* Changes determined worldwide in the '1970s and their influence over the scientific elite. The specific ecological researches and their evolution.

\* The influence of the ecological researches over the political decision-making.

\* The difference between the scientific elite focused on ecology and the scientific elite focused on economy and politics.

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\* Laws concerning the ecological consequences of the human action.

\* New types of ecological common sense.

\* The rhythm of the assumption of the new ecological conclusions of science: the decision-making as well as the common sense in front of the problem of limitation of waste, limitation of pollution and a creative ecological behaviour.

\* The preliminary features of the post '1970s ecological *conclusions of science* are only *tendencies* in the world ecological common sense (but all of these have to be demonstrated, as well as the problems raised by the features):

- the systemic approach of the nature-humankind/concrete social community,
- the spirit of re-subordination of the human being to nature, the spirit of being part of nature (i.e. the rejection of the damages this part made and could make to nature), and, at the same time,
- the spirit of confidence in the ability of the human reason to surpass unilateral approaches of the relationships human beings-nature (the understanding of the historical character of these relationships),
- the spirit of modesty issued from the understanding of the partnership between man and nature as a whole,
- the assumption of the capacity of humankind to repair the damages made to the nature and the consistent will to act as world community to annul these damages,
- the priority of the ecological interests—on world scale—over the narrow economic interests (i.e. the specific and new convergence of these types of interests),
- the priority of the ecological welfare and equilibrium and the re-consideration of the global warfare in function of this priority.

### **Problems of the present struggle for sustainable development:**

Many theories contain the critique of the present dominant model *b*. This model, issued from model *a*. and from the lack of interest concerning the ecological consequences of the present market-oriented economy (or from the subordination of the problem of ecological consequences towards the interest of profits *hic et nunc*), corresponds to the modern private profit oriented economy. For this reason, this model is opposing to the pre-modern common sense (see Thomas Paine's call for a return to the common sense). But the pre-modern more or less conscious ecological conscience is not the solution for the sustainable development, because of the quantitative and qualitative dimensions and stakes of the present society.

The present theories overhear the necessity of evaluate and solve the economic, social, political, cultural and ecological problems *together* and *at the*

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*same time all of them.* Simply, a sustainable development cannot be realised, at least not worldwide but eventually on a narrow local scale, without a re-thinking and re-formation of the economic, social and political order *worldwide*. The present control of resources can no more lead to development if it will not be a control subordinated to a sustainable development. A new type of common sense, an ecological-economic-political common sense is required and is to be take shape: based on a complex thought and ethical choices. The bashful ignorance of the inter-connexion between the economic and political order worldwide and, on the other hand, these complex thought and moral choices, as well as the ecological conscience cannot be separated from the dominant profit interests, but certainly does not lead to the progress of the common sense. Rather the contrary is happen.

An economics of sustainability is linked to the *common good*. The conscience of the common good is fundamental for the ecological common sense of the sustainable development.

This new type of ecological common sense is a fundamental feature of the present theory of science.

The price of the postponement of the sustainable development and the common sense it needs is so huge that not only the ecologist researchers and activists warn against this postponement but also some important actors within the present economy. The construction of sustainable development worldwide is a large opportunity for economy: for firms that implement new types of ecological production. And for the entire world has to be integrated in a sustainable framework, a new type of growth, requiring the full employment of the world labour force, is allowed. Consequently, the world transition to sustainable development implies the change of global order and structural relations of the capitalist system: as the goal of consumerism is substituted with the goal of ecological harmony and ethical human development, the reason of private profit is rarefied by the reason of common good and ethical human fulfilment of everyone and all. The concept of development as such ceases to be subordinated to the idea of permanent growth in order to maximise the selfish private profit: it is reasonable economic construction in order to develop the creativity of everyone and all, within a harmonious coexistence of nature and society. The present problem is that this new concept of development has to be implemented in a consistent way and an alert rhythm. (For this reason, present facts of infringement of the environment stipulations within the economic contracts (especially in the emergent countries, were firms do this with the help of state bureaucracy) are only signs of the struggle between the beneficiaries of the classical capitalist economy and the stringent needs and vision of a new type of economy and society).

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### **Conclusions**

The rhythm of the implementation of the recommendations of the ecological researches:

Lester Brown's B Plan (technical aspects: rapid implementation of alternative energies and of a Hydrogen based economy; social aspects: universal education, health for all, a meal for the poor schoolchildren, honest markets, re-orientation of taxes, subventions for the ecological and social activities) and the horizon of time.

First of all, the decision-makers have to be conscious of the practical importance of the ecological perspective. This one is the basis of a new "New Deal": reconstruction of buildings and dwellings, re-formation of production and relationships between resources and results, development of science, education and creativity. The implementation of the new ecological perspective generates a huge number of workplaces, suppressing unemployment.

The ecological perspective cannot be realised without the generalisation of the ecological common sense and this one cannot be constituted without the systemic and consistent change of the values shared by the decision-makers.

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