INTERTWINING OF DIVERSE MINDS IN(TO) POLITICAL ECOLOGY

Zbornik

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Scientific Texts of Doctoral Students Participating in the Summer School of Political Ecology

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UREDNIKA ZBORNIKA: dr. Andrej A. Lukšič, dr. Tomislav Tkalec
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Introduction

This book presents eight students' scientific texts presented at the Summer School of Political Ecology 2018. While some texts focus on reflecting the existing mental forms in order to reproduce or recreate them by changing the point of the view, the unconcealed intention of other texts focusing on different levels – polity, policy, politics – is to find new answers that will contribute to an understanding of the social and political dimensions of the existing reality and initiate the formation of alternative ways of changing them. Some important issues of political ecology are thereby opened from a new perspective. Therefore, we can state with confidence that these scientific contributions by the participating doctoral students have enriched the Slovenian intellectual public space with in-depth ecological and environmental insight into the field of political ecology.

Contents

About authors

MATEVŽ MALČIČ, Master of Arts in European Political and Administrative Studies, is a PhD student at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana and Young Researcher at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Slovenia.

SRĐAN ORLANDIĆ, is a PhD student at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia.

VESNA KOLAR PLANINŠIČ works for Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning - Head of Strategic Environmental assessment Division; she is a PhD student at Interdisciplinary Doctoral Programme in Environmental Protection, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia.

EMILY JURENEC PASCALE, Master of Political Science, is a PhD student at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia.

MARIE LOUISE AASTRUP, MSc Sustainable Resource Management, Technische Universität München, is a PhD Candidate at Memorial University, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada.

MATEJA SLOVENC, Master of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Bachelor in Agronomy, is a Young Researcher at Sociomedical Institute, Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Slovenia.

ADRIAN FURCULITA is frst year Master Student, Cadastre and Law Faculty, State Agrarian University of Moldova, Moldova.

BLAISE NKFUNKOH NDAMNSAH is a second year PhD candidate in Defence studies at the University of Ljubljana. He works as a train Cultural Mediator at the CARA Refugee Center Gorizia-Italy.

Matevž Malčič, Andrej Lukšič

Democracy, Societal Complexity and Environmental Degradation: Finding solutions among environmental discourses

Abstract: The goal of this paper is to expand the discussion on solutions for environmental degradation by analysing them through the lenses of Tainter's societal complexity and Held's democratic autonomy. Drawing on the lessons of sustainability of human societies from the first, and a wider (yet still limited) set of democratic demands for solving environmental problems from the second, we arrived at a set of eight criteria that we applied to environmental discourses found in Dryzek's *The Politics of the Earth*. After generally identifying useful proposals, we determine that three discourses present the best grounds for future development: sustainable development, ecological modernization, and green politics.

Keywords: environment, societal complexity, democratic autonomy, environmental discourses, problem-solving.

Introduction

Climate events of summer 2018 were another stark reminder that the environment will be the foremost political and policy problem of the 21st century, as even the 2°C Paris Agreement target might result in a runaway process turning our planet into a giant greenhouse (Steffen et al, 2018). Even worse, we have already begun to slack in our duties, with greenhouse gas emissions and economic output re-coupling after a few years of positive signs (IEA, 2018), a stagnating global investment in renewable sources of energy and energy innovation (IEA, 2017), and, among others, political setbacks in the US, EU, and Australia (BBC.com, 2018; EUobserver.com, 2018; Vox.com, 2017).

Environmental problems, however, are not the only urgent problem on our horizon. Stricken by secular stagnation, advanced industrial democracies can no longer expect the high growth experienced after the Second World War (Jackson, 2018). This has the potential of increasing social inequality and unemployment (Jackson and Victor, 2015), especially when considering that this growth was the result of high-energy fossil fuels (Brown et al., 2011; Warr and Ayres, 2010), which are no longer an option for humanity. Add to this list pensions, demographic collapse, healthcare costs, infrastructure investment, massive debt levels, and increased global competition (Gordon 2012; Tainter, 2014) and the sense of troubles plaguing us becomes overwhelming, with no simple solution to such a complex conundrum in sight.

What is required then is a theory that can connect the limits created by human societies and the limits imposed by the natural environment. We can find it in Joseph Tainter's (1988) theory of societal complexity, which is defined as an increase in the diversity of the parts that comprise society and the organization or control over them, and which emerges as a consequence of the myriad of short- and long-term problems that societies have to solve (Taylor and Tainter, 2016: 1016). Maintaining complexity requires energy in different forms from the ecosystem and the human social system (Tainter and Taylor, 2014: 169). The use of this concept

allows us to view the environment as both a problem to be solved, one among many human societies face, and as a constraint on our ability to solve problems, the environmental one included. This has profound consequences for the tools available to us for the resolution of environmental problems and the way we apply them.

It also has profound consequences for the politics of human society. At first glance, the only solution for our negative impact on the environment might appear to be eco-authoritarianism (Dryzek, 2013: 38–42), with all its negative consequences for both the environment and human societies (Hammond and Smith, 2017: 4–5). We reject any such prescriptions, not only because of our duty as social scientists to enable individuals to "become free and rational" (Mills, 1959/2000: 184), but also because only a democratic approach bestows legitimacy and accountability to political decisions, contains the power of the powerful, and "is the value that can link and mediate among competing prescriptive concerns" (Held, 2006: 260–1). Especially potent is Held's concept of democratic autonomy—which considers human beings able "to reason self-consciously, to be self-reflective, and to be self-determining" (*ibidem*, 263), while avoiding the negation of the rights of others—which will play a crucial role in our study of democracy under societal complexity.

When it comes to presenting competing prescriptive concerns in the environmental field, none have done it as clearly, innovatively, or completely as Dryzek (2013) with his *Politics of the Earth*, covering nine different discourses in four categories. The sentiment that "language matters, [and] that the way we construct, interpret, discuss, and analyse environmental problems has all kinds of consequences" (*ibidem*, 11) has resulted in a broad range of prescriptions for solving environmental degradation, as well as the preservation of human societies. Thus, a way forward can be sketched through the analysis of each discourse according to the criteria from both societal complexity and democratic autonomy.

The following section examines the sustainability of human societies through the lens of societal complexity. The third section will follow with a more detailed look at democratic autonomy

and its application. In the fourth section we present criteria through which we examine environmental discourses and see what each offers. The final section will summarize and conclude.

The curse of societal complexity

We discuss societal complexity because of its ability to connect the sustainability of human societies and of the environment. Consequently, we will focus on what the theory tells us about what sustainability means in human societies, how to make it more resilient, and what pitfalls we should be aware of.

Tainter (2006: 92) defines sustainability in human social systems as "the capacity to continue a desired condition or process, social or ecological, [while] resiliency is the ability of a system to adjust its configuration and function under disturbance." The two can come into conflict however, as:

> …in the end, sustainability is ultimately an issue of human behavior, and negotiation over preferred futures, under conditions of deep contingency and uncertainty. It is an inherently normative concept, rooted in real world problems and very different sets of values and moral judgements (Robinson, 2004: 379–80).

This not only reinforces our point that we need to look further than the environment, but also highlights the need to integrate democratic politics into any debate on environmental problems. It also strengthens our decision to take lessons from environmental discourses because of their focus on the stories we tell ourselves.

Looking at human systems, societal complexity provides us with six lessons to ensure their sustainability (Tainter and Taylor, 2014: 175):

1. *Sustainability is a function of success at solving problems. It does not emerge, as is commonly thought, as a passive consequence of consuming less.* To solve problems, as well as to function, survive, and develop, human societies and political systems require a continuous flow of energy; the

distribution of which is determined by its socio-political organisation (Tainter, 1988: 91). Energy can take the form of "resources, effort, time or money, and more subtle matters such as annoyance" (Tainter and Patzek, 2012: 77–79 quoted in Tainter and Taylor, 2014: 169).

2. *Complexity in human societies grows through the mundane process of solving problems, including problems of sustainability.* Human societies are problem-solving mechanisms; their problems are anything that threatens their sustainability (Tainter, 2010: 90). While we generally avoid complexity and pick the low hanging fruit first (Tainter, 2006: 92–3), it this this tendency towards complexity that is behind societal collapse, as historically no society has been able to achieve a "no-problem" equilibrium (Tainter, 1988: 123).
3. *Complexity is an economic function, with benefits and costs, and can reach diminishing returns.* If the costs outweigh the benefits, societies may decide that it is better for them to abandon further complexity (Tainter, 1988: 92). This means that a moment may come when the general population abandons the sacrifices demanded of them to save the environment. In one scenario, depending on the EROI[1] of renewable sources of energy, one estimate determined that a 10-17% investment of the world's economy over several decades will be required if we do not wish to surpass the atmospheric CO_2 limits, severely dampening economic growth (Sers and Victor, 2018: 16–17) and leaving less for creature comforts and the provision of public goods (Tainter, 1988: 212).
4. *Since sustainability depends on solving problems, it promotes the growth of complexity and its associated costs. Sustainability may therefore require greater consumption of resources, not less.* A renewables transition, because of

[1] Energy Return on Investment (EROI) is defined as "a measure of the quality of a given energy source calculated as the ratio of the energy delivered by the source to the energy invested in capturing and delivering the energy" (Sers and Victor, 2018: 11).

their nature as low-quality sources of energy, may result in comparable environmental degradation to what we experience today (Tainter et al., 2003: 11). This lesson also questions the attempts to achieve a steady-state economy, de-growth, or voluntary simplification (Tainer and Taylor, 2014: 170). While this reinforcing feedback loop is criticised, both regarding its supposed linearity (Garcia, 2012: 549) and the conception of "problems" as monolithic and dominating (Alexander, 2014: 556–8), it rightly draws attention to the fact that there is no silver bullet.

5. *Under diminishing returns, complexity in problem-solving causes subtle, unpredictable, and cumulative damage.* Temporary and low-cost solutions can have devastating long-term consequences, with the environment a historically clear case for this (Tainter, 2006: 96). Diminishing returns occur for the following six reasons: (1) increasing size of bureaucracies; (2) increasing specialization of bureaucracies; (3) the cumulative nature of organizational solutions; (4) increasing taxation; (5) increasing costs of legitimizing activities; and (6) increasing costs of internal control and external defence (Tainer, 1988: 115).
6. *A society or other institution can be destroyed by the cost of sustaining itself.* This requires them to possess sustainable problem-solving institutions (Tainter, 2006: 100), which is ultimately a political decision, to which we now turn.

The hope of democratic politics

As Dryzek (2013: 149) recognizes, democracy is a discourse, meaning we cannot arrive at a universal definition; but Keane (2009: xi), in his study of its long history, comes close by viewing it as the idea "that humans could invent and use institutions specially designed to allow them to decide for themselves, as equals, how they would live together on earth." The application of this principle finds its most appropriate form in Held's democratic autonomy:

> Persons should enjoy equal rights and, accordingly, equal obligations in the specification of the political framework which generates and limits the opportunities available to them; that is, they should be free and equal in the processes of deliberation about the conditions of their own lives and in the determination of these conditions, so long as they do not deploy this framework to negate the rights of others. (Held, 2006: 264)

Democratic autonomy helps us respond to political elements within societal complexity, from the need for legitimate collective decision-taking, to the fact that the necessary energy to do so is determined by socio-political institutions, to recognizing that future sacrifices are in store for us. Furthermore, the fact that "politics is about power; that is, it is about the capacity of social agents, agencies and institutions to maintain or transform their environment, social or physical" (*ibidem*, 270) ties democracy, societal complexity, and environmental discourses together and directs our attention to who has the capabilities of directing our future. Another crucial element of democratic autonomy is the need for a system of rights that would ensure equal autonomy of all citizens, which also means maintaining the powers of the state and setting constitutional rights and other regulations to protect everyone (*ibidem*, 277). While the concept of democratic autonomy and certain environmental discourses also question the current political-economic system of production, this is something that lies outside the scope of this article, as it would require us to examine all the different proposals for a green(er) economy. Our focus is on how to make democratic decisions under the circumstances of connected social complexity and environmental limits, which is the goal of the following section.

Finding solutions among environmental discourses

What exactly are we looking for? From societal complexity (SC), we seek proposals that (1) offer resilient institutions and flexi-

ble solutions to problems (in order to combat sources of diminishing returns on investment), (2) pass the economic function-test (resilient to unforeseen long-term costs), (3) recognize sacrifice (limited resources forces us to choose what to invest in), and (4) re-negotiate existing values (find the collective lighthouses for the future). In order for proposals to comply with democratic theory (DA), they must (1) preserve democratic autonomy (allowing individuals to determine the conditions of their lives), (2) not leave anyone behind (protecting the rights of seniors and the sick and infirmed), (3) fight inequalities (look towards a more equitable division of power), and (4) preserve the role of a higher organizational entity (such as the state).

The first discourse is 'Limits, Boundaries, Survival' and the apparent home of societal complexity. Fortunately, appearances is all it has, as its proposals fail almost the entirety of our eight criteria. As recognized by Dryzek (2013: 50), this discourse points out the importance of what we termed sacrifice (SC 3) and the state (DA 4); although, the latter is seen from a centralized controlling function, rather than a guarantor of rights. While its narrative calls for more resilient institutions (SC 1), greater centralization undermines the fight against diminishing returns. The concept of natural limits represents a form of the economic function of complexity (SC 2), however both these proposals are limited to environmental problems, rather than what societies must deal with in full. Hardin's (1968) "The Tragedy of the Commons" recognizes an unequal division of power (DA 3), although with the general population holding the strings; and his idea of "mutual coercion mutually agreed upon" that of democratic autonomy (DA 1), though they both fall short of the spirit of proposals that we are looking for. Furthermore, the role played by expert elites and their funding by the world's rich and powerful (Dryzek, 2013: 40–44) is something to give us pause. In the end, this discourse and its proposals are a powerful reminder of the ultimate limits we face, but it provides little in terms of useful solutions.

The idea of the "Promethean or Unlimited Growth" discourse is that technology will always rescue us (*ibidem*: 52), which

is comforting and fits both the resilient institutions and the economy function test (SC 1&2) were it not for the fact that innovation and education are also subject to diminishing returns to scale (Tainter, 1988: 99–107). Furthermore, the fact that this discourse views hierarchical relations as natural goes against the first three criteria of democratic autonomy (DA 1&2&3), although their positive view of individuals as problems solvers, and the more the better (Dryzek, 2013: 62), does ameliorate the situation somewhat. Unfortunately, unlimited population growth most certainly breaks the economic function and sacrifice (SC 2&3) criteria. Its focus on formal laws and regulation does satisfy our DA 4 criteria; however, as the population at large does not share the faith in technology by the elites (*ibidem*: 64), this goes against DA 1. Thus, contrary to even the limits discourse, there is nothing we can pick up from the Promethean one.

The problem-solving focus of "Administrative Rationalism" (*ibidem*: 75) might seem fit for the demands imposed by societal complexity, but fails because we doubt how adding extra layers of organisation or control contributes to the creation of resilient institutions (SC 1). Its cost-benefit analysis, especially regarding long-term planning, satisfies the economic function (SC 2), and, if sufficiently inspired, the issue of limited resources (SC 3). A lack of appropriate metaphors in this discourse leaves us empty-handed when it comes to setting up new values (SC 4). Looking to the political side of the discourse (*ibidem*: 89), democratic autonomy will hardly find its home in such a system. The necessary role of the state (DA 4) is present, but it is positioned above the citizens (DA 1&2) while the command function is given to technical experts (DA 3), leaving politics entirely out of the equation.

Politics is at the core of "Democratic Pragmatism". A premier approach to solving problems flexibly with multiple actors and involving many viewpoints (*ibidem*: 100), it immediately covers points from both SC and DA groups. Democracy is a resilient form of political system, even if it sometimes approaches the "best" solution warily. This gives it the best opportunity to construct resilient institutions (SC 1). The innovations and institutions it

creates also allows it to provide self-determination and protect the weak by giving everyone a voice (DA 1&2). While we share Dryzek's (2013: 118-9) concerns on the existence of power actors that may try to swing decisions and policies in their favour, democracy is still the best way to direct society's resources towards protecting the environment and creating a more equitable distribution of power (DA 3). It is also the best way of re-negotiating collective values and getting them accepted by a large swathe of the population (SC 4). There remains the question of the state's role as a protector of rights and provider of the necessary organisational cover (DA 4), although the discourse does not reject it outright. The pragmatic element (*ibidem*: 99) is assistance when it comes to committing to necessary sacrifices for long-term sustainability of human societies (DA 3), although how far we can do so without coercion has been questioned (*ibidem*: 121; Runciman, 2018: 90). This makes passing the economic function of complexity more difficult (SC 2), as even short-term budgets present difficulties, let alone decade-long investments necessary for the transition to a more sustainable lifestyle.

'Economic Rationalism' is the fifth discourse discussed and is defined "by its commitment to the intelligent deployment of market mechanisms to achieve public ends" (Dryzek, 2013: 122). Market mechanisms and economic incentives come close to providing the feedback loop necessary to prevent long-term costs of societal complexity (SC 2); however, the question remains of their staying power in a democratic society and their unforeseen consequences, as they may inadvertently increase costs. While they might have a role to play in creating resilient institutions (SC 1), their current forms closely match what Tainter identified as causing diminishing returns on investment. Their distribution of costs might make sacrifice (SC 3) easier, especially if everyone was involved in paying; however, the way they are set up plays no role in creating new values (SC 4) and reinforce existing negative ones (*ibidem*: 143). The discourse's track-record is even weaker on the democratic front, as it pays little attention to citizens in comparison to economic actors (DA 1), focuses on competitive re-

lations, undermines DA 2&3, has an uncertain relationship with government (DA 4), and is thus of little use to us.

If our goal is long-term sustainability of human societies, then there are few discourses more suitable than 'Sustainable Development'. Not only does it consider the economic, environmental, and social pillars (*ibidem*: 148), but it seeks to position growth for developed and developing countries in a way that is friendlier to the Earth (*ibidem*: 156). This can help us pass the major obstacle of the economic function of societal complexity (SC 2), as it will provide the resources Tainter says are necessary to solve an endless supply of problems. Although it is not as clear on more resilient institutions (SC 1), nested institutions and networked governance are certainly a step in the right direction (*ibidem*: 157), as well as an important element of assuring self-determination (DA 1) and even protecting the weak (DA 2), even though this discourse is less clear on this subject. The fight against inequality (DA 3) also remains an open question. Nevertheless, the idea of having it all without sacrifice (*ibidem*: 159) goes against a major principle that we deemed necessary (SC 3) and limits the mental readiness of a society to adopt new values (SC 4). The role of the state remains protected (DA 4), even if not as strong as before (*ibidem*: 158). Overall, however, this discourse offers several helpful approaches.

The next discourse that looks at taking contemporary societies into an ecological future is "Ecological Modernization", which seeks to restructure developed economies along more environmentally sound lines (*ibidem*: 170). By taking a complex approach to production, consumption, and resources (*ibidem:* 173), it moves toward setting up resilient institutions (SC 1) but undermines the goal of not incurring undue long-run costs by not extending the same treatment to nature (SC 2). A broad-tent coalition between the political, economic, social, and scientific worlds, an open question on hierarchies in human relations, and a long-term vision of possible economic and political system transformation (*ibidem*: 174–5) are important in ensuring self-determination (DA 1) and fighting inequalities (DA 3. Although not extending this to the global poor, we doubt its ability to protect the frail anywhere

(DA 2). The state continues to play an organizational and protective role (DA 4); however, we must question how much a corporatist style of governance, that is closely associated with this discourse (*ibidem*: 181), can ensure all voices will be heard. In addition, its connection with the idea of progress and long-term reassurance is powerful, but it leaves little room for sacrifice (SC 3) or re-negotiation of values for a more turbulent era (SC 4). Regardless, it offers several interesting elements to consider.

If we are serious at changing our look at the environment and how we organize our lives in accordance with environmental limits, then the "Green Consciousness" is the most direct and the powerful of discourses. By bringing together human and "natural" nature into closer harmony (*ibidem*: 197), it immediately fulfils the new values criterion (SC 4) and by looking at decreasing our material demands, also the sacrifice (SC 3) one. Taking it to its extreme, we could claim that the ultimate transformation of our relationship toward nature and taking a simpler path would also resolve the issue of diminishing return to scale (SC 2) and the need for resilient institutions (SC 1), as investment into societal complexity would be frozen; however, as shown by Tainter, that is impossible for human societies. The discourse also presents the idyllic democratic community, with individual self-determination and freedom from powerful collective actors and elites (*ibidem*: 199) (DA 1&3); however, like Dryzek, we must question this reasoning, both for its ability to change the minds of billions and fight vested interests. Furthermore, we must question its ability to protect the weak (DA 2), as many of the ailments that we now avoid require the resources of developed economies. Rejecting the state, which for us is a guarantor of human rights, also goes against democratic principles (DA 4). Despite the hopeful nature of this discourse, the micro nature of its assumptions makes us doubt its ability to provide the necessary tools.

Its more political version, "Green Politics", expands from consciousness change by moving toward a greener future through social, political, and economic structures (*ibidem*: 219–220). With multidimensional human motivation, nonlinear interactions

between the natural and human world, and the ability of the latter to learn, it fulfils criteria of both societal complexity and democratic autonomy. Reasoned communication about collective goals, criticism of hierarchies, while still allowing for more competitive relationships, an egalitarian political structure, and agency by both individual and collective actors, allows for both self-determination (DA 1) and fighting against inequalities (DA 3). While not explicit, both political and social movements of green politics can be expected not to leave anyone behind during the green transition (DA 2); although, as in other discourses, this commitment must be made clearer. The relationship towards the state is more ambivalent (*ibidem*: 224), but there is nothing to doubt that green politics would remove its protective function (DA 4). While only providing indirect evidence for societal complexity criteria, a complex view of the world together with creating room for experimentation (*ibidem*: 229) makes establishing resilient institutions much easier (SC 1). The political elements, combined with a strong vision, provides the means to adopt new values (SC 4), while collective negotiation of the future allows for agreement on sacrifice (SC 3). Whether or not green politics can pass the economic function test (SC 2) remains unclear. Nevertheless, this discourse is the richest so far for taking us into a greener future while respecting the constraints of both societal complexity and the need for democratic autonomy.

Dryzek's "Ecological Democracy" combines the previous discourses with his own work on deliberative democracy and presents many arguments that have already been examined through the lens of our criteria. He nevertheless presents several claims on the benefits of deliberative democracy (*ibidem*: 236–237) that may be conducive to finding solutions for resilient institutions (SC 1), establishing new values (SC 4), self-determination (DA 1), protecting the weak (DA 2), and possibly fight inequalities (DA 3); each would require a detailed analysis, which we must unfortunately eschew because of these paper's limitations. Nevertheless, as democratic innovations, they are something to consider in any debate on where we take our societies and how to get there in a manner that preserves human dignity.

Conclusion

This intention of this paper was to show that the environment is but one of multiple, interconnected issues that human societies must solve, each with a price tag attached to in the form of energy, as seen by Tainter's theory of societal complexity. With sustainability as a socially constructed concept, and the distribution of energy required for problem-solving determined by socio-political institutions, the only way to examine its implications was with a strong political component. For us, the only possible choice is a democratic approach. Since the environmental context demands more than just basic electoral equality, we turned to Held's democratic autonomy, as it provides a wider, yet still well-delineated, definition of democratic life that we used for analysis.

Combining lessons from societal complexity and democratic autonomy led us to a set of eight criteria that must be fulfilled to avoid man's negative effects on the environment. In our search for solutions, we applied them to the environmental discourses described by Drzyek, not only because they offered a complete overview of different approaches, but also because they plays a crucial role in how we see our impact on the environment.

The three that came closest to fulfilling our eight criteria were sustainable development, ecological modernization, and green politics; all but one discourse provided some piece of the puzzle. While the democratic aspect of environmental solutions is an open and rich field, it was easier to find possible solutions for it than trying to stave off the gloom of societal complexity. The pernicious effect of diminishing returns on investment in societal complexity means that humanity requires either a cheap and clean power source or a major technological leap forward, or preferably both. Otherwise, we will either have to abandon certain social problems in favour of the environment (and questioning the wider definition of democracy) or see ourselves destroyed by nature while protecting our civilizational achievements. Our analysis shows that there is still reason to hope; however, any approach that does not take societal complexity into account will fail both environmentally and democratically.

Nevertheless, we do hope that the criteria we introduced will inform future discussions on environmental problem-solving in human societies and lead to proposals that will offer solutions to the criteria of both complexity and democracy.

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Srđan Orlandić

The Marxist Perspective on Political Ecology: The Third World in the Whirlpool of Capitalism

Abstract: The paper attempts to grasp and discuss the ecological discourse in the writings of Marx and Engels, with a particular focus on elucidating the place of nature within their Theory of History. With that aim, the paper foremost elaborates Marx's and Engels's perspective concerning the relation between nature and humans, labor, and capitalism. The second part of the paper considers the Marxist perspective on Third World environmentalism in order to present how defined concepts could be applied in the analysis of concrete ecological issues. Hence, Marx's and Engels's theoretical considerations provide an epistemological basis for the development of eco-socialism.

Keywords: Marxism, nature, labor, capitalism, Third World

Introduction

Since the emergence of humanity, *nature* has been experiencing continual and overarching changes. When Enlightenment thought – which championed reason and its infinite potential in contrast to dogmatic beliefs – stepped onto the stage of human history, the *environment* started to vigorously transform and at remarkable pace. For the first time, humankind and nature were confronted with unconditioned changes in the spheres of technology, science, social relations, and economic (production) models, including the material world, i.e. the environment. Rampant industrialization, technological improvement, and the capitalist mode of production has impacted the material world and the human habitus, which has resulted in global warming, pollution, overpopulation, the depletion of natural resources, etc. Having in mind all these elements, I am of the opinion that contemporary political thought must devote considerable attention to the existing environmental issues that have the potential to affect and determine the future of humanity.

Marxists and Neo-Marxists hold capitalism accountable and perceive it as the main source of the degradation of the environment, since the logic of capital instrumentalized the needs of the wider population, social solidarity, and the preservation of nature. Harribey (2008) emphasizes that capitalism produced two principal degradations in the twentieth century. The first of these concerns social inequality, since we are witnessing that human poverty in many corners of the world is not being eradicated or even reduced, while the total wealth of the population is at its highest historical level. However, elucidating the second aspect is the focus of this discussion. Namely, Harribey underlines that capitalism has manufactured the severe degradation of nature through the constant extraction of resources and the protracted contamination of the environment.

Adherents of Marxism argue that his theoretical perspective offers adequate conceptual frameworks and analytical tools for a thorough analysis of political ecology and the contemporary

challenges that pose a severe threat to the environment. Bearing in mind the significance of Marxism and Neo-Marxism for a theoretical consideration of political ecology, this paper is primarily interest in disclosing the elements of the discourse of Marx and Engels that are related to the subject of political ecology and environmentalism, which represent a foundation and conceptual starting point for future Marxist and Neo-Marxist discussion. Thus, the aim of this paper is to analyze and coherently observe how Marx and Engels perceived *nature* and its position in their comprehensive Theory of History, the relation between nature and human, between nature and labor, as well as between nature and capitalism. By means of a thorough elaboration and systematic observation of Marx's and Engels's thoughts and writings in this domain, we are better able to understand the mere substance of the Marxist and Neo-Marxist understanding and critique of political ecology, which taken together represent one of most prominent theoretical approaches to this subject matter. In the second part of this article the aim is to apply the discussed theoretical framework and conceptual tools to a concrete analysis of the Third World environmental challenges, with a particular focus on the effects of the involvement of transnational corporations (TNCs) in developing countries. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to explore to what extent Marxism is linked to modern political ecology, as well as to present the manner in which Marxist notions and concepts could be used for a better and more coherent understanding of contemporary environmental issues.

The ecological perspective in Marx and Engels

Organizing the Marxist critique of political ecology into a coherent unit could be considered a truly Sisyphean task. At the start of our consideration of Marx's and Engels's understanding of nature, it should be highlighted that this conceptual framework has the potential to benefit the analysis of environmental issues from different aspects. Foremost, their writings can shed light

on the relation between the expansion of capitalism and the degradation of nature and decrease in existing resources, which are generated by the inner law of the motion of capitalist entities to acquire profit and surplus through the self-interested exploitation of natural resources and the ruination of the environment. Furthermore, Hughes (2000) argues that Marxist thought opened a debate concerning the critique of political ecologists that attempted to rise above the class division in societies. Thus, the particular importance and contribution of Marxism concerning political ecology lies in establishing the conceptual framework and providing instruments for an operationalization that enables a critique of the practices that pose a severe threat to nature.

Before I look into Marx's impact on contemporary ecological thought, two interesting views on the nature of ecological issues in different time periods could contribute to a contextualization of the subject matter. Enzensberger introduced the argument that environmental challenges in the twentieth century are not significantly different from those that occurred during the nineteenth century (Hughes, 2000). Namely, the process of industrialization in the nineteenth century was characterized by the rampant contamination of factory workers with chemical substances that can create grave health consequences, while towns, as emerging work centers, became overpopulated, which also created additional environmental issues *per se*. Similarly as Enzensberger, Gus Hall, another prominent advocate of Marxist thought, wrote that the core of environmental issues lies in the "most brutal of capitalism's crimes," which are the death tolls that are a byproduct of the working conditions on production sites (Hughes, 2000). In a similar vein, Engels in his study "Condition of the Working Class in England" discussed the position of the working class within industrial production in Victorian England with an elaboration of the impact of industrial work on the living conditions and health of workers. On the other hand, it should be underlined that industrialization, in Marx's perception, could not be labeled as a concrete cause of environmental degradation; he rather understood it as a mere instrumental tool for the emerging

ecological crisis (Kovel, 2011). Hence, industrialization represents a part of the capitalist setting that provided owners of the means of production with the decisive momentum to expand their interests and generate profit that could not be produced before.

The concept of *nature* has a particularly important place in Marx's comprehensive theory of history, where it serves as an indispensable element of the capitalist mode of production. Moreover, in his writings Marx discussed concrete ecological problems, mostly concerning agriculture and soil, which will be examined below. However, the scrutiny of Marx's thought in the context of environmentalism should begin by stating that he perceived and positioned human beings' social activity as part of the natural material world (Harribey, 2008). Hence, Marx argued that "[n]ature is man's inorganic body [...] man lives from nature" (Lee, 1980: 5), which opened a debate among his adherents whether his philosophy is more aligned with naturalism or materialism. In addition, he stated that the natural material state exists independent of human activity; however, humans do depend upon nature and its resources and conditions, which laid the ground for the development of environmentalism and offered a theoretical foundation for eco-socialist scholars. Furthermore, in 1844 Marx wrote that the fact that "man's physical and spiritual life is linked to nature means simply that nature is linked to itself, for man is part of nature" (Lowy, 2017: 11). Hence, Marx's perception of humans as a natural and pivotal segment of the environment establishes a solid initial argument for further analysis.

The author of the notable book "Marx and Engels on Ecology", Howard Parsons (1977) wrote that for Marx nature was an existence that he characterized as "presupposed for man's communal activity." Furthermore, he argued that Marx and Engels often underlined the material objective state of the natural and historical habitus, which constitutes an area for the subsistence of the community. Thus, nature with its laws of motion, existing supply of resources, climate conditions, etc., profoundly directs the production of the community. At the same time, nature is affected by production (Hughes, 2000), thus the relation betwe-

en nature and man/community represents a two-way mutually governed process. Therefore, while contemplating the emerging capitalism in German society, Engels wrote that "there is damned little left of nature as it was in Germany at the time when the Germanic peoples immigrated into it. The earth's surface, climate, vegetation, fauna and the human beings themselves have continually changed, and all this owing to human activity" (Hughes, 2000: 12).

Referring to Marxist writing about human dependence on nature, Hughes (2000) emphasized that the most important thoughts on this subject were noted in The German Ideology, which comprises a set of manuscripts where Marx and Engels presented the most coherent theory of history. The purpose of this book was to set the foundation for the materialist argumentation in comparison to the idealism of Hegel. Furthermore, Hughes (2000: 94) emphasizes a particular passage from the first part of The German Ideology:

> *The first premise of all human history is, of course, the existence of living human individuals. Thus the first fact to be established is the physical organization of these individuals and their consequent relation to the rest of nature. Of course, we cannot here go either into the actual physical nature of man, or into the natural conditions in which man finds himself. […] The writing of history must always set out from these natural bases and their modification in the course of history through the action of men.*

I would argue that this argument of Marx and Engels corroborates the previously mentioned concept that people are part of the material environment, thus they recognize nature as an important concept from which theory of history has to begin. In addition, it should be particularly underlined that Marx and Engels acknowledged the dependence of man on nature as providing a fundamental momentum for comprehending history and its laws. Hence, the two authors recognized nature as an essential prerequisite for the existence of humans and, subsequently, their history. Here one should note Hughes's elaboration that the idea of humanity as a dependent part of nature was recognized

in Marx's writings from his developing theory of historical materialism in 1846 up to his later writings focused on economic thought, from the 1850s to 1875. Thus, he rejects certain claims that Marx left out of the concept of human dependence on nature, which became a cornerstone for the development of environmentalist thought. However, one should keep in mind that Marx was predominantly interested in the manner of the organization of production, thus the focus of his writings was on the structural forces in the function of capitalism. Hence, he believed in a holistic approach and offered evidence that nature can be transformed, which distinguished him from 'deep ecologists', who argued that nature has to be preserved as it is.

The essence of Marx's research and relation to political ecology is that, as Harribey (2008: 195) put it, social crisis and environmental crisis are "two aspects of one and the same reality." While Marx emerged with the most persistent critique of capitalism throughout history, the focus of this paper is to underline and discuss the link between his theory and environmental issues and ecologist thought. Bearing in mind the above-mentioned considerations of Marx and Engels regarding the relation between nature and humans, one can argue that the most profound product of their thought was that the exploitation of labor is only possible along with the exploitation of nature, since it provides the necessary material basis, while the exploitation of nature can only be realized with the exploitation of labor (Harribey, 2008). Thus, that nature-human relation constitutes a circle functioning on the basis of indispensable mutual dependence, where the existence or non-existence of one segment implies the sustainability or cessation of another. The concrete evidence of Marx's thoughts concerning the link between labor and nature can be demonstrated in the following passage from Capital Vol. I (127–128):

> *Labor is [...] a process in which both man and Nature participate, and in which man of his own accord starts, regulates, and controls the material re-actions between himself and Nature. He opposes himself to Nature as one of her own forces, setting*

in motion arms and legs, head and hands, the natural forces of his body, in order to appropriate Nature's productions in a form adapted to his own wants. By thus acting on the external world and changing it, he at the same time changes his own nature. He makes use of the mechanical, physical, and chemical properties of some substances in order to make other substances subservient to his aims. [...] Thus Nature becomes one of the organs of his activity, one that he annexes to his own bodily organs, adding stature to himself. [...] As the earth is his original larder, so too it is his original tool house. It supplies him, for instance, with stones for throwing, grinding, pressing, cutting, &c. The earth itself is an instrument of labor [...].

From this particular passage one can gain insight into significant elements in terms of understanding Marx's perception of nature and its place in his historical materialism. Foremost, he plainly states that nature is an integral part of the labor process, within which humans have the power to control and appropriate natural resources in accordance with their current needs. In addition, Marx instrumentalizes nature twofold – as an organ of human activity and an instrument of labor. The latter is of particular importance for this paper, since with that notion Marx affirms that nature – as a "larder" and "tool house" – is a segment of his theory of labor whose purpose is to provide the necessary resources and materials to enable and sustain capitalist production. In the ecological discourse, this leads to the acute degradation of the environment and resource exhaustion, thus Marx's theory provides a pivotal conceptual framework for understanding mechanisms and processes that are in the background of severe ecological crises.

Consideration of the concept of nature in Marx's and Engels's writings and historical materialism has to include and elaborate Marx's notion of alienation. Namely, he introduces the concept of alienation to explain the process that occurs as a result of capitalist industrial production and manifests in disoriented human beings that have lost control of their lives and act as non-autonomous actors in their lives. Kovel (2011), for instance, understands alienation as the estrangement of human beings from their power

to modify nature and themselves throughout the historical development. Hence, the detachment of people from the means of production and the protracted exploitation of labor creates a state in which human beings' creativity is alienated, while at the same time people are becoming separated from their nature. In addition, Kovel (2011: 8) draws attention to the following passage in Marx: "they mutilate the laborer into a fragment of a man, degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, destroy every remnant of charm in his work and turn it into a hated toil; they estrange from him the intellectual potentialities of the labor process in the same proportion as science is incorporated in it as an independent power." Hence, Marx vividly underlines that the capitalist mode of production dehumanizes and degrades workers by taking away their originative and creative momentum. Thus, if people miss their creative potential and turn out to be mere reproducers of the same working techniques, humanity would be destined to constantly manufacture environmental problems against a backdrop of the logic of capitalism. In addition, I would argue that the capitalist mode of production also forces human beings to become alienated from their natural environment in the same way as human beings are alienated from themselves or their work. However, evidence of humans' alienation from nature is much easier to observe, since such is directly manifested in the overarching degradation of the environment and the rampant exploitation of resources.

Marx's most distinct and proximate reach into ecological discourse was in the fragments of his writings concerning agriculture and soil devastation due to the exhaustive power of capitalism as a reaction to the findings of the prominent chemist Justus von Liebig (Foster, 1999). In order to put this into proper context, one should keep in mind that Marx was writing during the time of the British – Second – Agricultural Revolution, when the use of chemical fertilizer and other chemicals for soil became widespread. Furthermore, Marx places the issues of agriculture and soil degradation within the wider concept that John Bellamy Foster (1999) defined as the 'metabolic rift', within which he recognizes Marx's ecological momentum. The metabolic rift represents a disruption

in the system of material exchanges between human society and nature on the basis of rampant capitalist production. Thus, Foster (1999: 379) highlights the following passage from *Capital Vol. III:*

> Large landed property reduces the agricultural population to an ever decreasing minimum and confronts it with an ever growing industrial population crammed together in large towns; in this way it produces conditions that provoke an irreparable rift in the interdependent process of the social metabolism, a metabolism prescribed by the natural laws of life itself. The result of this is a squandering of the vitality of the soil, which is carried by trade far beyond the bounds of a single country.

Here one should build on Marx's elaboration regarding the "irreparable rift in the interdependent process of the social metabolism" and argue that the metabolic rift could be associated with the previously discussed alienation of man from nature. Furthermore, Marx even wrote in *Capital Vol. I* that "capitalist production [...] disturbs the metabolic interaction between man and the earth," thus I would argue that Foster's concept of the metabolic rift should have been placed in the perspective of Marx's concept of alienation from nature. Foster writes that the notion of alienation from nature was translated through the concept of the metabolic rift and that without the latter one could not grasp the necessary metabolic relation between humanity and the earth. I concur that the latter concept is valuable for understanding alienation from nature; however, it cannot be exclusively subordinate or dependent on such understanding. Rather, the metabolic rift could epistemologically contribute as a segment of Marx's broader concept of alienation.

Marx and Engels particularly discussed deforestation, along with the depletion of soil. Marx argued that there is a severe 'conflict' between the capitalist mode of production and rational agriculture, while it is argued in *Capital* that "agriculture and industry have been so active in the destruction of forests that anything that has been done for their conservation is insignificant in comparison" (Lowy, 2017: 16). Furthermore, in the context of soil fertilization in England, Marx in the first Volume of *Capital* pla-

inly indicates that "the blind desire for profit exhausted the soil" (Foster: 380). Even Engels dealt with the devastation of Cuban forests by the Spanish coffee industry, as he wrote in his *Dialectics of Nature* that Spanish planters "burned down the forest slopes of the mountains and obtained from the ashes sufficient fertilizer for one generation of very highly profitable coffee trees. […] In relation to nature, as to society, the present mode of production is predominantly concerned only about the first, tangible success." Thus, Engels's attitude towards the subordinate position of nature in relation to capitalist production should be underlined and placed in the overall Marxist ecological discourse.

The analysis of Marx's relation to nature should also include how productive forces can manufacture environmental challenges. Marx did not define productive forces *per se*; however, it can be derived from his thorough elaboration of labor process. Accordingly, it could be argued that productive forces are made of means of production and labor capital (Jones, Bradbury, and Le Boutillier, 2011). In the same vein, Marx's consideration regarding the mechanisms of labor imply that – as Hughes (2000) named them – instruments and objects of labor are a product of nature. He further stated that instruments of labor are tools or equipment produced from natural materials and used for production ventures, while objects of labor, such as raw materials, are already determined and given by nature or are the result of previous labor activity. Therefore, Hughes (2000) offers particular viewpoints as regards the issue of how production impacts nature and a community's habitus, which will be further discussed in the concrete examples in the following section of this paper. Namely, he insisted that productive forces have the power to impact the environment due to their reliance on the given instruments of production and the extraction of existing raw materials, as well as since the results of production are often recognized in pollution, depletion, proliferation, waste, dangerous gases, etc.

In addition to Marx's implied meaning of productive forces, some of his adherents defend the thesis that the historical materialism in Marx's writings could be understood as technologi-

cal determinism, whereas the improvement of productive forces is perceived as the improvement of technology (Hughes, 2000). However, lately the results of new technologies have materialized in increased pollution and the intensified extraction of resources, thus ecologists are provided with an opportunity to explore the link between the development of productive forces and technological development in Marx's writings in order to establish the necessary conceptual framework. I would concur with Hughes that in Marx's elaboration the development of productive forces also means technological advancement in the sense of more effective extraction of natural resources, discovering new methods for processing materials, innovative approaches to labor exploitation, etc. Nevertheless, the development of technology must include human capital (work, knowledge, innovation, expertise, etc.) and available resources (the material basis). Therefore, since technological improvements indicate the exploitation of labor and natural resources, particularly in the contemporary world of intensive daily development, one can expect the degradation of nature and the human habitus, which is in line with Marx's pivotal critique of capitalism and its repercussions for nature. Below, I will cite practical examples and empirical evidence regarding the influence of capitalism on the environment.

Marxist thought implies that the capitalist mode of production continuously exploits natural resources to their limits, which results in environmental degradation and deprivation. Furthermore, Lawless's (2001) readings of Marx's writings indicate that capitalism is primarily focused on immediate returns at the expense of the protracted exploitation of nature; therefore, the only way to improve the current state is through the creation of a completely new and different society. In a similar vein, Marx wrote in the third volume of *Capital* that society needs a socialist logic that would consider "the conscious and rational treatment of the land as permanent communal property" as "the inalienable condition for the existence and reproduction of the chain of human generations" (Lowy, 2017: 17). In addition, Marx underlined that "an entire society, a nation, or all simultaneously existing societies taken to-

gether, are not owners of the earth, they are simply its possessors, its beneficiaries, and have to bequeath it in an improved state to succeeding generations as *boni patres familias*" (Foster, 1999: 384-385). Therefore, Marx implies that the harmony between nature and humanity can be established only in a socialist society by achieving "the perfected unity in essence of man with nature, the true resurrection of nature, the realized naturalism of man and the realized humanism of nature" (Foster, 2000: 79).

Marxism on Third World Environmentalism

Marxist thought was particularly exploited and used as a conceptual and theoretical framework in the analysis of Third World environmental changes, where the results of rampant capitalism are perhaps most evident. Thus, as suggested above, I will attempt to present how Marxist concepts and ideas are valuable in terms of perceiving and understanding modern and postmodern Third World environmental issues. In the context of the previous discussion, the starting point of the Marxist argument concerning this area is that environmental changes are the product of multiple inequalities that reflect the 'imperialistic' features of capitalism: socio-economic aspects (a class-based system of exploiters and the exploited), regional aspects (First World vs. Third World), and actors (TNCs and state/local communities). For researchers dealing with Third World environmental issues, Marxism and Neo-Marxism were particularly influential in the second half of the 20th century since they provided conceptual tools for an analysis of the exploitation of the environment and its resources from the broader perspective of political, social, and economic categories of the capitalist mode of production. Moorsom (1979), O'Brien (1985), and Hedlung (1979) were particularly involved in researching environmental issues through an analysis of the class system and global capitalist production. They published most of their research concerning this subject matter in the Review of African Political Economy (Bryant, 1998).

Bryant and Bailey (1997) offer the argument that political ecologists have two common attitudes towards the Third World. The

first of them is that challenges deriving from the broader environmental context reflect a wide range of political and economic forces related to the global capitalist tendencies. Since the Third World is facing fast-paced industrialization and urbanization, along with the intention of actors in developed countries to move 'unclean' production sectors to this area in pursuit of capital accumulation, researchers and scholars are even more focused on the effects of pollution and other negative externalities of capitalist production. Another area of agreement of political ecologists is the stance towards the necessity of comprehensive modifications in local, regional, and global processes in terms of political governance and the economy (Bryant and Bailey, 1997). However, Marxists disagree regarding how to achieve these changes and how to dismantle the above-mentioned inequalities that support the global capitalist system. It should foremost be noted that Marx emphasized that the momentum for change will secure the practical transformative actions of people, i.e. their 'praxis' (Jones, Bradbury, and Le Boutillier, 2011). In addition, he argued that revolution will only occur in combination with the concrete flaws of the system that will have an impact on developing the consciousness of the proletariat. On the other hand, Antonio Gramsci opposed the idea that political, economic, and wider social change will be achieved hand in hand with the development of the capitalist system and its modes of production, as Marx argued. Namely, Gramsci was of the opinion that Marxists have to teach and persuade, since revolution will only occur when hegemonic beliefs[1] are challenged by counter-socialization through education (Jones, Bradbury, and Le Boutillier, 2011).

In previous times, the function of the Third World was primarily to secure different natural resources for First World production, therefore contributing to the development of urbanization and industrialization. For instance, the countries and companies of the First World exploited cotton and groundnuts in Nigeria, copra in the Philippines, sugar in Brazil, and tea and coffee in India, while rubber was obtained from Malaysia (Bryant

1 Gramsci uses the notion of *hegemony* to describe different modes of the influence of ideology on distorting the individual's viewpoint and attitudes.

and Bailey, 1997). It should not be neglected that the colonial set-up significantly shaped local identities in the countries of the Third World, which also to some extent influenced the mind-set of communities in relation to the actors that act on the basis of capitalist logic. This aspect will be further discussed in the following part of the paper. However, one should note that the essence of the expansion of capitalism is manifested through the impact and degradation of the existing environmental, social, and economic state of the Third World countries. In addition, Marxist thought could be interpreted to mean that the aim of the global capitalist order is to drag all parts of the globe into the whirlpool of market logic and to generate surpluses for the benefit of transnational companies based in the countries of the First World. Thus, local communities and regions with vast quantities of natural resources, such that exist in the countries of the Third World, are particularly important. Therefore, developing countries, which are characterized by unexploited resources, cheap labor, and lax environmental restrictions, represent an ideal target for transnational companies and other global capitalist actors.

Adherents of Marxism fervently argue that the capitalist mode of production, based on unending pursuit of surplus accumulation, is the one that most significantly modifies relations among people and, which particularly concerns this paper, people and the environment (Peet, 1991). Hence, the success of capitalism, as first defined by Marx, depends on control of the means of production and the need to constantly create a surplus, which has to again be invested in the further acquisition of capital and creating surpluses. In the same vein, those who own the means of production aspire to controlling sufficient natural resources, instruments, and equipment, as well as human capital in terms of labor, in order for production to be efficient and to generate the necessary surplus (Bryant and Bailey, 1997). Thus, transnational companies choose to base their activities and production following the global capitalistic logic of generating a surplus, which leads them to the corporate decision to move industries predominantly to Third World countries. With that, the global

capitalist system directly causes an environmental crisis, which will be independently scrutinized below.

O'Connor (1989) argued that social and ecological categories are directly subordinated to the modes of the functioning of global capitalism by which it poses a threat to different aspects of environmentalism. On the other hand, Wolf (1982) discussed how the capitalist mode of governing production made (social) labor alter nature due to the manner in which available natural resources are used and further exploited. One can conclude, as Marxists and Neo-Marxists researching political ecology suggest, that the nature and characteristics of the global capitalist model cannot be in accordance with environmental postulates due to the logic of capital and surplus accumulation, which in the pursuit of existing natural resources often neglect the need to protect the environment and communities. Thus, the preservation of the environment and the global capitalist system comprise antagonistic principal features, which is manifested such that the progress of one side mirrors the deterioration of the other.

Transnational corporations in the Third World

In order to coherently observe the impact of the global capitalist system to Third World countries and their environment, one has to pay particular attention to TNCs – the most distinct protagonists of the globalization of the market-based economy and the logic of capital, and thereby an object of Marxist scrutiny. Thus, this type of research must take into account the relation between TNCs and Third World countries and societies, and as well further observe the rationale and impact of that relation on the environment while exploiting natural resources and human capital in the form of cheap labor. Bryant and Bailey (1997) in particular suggest that one of the principal characteristics of the relationship between First World TNCs and Third World countries is recognition of their mutual interest in cooperation. Namely, the financial, technological, and innovational capital of TNCs is presented as a necessary asset for the swift economic development of Third World countries. A prominent neoliberal

argument throughout most of the 20th century was that TNCs are of pivotal significance for the progress of the Third World (Jenkins, 2013). On the other hand, the vast natural resources of Third World counties, the availability of cheap labor, and lax environmental regulations are important incentives in the business strategies of TNCs based in First World countries.

At this point, we should take a step back in order to clarify the main business objectives of TNCs in the Marxist view. The logic of capital is primarily based on the accumulation of profit and surplus by reducing the cost of production as much as possible by acquiring resources and employing low-cost labor. In the field of Third World analysis, Marxists vigorously argue that First World TNCs transfer production to developing countries with cheaper labor compared to the countries wherein they are based, as well as to those with less stringent environmental regulations (Korten, 1995), which impacts local communities in terms of socio-economic change and environmental degradation. The academic and broader literature contains extensive evidence of TNCs moving production sites to Third World countries. In order to operationalize the analysis, this paper will place TNCs' reasons for transferring production into three categories. I would argue that the first argument for global capitalist companies to move production lies in the different valuable natural resources that exist in Third World countries. Since the beginning of industrial development and urbanization in Western Europe and North America, TNCs have been constantly exploiting their resources, thus the extraction of the necessary resources had to be shifted to other parts of world. Secondly, scientific and technological development, along with the rise in environmental awareness, prompted First World countries to adopt strict normative environmental regulations. Thus, the management of TNCs made a corporate decision to move production to so-called pollution havens, where environmental regulations have sufficient gaps or are simply less strict, in combination with the social-environmental crises in the western world, post-Fordism, and eco-consumerism. In addition, the cheap labor offered by Third World communities

plays a role in this context. These three categories form a mosaic of arguments supporting the corporative, capitalistic TNCs' motivation to move part of or entire production lines to the Third World, which causes, again due to the above-mentioned motives, the profound degradation of the environment.

In order to carry out a coherent analysis, previous theoretical considerations can be supported by the empirical evidence of environmental degradation caused by the profit chasing of TNCs. When discussing the impact of the global capitalist system on the extraction and exploitation of natural resources, one has to examine the case of Papua New Guinea, where mining and tree harvesting contributed to the degradation of the remaining tropical forests. Evidence of deforestation in Papua New Guinea was collected by Hurst (1990), who pointed a finger at the Honshu Paper Company from Japan and Amoco Corporation from the U.S. The Japanese company controlled a 50,000-hectare concession for timber exploitation in Madang, but their business operations caused large-scale deforestation due to negligent and unprofessional logging methods. Furthermore, Amoco, founded by one of the brand names of rampant capitalism – the Rockefeller family – operated the OK Tedi Mine, an open-pit copper and gold mine, one of the most significant in the world. However, besides generating profit, the results of operations were manifested in the degradation of biodiversity, soil depletion, and the vast destruction of forests.

Another example of a manufactured environmental problem is located in Ecuador, where a petroleum industry production site was located. Texaco, a subsidiary of Chevron Corporation, extracted oil in the country, in cooperation with the national oil company of Ecuador, and since it did not properly construct or maintain the sites, there were oil spills, production pits, and leaking pipelines, as well as heavy metal contamination, all of which resulted in evident environmental impoverishment (Bryant and Bailey, 1997). Recently, Ecuador and its former president Rafael Correa accused Chevron of "deliberately polluting" the Amazon rain forest and demanded reparations for polluting communities, all while comparing its business practices with racism (North,

2015). Moreover, he blamed Texaco for dumping toxic waste into 1,000 pits along with billions of gallons of oil-exposed water in a 1,700-square-mile area between 1972 and 1992 (North, 2015).

The current literature has extensive evidence of TNCs' practice of neglecting environmental regulations in the Third World, which has had a profound impact on nature and the socio-economic setting. Perhaps a 'good' example to mention is the Bhopal disaster, the worst industrial disaster of the time. Namely, in 1984 in Bhopal, India, an explosion occurred at a Union Carbide pesticide plant that claimed approximately 3,000 lives, with about 100,000 also directly injured by the gas explosion (Varma and Varma, 2005). Moreover, it is estimated that more than 500,000 people were affected by the leaking of extremely toxic gas, more than 40 tons of methyl isocyanate (Broughton, 2005). The explosion was the chief cause of the high mortality rate and premature death amongst the local inhabitants, who mainly came from the lower stratum of society. This calamity unveiled to the global community the urgent need to strengthen respect for norms regarding environmental protection. The main argument in condemning the disaster was that the U.S.-based Union Carbide Corporation's inadequate management and maintenance was the leading cause of the explosion. It is important to note that the normative framework regarding industrial safety was in place, but the capitalist logic of the business entity concerned dictated that environmental regulations be neglected in order to acquire capital swiftly, without consideration of the potential impact of such practices (Gladwin, 1987).

One can interpret Marxist thought such that TNCs' corporate logic remains diametrically opposed to the postulates of environmentalism and the need to preserve nature and its resources. The selected cases described above suggest that TNCs commonly do not place environmental protection among their business priorities, which results in the genuine degradation of nature, the exploitation of resources, and neglect of social justice. Their basic corporate interest is to maximize profit while minimizing production costs. One of the most efficient ways to achieve such profit is to bypass the existing environmental regulations, along

with locating production sites in countries characterized by vast supplies of natural resources and cheap human capital. Thus, Marxist thought would explain such effects as a product of the capitalist necessity to maximize profits through the exploitation of labor and natural resources on the basis of the ideological perspective that the accumulation of wealth will benefit people in all societies. However, today we are witnessing ever-growing inequality, while labor continues to be intensively exploited and the environment continuously degraded.

Conclusion

The objective of this paper was to discuss the ecological discourse in the writings of Marx and Engels and to further determine the position of nature in their comprehensive theory of history. Thus, the significance of this particular work lies in grasping the substance of their concepts related to the natural environment, which represents the foundation and starting point for further Marxist and Neo-Marxist critique of political ecology. Therefore, the first part of this paper focused on presenting how Marx and Engels understood the relation between nature and human, between nature and labor, as well as between nature and capitalism. In the second part of the paper I attempted to present how the relevant concepts and established theoretical framework could be applied in an analysis of particular regional environmental issues. In that vein, this paper briefly discussed the Marxist perspective concerning Third World environmentalism. Hence, it has to be underlined that Marx's and Engels's concepts and considerations related to nature provide an epistemological ground for the development of eco-socialism.

Any analysis of Marxism cannot be complete without a brief selection of the main criticisms. For instance, Lowy (2017) argues that mainstream ecologists criticize Marx and Engels for their Promethean view of a humankind that dominates and controls nature. Furthermore, they raise the issue of the continuous conflict between humanity and nature presented above. In addition,

there is a group of eco-socialists who argue that the fragments of Marx's writings concerning ecology are not sufficient, and, moreover, they cannot be applied to an analysis of contemporary environmental issues. On the other hand, Foster, Burkett, and other eco-socialist underline the importance of the methodological approach in Marx's critique of political economy and capitalism (Lowy, 2017). It may be the case that contemporary eco-socialists are not in a position to organize their analysis of concrete environmental issues around Marx's nearly two-century-old thoughts in this sphere. Therefore, they have to adopt a proper critical attitude towards Marx's limitations in the context of 21st century political ecology. However, I would argue that Marxist historical materialism and Marx's thorough scrutiny of the devastating and predatory power of capitalism from an ecological perspective represents a pivotal and inevitable component of the evolution of eco-socialist thought. Furthermore, the comprehensive theory of history of Marx and Engels and the place of nature within this elaborated framework provide the foundation for a subsequent critique of political ecology and offer tools for a better understanding of the environmental crises that pose a grave threat to humanity and its habitat.

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Vesna Kolar Planinšič

Use of Environmental Criteria in Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening for Developing an Integrated Green Economy and their Relation to the Conflicts between the Development and Environmental Protection in Slovenia

Abstract: The article presents the results of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening assessment research. Screening represents an early phase of SEA, during the preparation of the first plan or programme drafts. The criteria are checked by environmental administration in consultation with ministries and various other organisations and a determination is made as to the significance of particular environmental effects. The research was done on 279 screening decisions cases within the period 2009 -2010, which present representative period, when criteria became fully applicable. The screening decision were analysed by types of plans and programmes. The first 20 screening decision during 2009 shows that not all criteria were used during the screening, but in the other 259 cases in 2010 the criteria were more developed. The considered criteria included the degree to which a plan or programme set a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources; the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy; the relevance of a plan or

programme regarding the integration of environmental considerations- in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development, considering environmental problems relevant to a plan and its effects. Conflict arose in only 2 screening decisions in municipalities, complaints taken to the administrative court against screening decision , claiming that the land use plans would have significant environmental effects. The court decisions confirmed the screening decision and support the decision of the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning, concluding that the decisions were favourable to the environment. In 2010 259 screening decisions were issued, all criteria were applied, and, there were no complaints. . The study demonstrates, that transparent screening procedure significantly reduces the number conflicts and that the procedure helps in integration of environmental aims and green economy.

Keywords: Political ecology, integrated green economy, sustainable development, strategic environmental assessment, environmental criteria, screening, conflict

Introduction

Conflicts between environmental protection and development is centuries old , and was particularly hastened in the 19th century, with the advent of capitalist development making exponential demands on the environment and natural resources to match its overwhelming growth in production. Methods for reducing conflict in the field were developed by landscape and spatial planners in 20th century with the aim of finding sustainable alternatives, but were limited to such types of development as infrastructure, water supply, tourism and industry. McHarg's influential book Design with Nature influenced the synthesizes and generalization of the ecological wisdom in informing landscape planning and design (Mc. Harg, 1969). In further decade methods were developed, such as matrix and other evaluation methods (D.H.F. Lju, Bela G. Liptak, 1997), which were used in environmental impact assessment for projects (EIA). Methods were not perfect and technical challenges appeared (B. Elling, 2008).

In 21 century in EU and OECD countries environment is recognised not only as the natural source for economic development, but as substantive category which is needed to sustain for long term development (OECD, 2012). Only countries with clean water, soil, air, nature, cultural heritage, landscape, human health will have long term base for survival and development. In the parallel with research, case studies and study programmes in Slovenia (A. Zavodnik Lamovšek , 2018), the legislative framework has been developed, which included also public information and participation.

In Europe, the Environment become high on the political agenda and very complex environmental legislation was developed. There is the obligation of membership in the European Union which means that countries aspiring to join the European Union must align their national laws, rules and procedures in order to give effect to the entire body of EU law contained in the *acquis communautaire* (European Commission, 2015).

At the beginning of 20th century the conflicts occurred in water protection, floods and settlement planning, industry and public

health, nature conservation and different land uses etc., and today we can see the results and lessons learned. In 1984 the integration of nature conservation and water into the national strategy and municipality spatial plans started more systematic, but steel weak.

In 2004, the new legislative, administrative and technical measures were developed on national, EU and international levels to protect the public interest of the environment with an active participation of Slovenia. In 2004, the renewed Environmental Protection Act established transparent procedure of environmental integration into all plans and programmes at the very beginning of planning as the common standard. SEA was developed as supportive method and applied from 2004. In the field of environment Slovenia had positive development with good practice examples on SEA, but also some cases of underestimation of environmental issues.

In parallel, the civil society models were developed to stop the capitalistic economic approach and to develop value based approach of Integrated Green Economy. The models were developed in Slovenia to find the ideas and the way for harmonised development, based on cultural and natural heritage, tradition and history (Piciga, 2016).

Strategic environmental assessment Directive (SEA Directive)

Article 174 of the European Treaty provides that Community policy on the environment is to contribute to the preservation, protection and improvement of the quality of the environment, the protection of human health and the prudent and rational utilisation of natural resources and that it is to be based on the precautionary principle.

In 2001 countries with the support of science and NGO decided that within all sectoral pieces of environmental legislation the horizontal one is needed to support the integration of relevant environmental issues into the plan and European Parliament accepted SEA Directive. The scientific approach in preparation

of legislation helps in its practical components in strategic environmental assessment, to restructure the old ways of acting into the acting »learning by doing better«. Slovenia co created the directive, including criteria and methodology as well as the international law such as Protocol on Strategic environmental assessment to the Espoo Convention (UNECE, 2003). Both laws were built on integration of environment into plans and programmes, and on cooperation between authorities and States, and thus reducing conflicts.

The Convention on Biological Diversity (United Nations, 1992) also requires Parties to integrate, as far as possible and as appropriate, the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity into relevant sectoral or cross-sectoral plans and programmes. Environmental assessment became an important tool for integrating environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment, because it ensures that such effects of implementing plans and programmes are considered during their preparation and before their adoption. The adoption of environmental assessment procedures at the planning and programming level should benefit undertakings by providing a more consistent framework in which to operate by the inclusion of the relevant environmental information into decision making. The inclusion of a wider set of factors in decision making should contribute to more sustainable and effective solutions (SEA Directive, 2001).

The SEA Directive applies to a wide range of public plans and programmes and it has been in force since 2001. The transposition date was 21 July 2004 and Slovenia transposed it into national legislation by Environmental Protection Act in 2004 particularly with the articles 40-46. Plans and programmes must be prepared or adopted by an authority (at national, regional or local level) and be required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions. SEA is mandatory for plans/programmes which are prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste and water management, telecommunications,

tourism, town and country planning or land use, and which set the framework for future development consent of EIA projects or have been determined to require an assessment under the Council Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive, 1992). For the plans and programmes not included above, the Member States must carry out a screening procedure to determine whether the plans or programmes are likely to have significant environmental effects. If there are significant effects, a SEA is needed. The screening procedure is based on criteria set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive. The criteria have been negotiated in all member states and now present the same detailed criteria for all Europe.

If the decision on significant environmental effects is issued at the end of the screening procedure, SEA is required. The SEA further procedure consists from following steps: scoping, preparation of the environmental report in which the likely significant effects on the environment and the reasonable alternatives of the proposed plan or programme are identified, information to the public and final decision on plan. The public and the environmental authorities are informed and consulted on the draft plan or programme, and the environmental report prepared. As regards plans and programmes, which are likely to have significant effects on the environment in another Member State, the Member State in whose territory the plan or programme is being prepared must consult the other Member State(s). On this issue the SEA Directive follows the general approach taken by the Protocol on strategic environmental assessment to the UN ECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context. The slightly different environmental assessment systems have been developed within Member States, but the set of common procedural requirements are necessary to contribute to a high level of protection of the environment. The transposition and proper application are widely used now and present the environmental tool, which could support integrity, democracy, and reducing the environmental crime (K. Bezuh, T.Filipiva, J.A. Gerardu, V.K.Planinšič, et all. 2017).

Transposition in Slovenia

The transposition obligation started on 21 July 2004, at the time of Slovenian EU membership. This means that there were no experiences in EU before and the systems were developed in parallel with all other member states. SEA was introduced into Slovenian system in 2004 by Environmental Protection Act and Decree laying down the content of environmental report and on detailed procedure for the assessment of the effects on certain plans and programmes (Of. J. 73/05)

At the beginning of such prescribed environmental transparency there was partly negative attitude of developers, which would like to have bigger influence on municipality planning and which would like to keep influence on decision making, including on environment. The municipality role by Constitution is local land use planning. Environmental issues within the plans and environmental report support planning to develop proper sustainable alternatives, which would benefit economy, ecology and social.

After 14 years of transposition, application and experiences in integration it was time to check the real consequences and results and begin the study. We will present the result of the study of environment integration in the early stage of plan preparation, which is a screening phase. The research thesis is that transparent use of scientific criteria and transparent procedure reduce the level of conflict between the development and environmental protection in Slovenia at the planning stage.

Among the horizontal legislation the SEA transposition has great potential. It could influence and support the process to transform the plans and programmes for the transformation of society into environmentally friendly, sustainable society. "Plans and programmes" in Slovenian legislation means plans and programmes, including those co-financed by the European Community as well as any modifications to them: which are subject to preparation and/or adoption by an authority at national, regional or local level or which are prepared by an authority for adoption, through a legislative procedure, and which are required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions.

SEA is needed for plans which are prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in decree on EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment), or which, in view of the likely effect on sites, have been determined to require an Habitats assessment.

Plans and programmes which determine the use of small areas at local level and minor modifications to plans and programmes shall require an environmental assessment only where the Member States determine that they are likely to have significant environmental effects. The phase is known as a screening phase and is determined in Environmental Protection Act , article 40.

The question is to what extent we manage to apply transparency in using environmental criteria in SEA screening and reduce the level of conflicts in Slovenia.

The SEA screening analysis

We have analysed the first stage in preparation of plan, which means first drafts and screening procedure. Mostly, the assessed screening procedures for land use plans are municipality land use plan and national spatial plans, forest management plans, water management plans, rural development plan and energy plans.

The environmental criteria assure that all state organisations and municipalities are treated equally in assessing the environmental effects of their plans and programmes taking into account all screening cases. The method consists of three analytic steps. As the first we examined 1000 screening in the period of 2006-2018 (MOP, 2018). The second step was choosing the representative period where different types of plans were examined and the third step checking of 279 screening decisions for the period 2009-2017 and the use of all different environmental criteria.

The examination of criteria and related level of conflict was done on 279 screening decisions cases within the period 2009

-2010, which present representative period when criteria became fully applicable. The screening decisions were analysed by types of plans and programmes. In 2009 20 screening decisions show that not all criteria were used in the screening. In 2010 259 cases show that the criteria were more developed and explained.

Most of the plans were municipality land use plans, which assure:

a. the long-term organisation of all activities in the space, the proper organisation of activities that are not in conflicts with each other,
b. the organisation of the different land use in such a way that they are not in conflicts with the environment, water, nature conservation, landscape, air, soil, cultural heritage and human health and that all environmental components are still in good status.

SEA in Integral Green Economy Model

SEA presents systemic approach for integration of the environment into political plan decision and supports transformation to more green economy. The political ecology experts search for new systemic models for the transformation of capitalism and degrowth (Vincent Liegey, 2018). Different terminology for environmental sustain development models, like eco-feminism, eco socialism and green economy.

Together with the authors of Integral Economics, Professors Ronnie Lessem and Alexander Schieffer, and their Geneva-based institute Trans4m Centre for Integral Development, and a number of internationally renowned role models, in theory and practice, a new Integral Green Slovenian Economic and Societal perspective gradually evolved and was presented in the Gower and Routledge volume Integral Green Slovenia (Piciga,2016), with the future proposed model called Integral Green Economy.

The Initiative for an Integral Green Slovenia is based on the conviction that by building on the country's potentials for all four integral economic paths (i.e. self-sufficient community-

based economy, developmental culture-based economy, social knowledge based economy and "living" life-based economy) and fundamental values underlying its cultural heritage. We have the opportunity, in both theory and practice, to co-evolve a knowledge and value based economy and sustainable society that can serve as a pilot case for the integral green approach at a time when Europe is seeking to develop a smart (knowledge-based), sustainable and inclusive society and green economy.

The integral theoretical framework is being applied in an original and practical way:

- by placing fundamental values, underlying the Slovenian and European cultural heritage in the centre and as the starting point of practical policies and measures;
- by authentically building on Slovenian culture as well as incorporating elements of neighbouring and other cultures;
- by connecting and upgrading Slovenian good practices, aligning them with (already) internationally recognised models of integral economy and sustainable development;
- by smart integration and effective implementation of EU developmental policies based on sustainable development principles;
- by purposely building on the paradigm of sustainable development that encompasses four dimensions (i.e. economy, environment, society, culture), with emphasis on values of sustainability and social responsibility.

Within this participative Integral Green Slovenia the SEA was presented on different programmes as a positive systematic method to support the transformation (D. Piciga, V.Kolar-Planinšič, 2017). One of the key distinctive features of the Slovenian model of integral green development is its *embeddedness* in the policy framework of the European Union. A new development model has not been built *from the scratch;* quite the opposite, our argument is that a number of existing policies and guidelines, measures and instruments across several policy domains are already

supporting sustainable development goals and the integral green model of development. We can consider them as EU policies for sustainable development. On the other hand, one can observe that sustainable development is often impeded by certain other policies, i.e. macroeconomic and fiscal policies. Already proven advantages and strengths of the social responsibility principles and integral economy model lead us to the assumption that by placing values of social responsibility and sustainability in the centre of an economic model and, at the same time, by strongly relying on four dimensions of sustainable development (i.e. environment, society, economy, as well as culture) we could outweigh the unsustainable policy impulses. (Piciga, 2017). Drawing the threads together of our integral green argument, we can relate it to several existing EU policies for sustainable development (such as the green and social economy, social responsibility, organic food and energy self-supply), with a view to "smart integration" of such. In this context we find the SEA system useful for integration of the environmental goals into all plans and programmes related to EU financial support and therefor the possibility to preserve and develop Slovenian landscape, cultural heritage and the environment. (Piciga, V. Kolar- Planinsic, 2017).

The SEA environmental screening criteria

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects referred to in Article 3(5) of the SEA Directive and the Decree laying down the content of environmental report and on detailed procedure for the assessment of the effects on certain plans and programmes on the environment (O.J. RS, No. 73/05) and are like following:

I. the characteristics of plans and programmes regarding,

1.1 the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources,

1.2 the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy,

1.3 the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,

1.4 environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme,

1.5 the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection).

2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to 2.1 the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,

2.2 the cumulative nature of the effects,

2.3 the transboundary nature of the effects,

2.4 the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),

2.5 the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),

2.6 the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:

2.7 special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,

2.8 exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,

2.9 intensive land-uses,

2.10 the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.

On the base of criteria the screenings were prepared and explained with the use of data from different environmental information from the data bases (Environmental Atlas, 2018).

The methodology on case analysis of screening decision in 2009

At first, the cases were analysed in relation to three basic criteria: the framework for projects with significant effects (EIA), effects to European ecological framework Natura 2000 (Natura 2000) or

criteria from Annex II. The cases where SEA was not applicable and had no significant environmental effects (N –NO) and cases where SEA was applicable, because there were possible significant environmental effects (Y-YES) are presented in Table 1. At the end of the table, the conflicts are presented. Conflict means that developers complain to the ministry or to the court against the screening decision. In 2 cases they mean that their plan proposal is good and there is no need to prepare the Environmental report and proceed with SEA further.

The screening criteria have been analysed and then defined in two groups: in first, the criteria were taken into account (+) and in second the criteria were not been taken into account (-) are presented in Table 2.

Interpretation of results

Screening decisions in 2009 were mostly about municipality land use plans and implementation spatial plans, energy, forestry plans, one water management plan and one nitrate reduction plan.

All groups of criteria were applied for all 20 cases. The characteristic of plans and programmes, having regarded the decree to which the plan or programme sets the framework for projects, were applied in all 20 cases. The characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected in 11 cases, having regard to the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of effects and the cumulative nature of effects in 2 cases and risk of human health in 2 cases, the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to special natural characteristic or cultural heritage appeared in majority of cases in 8 cases and extended environmental quality standards and limit values in 2 cases. Other criteria were not described in screening due to the fact that they were not relevant for the case. All decisions were published and only two conflicts occurred.

First political ecologic conflict appeared in the case of National energy plan, because the policy decision was to accept the plan as soon as possible and environmental consideration were

Table 1: The analysis of effects on 20 cases in 2009

Number of cases	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
EIA	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Natura 2000	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Annex II	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
SEA Screening Decision Appropriate Assessment	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N
Conflict	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N

not taken into account yet. The reason was that at the beginning of the process nobody could have predicted what would be the final result, since the process was done on technical level. In spite of uncertainty, the SEA process was finally supported and all SEA processes, including transboundary process with 5 Member States, were finalised.

The second conflict was only technical with one municipality, because the screening decision was issued few days after 30 days legislative framework for the screening decision. The municipality complained to the administrative court, which decided that the date was an orientation date and that the substance of the decision was important and confirmed the issued screening decision. The court decision was in favour to the ministry decision. In the court decision it was exact explanation to the municipality that the law settled the orientation date to issue decision and that the main purpose was not about the date, but about the environment and human health. The decision was confirmed, and the municipality started with preparation of the plan and environmental report.

On the base of analyses for the year 2009 we can conclude that when the conflict situation occurs, it is not related to the environmental criteria. One of two conflicts was based on technical reason of late decision and another one on local political reason.

Table 2: The analysis of criteria from Annex II of SEA Directive

Number of cases	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1	-	-	-	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
1.1	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	-	-	-	-
1.2	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
1.3	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1.4	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
1.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	-	-	-	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-
2.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2.2	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
2.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
2.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
2.6	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	-	-
2.7	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	+	+	-	-	-
2.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2.9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2.10	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

The SEA screening analyses 2010

The 2010 years analyses show that in 259 cases draft plans were presented by the different proponents such as municipalities, national directorate for spatial planning and institute for forestry for the screening. 207 cases were screened out with the use of criteria, which means that there was no significant impact on those plans. In 32 cases the strategic environmental assessment and appropriate assessment were decided and in 20 only strategic environmental assessments was decided. In all cases the Natura 2000 effects and EIA criteria were used as well as the SEA Directives Annex II criteria. Mostly used criteria were the characteristics of the effects and the area likely to be affected, having in regard the value and vulnerability of the area due to specific characteristics or cultural heritage. In some cases, the risk to human health or the environmental criteria was relevant and assessed. The reason lied in detailed criteria analysis and additional presentation of technical facts to the proponent of the plan. Sometime the proponents improved plans with environment mitigation measures. All decisions in 2010 were based on selection criteria.

In 2010 the first strategic environmental assessment was introduced for the forest management plan, due to change of protected forest and possible impact on biodiversity. The proponent decided not to accept the plan and not to proceed with the assessment. Due to the facts that technical criteria were well described and presented to the proponent before the final decision was issued and due to the reason that the forestry plan was confirmed by the Ministry for Agriculture, there was no official complaint by the proponent to the court. But on technical level and political level the conflict occurred: the strategic environmental assessment was not prepared by proponent, which rather ignored the decision than preceded it. Such a conflict we can call »hidden conflict«. In the framework of SEA directive, the aim of screening decision is to delete unnecessary administrative burden, but still have a look to all environmental criteria and the impact of the plan. In the case of positive screening the main aim

is to proceed with strategic environmental assessment as soon as possible in effective way and not ignore the decision for 8 years.

The analyses of 2010 showed that the use of criteria extended and those criteria were further used and developed. Only one potential conflict in the municipality plan occurred, but turned into positive cooperation and interdisciplinary work between actors and at the end, environmental better plan was developed, and SEA finalised. There was no complain procedure before the court, therefor it was registered as the positive example. In 2010 no conflict occurred, which would result on court case.

Conclusion

SEA methods support the integral green economy process, while greening plans and programmes, including land use plans in municipalities and it is essential for harmonised eco-economic development. The first SEA stage is screening procedure, which presents an important step, while it screens out the plans with no possibility for significant environmental effects.

The possibility for the environmental effects was assessed in all cases at the very beginning of planning when the first drafts of all plans and programmes were prepared. The screening decision was publicly available and gave possibility to the proponent to complain.

The research was done on 279 screening decisions cases within the period 2009 -2010, which presented representative period when criteria became fully applicable. Analyses by types of plans and programmes showed that screening decision was issued mostly for the municipalities land use plans and urbanistic plans, national spatial plans, forest management, water management and energy plans.

In 2009 20 screening cases 2009 show that not all criteria were explained in the screening. In 2010 259 cases showed that the criteria were more developed and explained. Criteria such as the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the loca-

tion, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources, the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy, the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development, environmental problems relevant to the plan and effects were used during the screening. Until 2010 all criteria were used in the screening.

The conflict situation appeared in 0, 71 % screening decisions, mostly in small municipalities, which complained against the ministry decision on screening that the plan has significant environmental effects at the administrative court. The court decision for municipalities confirmed the environmental decision and the use of criteria, so the reduction of complains occurred in none in 2010, which could be treated as minor.

The analysis of 279 cases from the first period of application of screening procedure shows that detail criteria assessment was used and analysed in the screening decision. It presents that from 20 cases in 2009 there were 2 conflicts and from 259 cases in 2010 there were no conflicts. The rate of the conflicts for the period 2009-2010 is 0, 71 %, which could be treated as a minor rate.

The study shows that all environmental criteria, when they are properly used and well explained in the screening decision, present the transparent base for screening and reduce the level of conflict, because they raise the understanding of the environment in state and local administration, expert level and public. The research confirms the thesis that transparent use of scientific criteria and transparent procedure reduced the level of conflict between the development and environment in Slovenia.

The study shows that the procedure helps in integration of environmental aims, understanding of the public and the acceptance of the plan. All 0, 7 % conflicts occurred regardless to environmental criteria used in the procedure and were developed on the political level.

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Pascale Emily JURENEC, M.Sc. (Political Science)

Blue Political Theory through the Prism of Human Rights

Abstract: The following paper deals with humanity's perception of the Earth through the prism of human rights, which are nowadays the most commonly applied legal and political concept. The author critically evaluates the role of the state and the individual within it through the attitude of the individual towards the environment. The central question of the article is whether the existing (institutional) forms enable the realization of human rights and sustainable development goals. In the development of the argumentation, the author relies on the thoughts of different authors within political theory and current environmental problems. The aim of this article is therefore threefold: to explore the role of human rights within the environment and sustainability, to reconsider the role of the state in the desire to achieve sustainability, and finally, to propose some possible improvements for future research in terms of rights and responsibilities, with a proposal for a human right to blueness.

Keywords: human rights, sustainable development, state, blueness, the environment, Earth.

"No system's gonna help,
if we are prisoners of ourselves."
Soulgreg Artist

Introduction

Human history reminds us of the fact that it is composed of, to say the least, agreements and disagreements, ideological wars for power and powerlessness, economic growth and falls, and various movements that have challenged and changed the dominant political ideology and theory. Human rights, civil rights, even women's rights, and such movements were often rooted in modest beginnings, the passion of a few which became the cause of the many. For instance, environmental movements became an overarching term for the growing public interest in protecting the Earth and its natural resources in the late seventies (Whitney, 2018). Deforestation and ecosystem destruction, the depletion of resources such as oil fields, the loss of wildlife, impacts on landscapes, such as earthquakes, craters developing, or volcanic eruptions and the ever-expanding economy and industry are just a few of the causes of the environmental movement that have had a significant in shaping different policies (Mannion, 2003). All this resulted in the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in 1972, which defined the environment, both natural and man-made, as essential to human well-being and the enjoyment of the most basic human right, the right to life itself. This is defined as a fundamental right to freedom, equality, and adequate conditions for life in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being by protecting and improving the environment for present and future generations (United Nations, 1972). Nevertheless, alarming environmental changes became not just a crisis of a certain area of the Earth's surface, but a planetary problem of humanity. Although some of the problems remain local, regional, or continental, the shift was or should be, namely, towards the realization of the global. The necessity

to see beyond the boundaries of national states or continents is needed more than ever before. However, the truth is that people are usually only aware of local and regional environmental problems, especially when they affect their good life (Lukšič 2009-2010: 423). In spite of the awareness of the majority of only the local level, the awareness of the minority as to the global led to the development of the concept of sustainability in the form of global sustainable development goals. Therefore, human rights and sustainability have become the most commonly used form for achieving goals in many countries in the world, especially in the developing ones. They have become the main (political) concept and an indispensable element of law (Jug in Zver, 1992).

Seventy years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and almost fifty years since the emergence of the human right to a clean environment, on the one hand, and climate changes calling for urgent action to phase out fossil fuels, natural disasters, and other increasing environmental problems, on the other, we are discovering a deep crisis in the implementation of the Declaration on different levels.

The article begins by explaining different generations of human rights and their role within the state, the environment, and sustainability. In the process, it reveals different levels of responsibilities and questions the existing forms, structures, and mechanisms of the state for achieving sustainable development. Based on the fact that all social forms are constructed by individuals, in the last section the article brings into question the human right to life in parallel with the human right to a clean environment, through the basic elements needed for survival and the life of all human beings on the Earth, and proposes some possible improvements for future research.

Our aim and thesis is therefore not to find a culprit for the state of the Earth, but to enable progress by ensuring that humans, institutions, and states take responsibility on all levels and by considering the structures that we as a society have set up. Not by offering new and different forms, but rather by implementing the existing ones, with a holistic view of the world.

Human Rights and the Environment

The modern development of human rights has occurred in the form of three generations (as most authors summarize Vasek's division from 1977). Human rights have a long history, as the beginning of the first phase in the modern era is marked by the generation of civil and political rights. Those rights have been institutionalized in constitutions, in the laws of most countries, and in many international documents, such as The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Pact on Civil and Political Rights, and the European Convention on Human Rights (Cornescu, 2009: 5). Today, such rights are a fundamental part of the legal and constitutional systems of many countries and have become anchored in the consciousness of individuals as something that exists as the foundation of modern (Western) societies. Even though it seemed unimaginable a hundred years ago, nowadays they have been guaranteed and protected on different levels.

The second generation of human rights, in contrast to the first one, which can be implemented individually, requires institutional support from the state. This is a logical product of the increasing role of the state in a legal and political sense. Therefore, the state requires intervention through the legalization and creation of an institutional system that permits the exercise of individual rights. Naturally, we are referring to socio-economic and cultural rights, such as the right to work, the freedom of association, the right to education and learning, etc. These rights first appeared in the Mexican Constitution and a year later in the Weimar Constitution, and created a hierarchical relationship between the two generations of rights (Cornescu, 2009:5). Due to the existence of the first and second generations, we often hear that the human rights of the second generation are in a subordinate position to the rights of the first one. The truth is that they provide us with a distinction between the individual and collective levels, but despite using the term generation we have forgotten that also in life generations do not replace each other sequentially over time. The only shift between them is in

the existence of borders or states, which have taken responsibility for their implementation and control (Macklem, 2015).

Even more collectivistic is the third generation, comprised of solidarity rights, which cannot be exercised individually on the global or state level, although they can be exercised individually at lower levels. Despite the possibility of implementation on the micro level, to be fully implemented they require local, regional, national, and international support and operation on the macro level. We are talking about the right of people to self-determination, to peace, development, humanitarian assistance, environmental law, and even the rights of minorities such as sexual, ethnic, religious minorities, etc. These rights are not so widespread as those of the first generation and are often problematic in practice. Usually they are expressed in documents that spread so-called soft law, for example the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992), the UN Conference on the Human Environment, the Stockholm Declaration, and others (Cornescu, 2009).

The last generation of human rights is therefore the one that warns about and defines the rights whose factors are constantly present but which – due to the level of development and the perception of contemporary capitalist society – are overlooked, and we could even say that until the breakthrough in the 1970s they were an unimportant or invisible part of everyday life. An individual as a citizen therefore finds him- or herself at a point where the individual and collective awareness are not enough for the implementation of the sustainability goals and the third generation of human rights. At the point where the form of the state is not enough, since many regimes do not adopt policies that would ensure their implementation. The exercise of the rights of all three generations, therefore, requires the activation of both approaches wherever it is necessary and urgent. However, in order to understand the necessity of consolidation, we first need to understand how human rights and sustainable development are connected.

The concept of sustainable development emerged at the moment when it was necessary to provide further opportunities for economic and social development. Concurrently, it was ne-

cessary to reconsider the environmental dimensions, while keeping production ratios untouched. It is a concept that it is impossible to determine due to a multitude of definitions that emerge upon mentioning it (Bahor in Lukšič, 2009). Roughly speaking, for an understanding thereof, we can use the definition of the Brundtland Commission from 1987, which defines sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present generation, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (UNECE, 2018). It is therefore a concept whose realization would be achieved by respecting human rights intentionally or unconsciously, or as Mary Robinson (UN High Commissioner for Human Rights) stated: "poverty eradication without empowerment is unsustainable. Social integration without minority rights is unimaginable. Gender equality without women's rights is illusory. Full employment without workers' rights may be no more than a promise of sweatshops, exploitation, and slavery. The logic of human rights in development is inescapable (UNAC 2018)." As we can see, respect for and enforcement of human rights is a precondition for sustainable development. We can therefore agree that the concept of sustainable development involves and contains all three generations of human rights and requires their equivalence, balance, and unification. And all these rights need to be respected and regulated through different individual local, national, and international mechanisms.

Since human beings are basically dependent on the Earth, nature, and the environment, we will continue to focus on the rights and goals of sustainable development that are related to the environment and require the unification of all three generations of human rights. They encourage the awareness of human beings, who on the basis of nature will realize all other human rights. Just like building a house: first of all, a person needs some land on this planet Earth. After that, he or she needs to learn about all the relevant rules and regulations. During this process, he or she becomes acquainted with all of the necessary interventions in the environment. This is followed by the first construction phase, which involves the preparation of the terrain, excavation,

and laying the foundations. The subsequent procedure is clear in terms of both physical and financial aspects. All the way to the stage when after a few generations the house is demolished. Just as in the construction of a house, humans constantly interact with the environment. On the one hand, survival and quality of life are dependent on nature, while on the other, nature is ironically dependent on humanity. So, the responsibility of all human beings is to live in harmony and interaction with nature.

The shift to using environmentally *harmful construction materials* and the disruption of the balance between input and output began in the mid 1700s, with the biggest visible impact in the early 1960s with the so-called Green Revolution. Consequences such as population growth, dependence on limited resources, unsustainable growth, capitalism, migration processes, and others have had a significant impact on the environment in many different ways (McLamb 2018). This led to the emergence of the above-mentioned third generation of human rights, initially in the Declaration of the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972, and reaffirmed with the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development in 1992, when the right to – and often forgotten responsibility to ensure – a clean environment was finally discussed and prioritized. Article One of the Stockholm Declaration states: "Man has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life, in a quality environment that permits a life of dignity and well-being, and he holds a solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment for present and future generations."

Humankind thus finds itself at a point where, on the one hand, it is developing sustainable development goals, the human right to a clean environment, and global policies for the conservation thereof, while on the other hand it supports the capitalist state and its primary goal i.e. to maximize profit. As a result (of industrialization, capitalism, and increasing supply and consumption) a society has evolved that is increasingly egocentric and alienated from the environment. This is the subject that Marcuse (1964) discussed in his work One-dimensional Man. He was

convinced that people are seduced by goodness and comfort and content to wallow in false freedom, free time, and individualism. He even characterizes one-dimensional man as shallow, living in a world full of illusions, and with a great demand for subjectivity.

After fifty years, we can surely say that the distinction between those two extremes is even more visible than before. The pollution of the oceans, climate change, the melting of the ice cover, planetary heating processes, the eradication of forests, and nitrogen pollution are just some of the real environmental processes happening at the moment. Increasing consumption, wars, substance abuse, and the increasing incidence mental health disorders are just a few of the facts that our society is dealing with. The demand for natural resources worldwide has increased tremendously and has caused major, irreversible impacts on the global ecosystem (European Environment Agency 2010).

Both aspects, i.e. the development of human rights and sustainable development goals and the cruel reality and egocentrism of human beings, require a distinctive global approach, broad human understanding, and awareness of the world. Since the state is the predominant structure in the world enabling the realization of human rights and sustainable development in terms of policies and law, it is necessary to consider its relationship with nature. Firstly, because the state is a form that consciously or unconsciously creates the relationship of its citizens with the environment. And secondly, because the effective realization of macro policies, such as the UN Declaration on the Human Environment and Sustainable Development Goals (i.e. forms adopted upon by international agreement), is impossible if there are no required mechanism on the micro level.

The Relationship of the State with the Environment

The human right to life and its realization through enforcement of the human right to a clean environment puts the state under scrutiny due to the form of the current social order. Its role has

escalated to the point where it regulates the human rights of all three generations. This shows that the question is not whether we have different generations as regards forms of application. But the question is whether and how the existing policies and economic arrangements of different states enable its realization. Rights and responsibilities are being intertwined through different institutional levels. The course of their implementation is therefore set individually by states through different legal and other mechanisms. In view of the existing forms of the state, their (effective) outcome is doubtful.

For example, Slovenia adopted the Development Strategy 2030, a national framework for development, whose main purpose is to ensure a sustainable, inclusive, and more conscious future for Slovenia. In order to realize the strategy five strategic orientations have been implemented, namely the following: "an inclusive, healthy, safe, and responsible society; lifelong learning; a highly productive economy that generates added value for all; a well--preserved natural environment; and a high level of cooperation, competence, and governance efficiency." For the implementation thereof, Slovenia formulated a medium-term plan tied to the medium-term fiscal framework and a four-year national development policy program, which will include measures and activities based on the goals (Šooš, 2017). The development strategies at the national and global levels are, as we can see, to strive to achieve a balance between the productivity of the economy and the preservation of a healthy natural environment. Since the state is the structure that determines the functioning of the individuals within it, its role is inevitably large. Therefore, and based on development strategies, such as those of Slovenia, we constantly witness new laws, regulations, mechanisms, and movements regarding environmental policy, global ecology, and sustainable development.

As an example of those mechanism, Dryzek (2013) quotes the establishment of pollution control agencies. Since every country in the world suffers from pollution, there are many that have established a pollution control agency. And they do not exist only on the national level, but also on the local and international

levels. Their main purpose is usually the implementation of law through regulatory policy instruments. Traditionally, such regulation involves the staff of the agency, who formulate standards for polluters and the most common consequence and punishment for polluters who do not comply with the standards is a fine. Usually, besides the standards there are also some other mechanisms such as pollution-control equipment (emissions measuring devices and catalytic converters on car exhausts) or, for example, the Slovenian decree on emissions into the air from small and medium-sized combustion devices or decrees regulating what kind of materials can be used and which practices must be followed (controlled by inspections). What this shows us, as Dryzek states (2013), is that many of those mechanisms are part of the final process and are not able to intervene by requiring specific changes in production processes in order to make them produce less noxious waste in the first place (Dryzek 2013).

The case of fiscal incentives is very similar, as Dobson (2007, 277) explains through two different examples. The first is a road pricing example from Britain. The city center of Durham began to suffer due to pollution and the city planners decided to impose road pricing. By adopting a road pricing scheme, they wanted to reduce the traffic in the city center. They had hoped that traffic would be cut by 50% within a year, but in fact it was cut by 90% in just a few months. And the second example comes from Ireland. In 2002 an environmental levy on plastic bags was introduced throughout the country. Starting on 4 March 2002, the price of a plastic bag was set at 15 cents. As a result, the use of plastic bags was reduced by 90% in a year. Both examples of fiscal measures seem to work and at first sight can be marked as good practices. Behavior changed almost overnight. But the questions which Dobson points out at this point are whether people would revert to using a new plastic bag for each couple of items if, for example, the Irish government decided to repeal the plastic bag tax. And secondly, are such mechanisms really sustainable, since people no longer drive in the city center because they are scared of a fine – but they still drive everywhere else (Dobson, 2007)? Can

macro initiatives be effective if there is no action by individuals on the micro level?

The problem, therefore, is that mechanisms are still harmful to the environment due to a self-centered understanding, or they just change behaviors but not also attitudes, which results in two levels of responsibility. In addition to the individual level, which has recently been strongly emphasized through various ideological apparatuses and is achieving a small shift through various actions, it is absolutely necessary for the state to assume its share of responsibility before the damage is caused. Since the state as a structure consists of the individuals who are governing, the latter need to balance between the environment and environmental problems every time they come into contact with the economy, as the driving force of the state. And the question that arises here is what can the attitude of the state towards the environment possibly be if we know that individuals are in charge of the (capitalistic) state.

Claus Offe (1985) made two claims about the capitalist state, which is the form that we are nowadays dealing with. The first one is that the state does not defend the particular interests of a particular class, but the common interests of all members of the (capitalist) society, and protects them and imposes sanctions for infringements thereof. And the second one is that there is an instrumental relationship between the class of capitalists and the state apparatus, and it is necessary to consider the "state as the tool of a ruling class that realizes the common interests of its members." Since we know that political struggle takes place on an ideological level, it is clear, as Offe states, that some legislative alternatives are given as a priority, although both are set up as proposals. However, public authority is indirectly (for example, through the tax system) dependent on private accumulation, and the greatest interest of those who are in positions of authority and have power is in preserving the exercise of social power by establishing the political conditions that are and will be favorable for the private capital accumulation process, which is regulated through the subsidy and tax system (Offe, 1985: 60).

The source of such social formations derives from the dominant mode of production. It can therefore be argued that any decision related to the environment stems from a predetermined conscious or unconscious opinion about something and from the perception of those in power (Althusser, 2000). The role of the state is to produce and reproduce, therefore it produces the conditions for its production through reproduction. It could be argued that the decision on reproduction stems from the conscious or unconscious state of the rulers, who may or may not care about the environment (or any other subject.) An example of those whose priority is or should be to govern by taking into account the environment are green political parties, which nowadays include sustainability as a priority.

As an example, the reproduction of the workforce, which is important for the production itself, takes place through material means where the state enters the market. The state ensures the reproduction of the workforce through the educational system, where we learn about the elements that are, in addition to their extraordinary importance in everyday life, also directly applicable in the workplace. Through the educational system we therefore learn about rules, behaviors, reactions, the division of labor, and other regulations that help to maintain the classes and current relationships. The state maintains its form and concurrently its attitude towards the environment and nature, which is subordinated and determined by the ideology of the ruling cadre and their viewpoint on society and lack of critical thinking.

Or as Dobson argued in his research, we can make people stop driving into the city center due to the fear of a fine through a fiscal incentive policy, but the question of its sustainable effectiveness remains, since this is not a consequence of them taking responsibility for sustainability and development. As a possible solution, he offers environmental citizenship, which would not prohibit driving into the city center but encourage people to drive less, by means of knowledge and awareness regarding such issues. Namely, the knowledge that driving contributes to global warming and awareness of the consequences that global

warming brings. Dobson's suggestion is "that behavior driven by environmental citizenship considerations is more likely to last than behavior driven by financial incentives." Admittedly, this is much harder to achieve (Dobson, 2007, 282).

That is why the rights from the third generation, which have an inevitable role for us, are not so widely spread throughout the world as the rights of the first generation, although they are inextricably connected and essential for the maintenance of life on Earth. Knowledge of the role of the state in relation to nature brings into question what the relationship of humans towards nature can possibly be.

The Relationship of Humans towards Nature

"There is life after survival."
Buddy Wakefield

Humans, as the creative element of the state and other forms of community, have developed a relationship to each and every element. The product of their relationship is nowadays reflected in economic, political, legal, urban, and other arrangements on the Earth. Regardless of agreements or disagreements concerning the elements and different forms, what every person has in common is his or her interaction with nature, which merely exists and is not dependent on human activity, although its exact actualization is. And this is very similar to human rights. As is written in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the basic purpose thereof is universality, the validity of every human right as the right of each and every person.

But as we can see, the realization of human rights is far from simple and *basic*. Although their existence is necessary for the development of humankind, without their implementation in everyday life they would not mean anything or would merely lead to temporary (unsustainable) solutions. Very similar to a house, is it not? When a man (legally) builds a house, he has the right to live in it, but at the same time he also has a duty to perform and must

assume all responsibilities and obligations that a house brings. So, the right basically contains a duty or responsibility. And furthermore, if this person does not perform his resulting responsibilities, he could lose it even though he built it and despite how much he invested in it. At the same time, regardless whether a person performs all *formal* duties and responsibilities, his house might still collapse due to a negligent attitude. The realization of human rights therefore requires knowledge of and respect for the right itself with all consequent responsibilities that this right brings.

For example, one of the first human rights is the right to life. It is one of the rights from the first generation; it is fundamental and recognized as one of the most important. But if we consider it more deeply, we can see that in essence it contains two elements, the human being and the Earth, which have an inherent connection with each other. In fact – ironically – even chemically, their fundamental composition is almost the same. The surface layer of the Earth is approximately seventy percent water and thirty percent other vital components, similar to the human body. Biologically it is known that our bodies cannot survive without water, oxygen, and food. On the other hand, Earth without water cannot create the conditions for terrestrial life; actually, it would be a great desert and there would no longer be living nature or humanity. Water, oxygen, and food are therefore elements basic to survival and the implementation of the human right to life on Earth.

Part of the undeniable relationship between the human body and water was finally recognized (on some levels) in the year 2010. The General Assembly of the UN adopted a resolution that calls upon states and international organizations to provide financial resources and assistance in capacity-building and technology transfer to countries, especially developing ones, in order to ensure safe, clean, accessible, and affordable drinking water and sanitation for all (UN Water, 2014). Irrespective of this right, the responsibility aspect in this regard is huge. The fact that more than 884 million people in the world still do not have access to drinkable water is terrifying. Even more so if we consider the 2.6 billion people who do not have access to basic

sanitary and hygienic conditions, based on research showing that more than 37 percent of the countries assessed experience high to extremely high baseline water stress (Reig et al., 2013). And it is those desert areas where the daily struggle to survive takes place. It is therefore probably not strange that desert areas are most often the areas with tyranny and military actions, such as Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Uzbekistan, Algeria, Libya, etc. (Abramowitz 2018). This fact, firstly, calls into question exercise of the right to life in the already existing desert areas as they do not even enable human life. And secondly, it calls into question the role of the state if we know – for example in Africa – that many people struggle to secure drinkable water because bodies of fresh water on the continent are controlled by more than one government or because it is too expensive to build the necessary infrastructure (Water Filters 2018).

This bring us to two aspects of perceptions of natural resources that occur at both the individual and national levels and that disenable the realization of the human right to life in two ways. The first aspect is that in many highly developed countries the environment, water, blueness, and everything that these enable are taken for granted. We use huge amounts of water for bathing, cleaning, watering family food plots, industry, electricity, consumption, and to produce food and fiber (World Water Council 2018). The second aspect, On the other hand, is that we can witness excessive gratitude for mere drops of water and the perseverance of those struggling in conditions that barely allow survival, as well as an unacceptably large portion of the global population not even having access to safe drinking water, along with the visible impact of economic progress on natural ecosystem. And all this goes on without the awareness that the Earth gives us much more than a person is able to perceive through his or her own prism and pyramid of values (Pečnik, 2002).

A great example of both aspects is the situation in Rio de Janeiro, where the distinction between the two aspects is clearly visible, although similar exists in almost every country. On one hand, there are favelas where people live in areas with low water

quality, poor housing, and a lack of drainage, sanitation, green areas, or public spaces (Arcidiacono et al., 2017:1). On the other hand, there are developed parts of the city, which in many cases are not even grateful for the natural resources available or aware of the consequences that a consumerist and capitalistic way of life have on human life and the planet, and because of this lack of awareness they are not even able to really enjoy life. The consequences of both have resulted in various conscious and unconscious impacts on the environment. If we stay with the example of Rio de Janiero, we can see such impacts very clearly. It has surpassed the WHO limits for the most dangerous air pollutants, which are spewed from millions of vehicles clogging the city's roads. Every year, thousands of people in Rio die due to complications stemming from the air quality. Besides air pollution, water is also very polluted in different ways, and the consequences are visible in the oceans (Brooks 2016). Even though people have the right to life and drinkable water, their manner of taking such resources for granted or feeling excessive gratitude do not allow them to realize such rights in terms of taking responsibility.

Furthermore, usually when we talk about the environment and nature we are focused – *as is the (capitalistic) state, which enables the reproduction of the means of production* – on the green and brown parts of the world in terms of the basic elements enabling survival, such as oxygen and drinkable water. But in addition to the basic elements of survival, humans also need other elements that are equally important for their further development. For this reason, throughout history and development, humans have designed a number of mechanisms to help and accompany them on the path of life. Of course, they differ from country to country, and between people and social groups according to the level of development and interests, but all of them have two things in common. The first one includes work, development, and (technological and other) advancement, while the second one comprises enjoyment, entertainment, culture, relaxation, and leisure. Like most things on the Earth, humans have distorted the image of one and the other and remain trapped

in a construct of either taking things for granted or expressing exaggerated gratitude for one or the other, having constructed a pyramid of illusions about needs. Most of the time humans demand something that in reality simply exists, independently of the technological advancement of humanity. Or as Marcuse (1964) said, everything is interpreted as a commodity, even the things that concern the actual needs of everyone.

In terms of producing regimes, political parties, policies, theories, and rights concerning the green and brown parts of the world, we have forgotten about the one that has an unavoidable connection to the green part, and it is confronted with the same dangerous problems as underlined by green political theory in the 1970s. We are talking about that part of the world that is, when we speak about the environment, its foundation. Namely, about the part that has the greatest impact on climate, the atmosphere, life on Earth, food, and mobility. The three quarters of the world that deserves our attention as much as the green and brown parts. Naturally, we are talking about the seas and oceans. They cover 71 percent of the globe, and are as important to us as they are vast. The oceans are home to most of the life on our planet and play a central role in the world's natural systems, such as regulating our climate and absorbing carbon dioxide. They provide a livelihood to countless fishermen and others around the world. They feed hundreds of millions of people and have the capacity to provide a healthy seafood meal to a billion people every day (Oceana, 2018). And not only are the oceans a primary source of food that is indispensable for survival, but they have historically been used for trade, adventure, and discovery, other aspects indispensable for life. And just as the environmental crisis of the 1970s reminded us of the depletion and exploitation of the green part of the world, nowadays the environmental situation is warning us of the urgency of having an integral perspective on the Earth.

By ignoring the environment that the oceans and seas offer in terms of survival and life, we have brought the oceans and seas to the point where we produce more than 300 million tons of plastic annually, of which at least 12 million tons ends up in the oceans

every year (UN DOALOS, 2018). Another recent study estimates that more than a quarter of all that waste is pouring in from just ten rivers (eight of them in Asia). The results from the study of Schmidt et al. showed that rivers collectively dump from 0.47 million to 2.75 million metric tons of waste into the seas every year. This is causing the extinction of millions of animal species. Sea turtles, seals, sea lions, seabirds, fish, whales, and dolphins are just a few of the victims of our plastic pollution (Henn, 2017). There are 500 times more pieces of micro-plastic in the sea than there are stars in our galaxy, and some forecasts say that if we do not start taking care of this matter, there will be more plastic than fish by 2050. What is really terrifying for those relying on fishing, which brings food to more than 820 million people around the world, is the fact that as plastic degrades to pieces small enough to pass from the digestive tract into the flesh of fish and other animals, we are already eating some of the plastic we have thrown into the sea and it already contaminates the air we breathe (Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, 2018). And we are only talking about the most widespread phenomena, to which we could add many more, such as wastewater, deforestation, the maximization of profits, oil extraction, and air pollution, and products that end up in the oceans and seas. As a side effect thereof, billions of dollars are invested in attempts to restore and protect contaminated and destroyed areas. And all of those consequences would not even exist if we were responsible and aware individuals and states.

As is well known, there exist organizations that are involved in the oceans and seas in terms of raising awareness, such as Greenpeace (with their campaign to end ocean exploitation and ensure a healthy future of the oceans (Greenpeace, 2018), and the United Nations through many different programs, such as the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, which defines the rights and responsibilities of states with respect to their use of the world's oceans, and establishes guidelines for businesses, the environment, and the management of marine natural resources, etc. But most of them are involved in restoring areas that have already been affected. There are also some laws that regulate territorial waters, sea lanes, and

ocean resources, such as the right to oil, gas, and other resources up to 200 nautical miles from shore, and others (Churchill, 2018). But there is no person on Earth who has a right to the sea and everything that the earthly seas represent in terms of surviving and enjoyment as a means of achieving a better quality of life.

Through the construction of all the illusions that the sea represents to humankind, we have evidently forgotten about the basic things. The things that the seas and oceans offer by merely existing. The structure of the Earth and the composition of the seas and oceans by themselves provide many things that we seek in pursuit of the illusory satisfaction of external needs, consumption, new drugs, etc. They give us enjoyment, refreshment, movement, weightlessness, life, and death. Each region, each sea, each ocean offers life to myriad living species; each area provides exactly the conditions and requirements needed for development, progress, and finality. In fact, they give us what humans cannot find anywhere else in the universe. And not only that. The seas and oceans are the place where life began, a place without which Earth would become a great desert.

Therefore, humans should have the *right to blueness* and everything that blue on Earth represents. To the enjoyment and life that it gives. Because in the blueness of Earth there is life and it is from there that it exists, and the basic human right is the right to life. Not in terms of exploiting illusory benefits and that which eventually offers death, but in terms of everything that it truly is, in terms of life, enjoyment, relaxation, entertainment, joy, and everything it represents. However, it remains hidden and distorted, because humans require it through different concepts and ways, without realizing that it just *is*. The existence of the right would consequently mean the existence of responsibilities and duties that would protect the Earth from the consequences we are facing today. The balance between rights and responsibilities would offer a balance between taking resources for granted and excessive gratitude for such. And it would help humanity to see that there is life after surviving, which only exists – and we do not need to buy it.

Conclusion

The form of human rights gives many different opportunities to research and thoroughly explore their purpose. Due to the different development and status of individual areas and societies and also the abundance of rights, we can often hear that it is quite impossible to put them into a universal form. And yes, maybe it is not even possible. However, regarding such, we often forget to look at them from the opposite direction and question the suitability of the areas and dominant ideologies that strive to maintain their continued existence, despite their universality, due to the equivalence of each and every one. The dominant ideologies therefore maintain a form that often tries to support both the capitalist state in its existing form and progress in the realization and determination of human rights as the foundation of the ability of humans to take responsibility at both the institutional (state) and individual levels. The foundations thereof can be found in the history of the oppressed, slaves, and even slave owners, which emphasizes this right itself, and only under conditions that we can practically equate with war (although not in the form of bombs and tanks) are we prepared to also assume responsibilities and duties. But the progress, which nevertheless exists, makes it possible for us to think and set up things in a form that does not yet exist, although the consequences of irresponsibility are already present. And a form of the human right to blueness would enable us to take responsibility for the catastrophes that may come and would, as a result, bring war due to the struggle for survival. Given the structure of Earth and human dependence thereon, it seems necessary to unite brown, green, and blue, which would consequently enable the realization of the basic purpose of human rights and the sustainable development goals, which are utterly necessary for the survival of life on Earth. And this is up to us, *the future generations*, right now.

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Marie Louise Aastrup, PhD Candidate, M.Sc., B.Sc

Shall We Park here? Landscape Meanings and Conflicting Visions for the Făgăraș Mountains, Romania

Abstract: Establishing new parks and protected areas is never a controversy-free endeavour. This study explores the brewing conflict over the proposed establishment of a neoliberal/public "hybrid" national park in the Făgăraș Mountains, Romania. Based on semi-structured interviews, the different meanings ascribed to the landscape and how such manifest as different visions for the future are explored. Conserving biodiversity and IUCN categories dominate at one end, and rural invigoration through development at the other. In between these two "ideals" is a heterogeneous group of local community members who hold diverse landscape meanings and visions.

Keywords: Political ecology, parks and protected areas, conflict, power

Introduction

Nature conservation activities represents a minefield of potential conflicts over rights, access, environmental and social justice, politics of knowledge, and management, among others (Sen and Pattanaik, 2017; Cortés-Vázquez, 2014). A political ecology perspective suggests such conflicts do not occur in a vacuum but should be viewed in light of their historical, political, and social context in which they occur. Visions for the future of a landscape may reflect various actors' different ideologies and political agendas – contradictions which become increasingly clear in the context of contemporary protected area establishment. From a protected area management perspective, the potential benefits such areas can bring to local communities are used as arguments for legitimizing the establishment of protected areas (Jones et al., 2017; Bratman et al., 2012; Bowler et al., 2010; Sodhi et al., 2010). However, perhaps despite good intentions, protected areas do not always deliver on their social "promises" and research on the impact of said areas on local people is vast (e.g. Holmes and Cavanagh, 2016; Pullin et al., 2013; West et al., 2006; Jacoby, 2001). Attention has been brought to protected areas' potential to disrupt local communities through, for example, displacement or loss of access to resources within said areas (Cundill et al., 2017; Vaccaro et al., 2013; Elmhirst, 2012; Brockington, 2004; Neumann, 2001). The potential detriments or benefits anticipated to arise from the designation of protected areas leave different actors to evaluate such areas differently.

The Făgăraș Mountains, part of the Southern Carpathian Mountains in central Romania, exemplifies such contradicting visions and reflect the connections between broader political economic ideals and land use and management in its historical and contemporary contexts. The area surrounding the Făgăraș Mountains were once collectivised in *Cooperativa Agricolă de Producție* (CAP) during the Romanian communist regime (1947-1989), later to become privatized, then designated under the European Union (EU) wide Natura 2000 protected area network,

and now potentially becoming a national park following a hybrid neoliberal nature conservation proposal initiated by a foundation financially supported by international philanthropists.

In relation to conservation conflicts, focus on the political nature of conservation, its historical context, and issues of access and user rights, have not gone unnoticed in the field of political ecology (Neumann, 2015; Kelly, 2011; Sodikoff, 2009; Brockington, 2004; Roth, 2004). And as such, political ecology provides a useful framework for answering the questions that arise in relation to how the Făgăraș Mountains "hybrid" public/neoliberal conservation initiative come to be: How do local, regional, and national actors envision the future of a landscape that was once nationalised, then privatised, and since designated a protected area in an EU wide network? Where lie the contradictions, potential conflict points, and common understandings within these?

Based on qualitative research conducted in some of the communities bordering the proposed park, I present some initial themes and points of contention among different actors as reflected in their visions for a transforming landscape. Visions which seek to tackle issues of environmental degradation that deforestation represents to conservationists and locals alike and issues of fading rural communities and urbanisation as highlighted by both local decision-makers and local community members.

Political Ecology and Conservation

Accession to the EU highlights the political nature of protected area establishment as Europeanization (i.e. process of states adopting to the rules of the EU) of East Central European (ECE) environmental law resulted in the designation of protected areas. Aligning national environmental law to the EU's environmental laws is not considered to be a painless endeavour, but rather a necessary "evil" motivated by the greater quest of accession to the EU (Yakusheva, 2017; Andonova, 2005). A major component of these environmental laws is the designation of ecologically representative protected areas and species under the Natu-

ra 2000 framework (Directive92/43/ECC and Directive79/409/ECC). The process of Europeanization of conservation policies began, in some instances, prior to accession (Yakusheva, 2017). Following accession to the EU, many ECE countries experienced drastic increase in the percentage of land protected, due to Natura 2000 designations (EEA, 2012). This illustrate the role of environmental law, and therein also the role of conservation efforts, as a means to a greater political end, namely becoming part of the EU. This new type of nature protection has, however, been met with strong oppositions from locals, as such protected areas have been perceived to be a nuisance to local people, even those who support conservation initiatives more generally (Pietrzyk-Kaszyńska et al., 2012). This resistance is not only characteristic of "new" member states, but also among members of the public in "old" member states (Keulartz, 2009).

Parks and protected areas are always political projects, as they (re)define user and access rights to resources and draws borders (Adams, 2017; Neumann, 2015; Vaccaro et al., 2013). Byrne and Wolch show how parks "are not ideologically neutral spaces" (2009:745) with reference to how national parks in the U.S. were spaces of class and racial segregation, and how this ideological foundation is reflected in today's park use as well (e.g. less visitation to parks by African American and Hispanic Americans). Political ecologists have put protected areas under scrutiny as these, to a large extent, "(…) are implemented by different social and institutional actors (often powerful), suffered by other social groups (often not so powerful), and enjoyed by yet another set of players (tourists and scientists)" (Vaccaro et al., 2013:255). This raise questions of resource use and access, conflict, and justice. Although exactly how protected areas affect (local) people is a highly context dependent as local practices, culture, protected area establishment and management, and politics on local, national, and subnational level all affect the "success" of the protected area. Nevertheless, the demarcation between those who bear the costs and consequences of protected areas and those who benefit is often one defined by power (Kelly, 2011). Although evidence

exists suggesting that local support for protected areas in key in their success (Sodhi et al., 2010; Pretty and Smith, 2004), this is not always the case (Brockington, 2004). It should be noted that as long as a protected area has the support of powerful players (e.g. international NGOs, the global public, foundations) alongside effective means of control over who have access to the area, resistance among weaker rural groups may not manifest. This means that unjust treatment and oppression of local people(s) do not necessarily hamper the (ecological) success of conservation, thus conservation does not necessarily depend on local support (Brockington, 2004). Uniformity in agendas among powerful players is not necessarily a given, as various actors at different levels (local, regional, national, global, and/or combinations hereof) potentially have contradicting interests. These differences can manifest in power struggles over which vision for the future, which ideologies, should dictate future development of a landscape. The "conflict--in-making" that can be observed in the Făgăraș Mountains represents such a struggle, where conservationists with international connections hold one vision for the future regional development, which is in stark opposition to that of local decision-makers.

"The Yellowstone of Europe"? Theoretical Connections

Protected area establishment and management have taken different shapes from the early "Yellowstone model" over co-management to neoliberal and private conservation (Vaccaro et al., 2013). The case of the proposed Făgăraș Mountains National Park is an interesting one seen in the light of this historical development of protected areas. At a first glance, it represents a neoliberal conservation initiative with the buying of land supported by international philanthropists. What makes this case an interesting hybrid is the intention of returning the park, once established, to the public domain with a written agreement on the (conservation-oriented) management of the area. This intention is a potential variation of neoliberal conservation, although the initiative is still

rooted in such ideas and employ neoliberal strategies to achieve its conservation vision. What is more, conservationists are promoting this hybrid conservation initiative under the banner of a "Yellowstone of Europe", in reference to the Yellowstone National Park - the poster child for fortress conservation. So-called "fortress conservation" reflects the strategy which early protected area establishment followed, which, as the name indicates, follows a "fence and fine"-strategy (Fletcher, 2010), with power (typically) exercised by the state through evictions and restricted access (Brockington, 2004). This model has been criticized for its command-and-control strategies (Fletcher, 2010) and for keeping people out and displacing locals (Jacoby, 2001).

Neoliberal conservation and represents a type of conservation which has become increasingly more prevalent (Vaccaro et al., 2013; Langholz and Lassoie, 2001). It refers to the marketization, commodification, privatization, and decentralization of conservation (Adams, 2017; Holmes and Cavanagh, 2016). Commodification of nature in a neoliberal conservation context refers to the institutional or legal redefinition of elements such as ecosystem services, endemic species for pharmaceutical development (bioprospecting), ecotourism, and how these elements have entered the market and can be obtained through monetary payments (Holmes and Cavanagh 2016; Kelly, 2011; Fletcher, 2010; Sodikoff, 2009). Where protected areas following a fortress conservation model have been detrimental to local livelihood strategies, neoliberal conservation poses a different strategy. Neoliberal conservation focuses on market-oriented livelihood strategies (e.g. ecotourism) and does so by providing incentives and advocacy for engaging in these (Holmes and Cavanagh, 2016), although ecotourism is not necessarily an environmental impact-free endeavour (Kiss, 2004). This type of conservation has increased the ties between protected areas and the private sector, which can benefit local people in that they can exploit these ties and connections (Haenn et al., 2014; Igoe and Brockington, 2007; West et al., 2006). While on one hand connections to the private sector can operate as an outlet for local voices, neoliberal conservation risks

increasing the influence of national and international private sector players over local resource uses (Fletcher, 2010). In the case of Romania, the (inter)national private sector is already indirectly influential in forest related issues, as logging is often carried out and/or processed by foreign interests (Dorondel, 2016).

With the decrease in state budgets, protected areas have also become increasingly dependent on the private sector to remain financially afloat, with NGOs "step[ping] in to fill the power vacuum left by a shrinking state" (Haenn et al., 2014:114). In turn, the negative social impacts derived for neoliberalism has also resulted in increased state interventions to mitigate these (Haenn et al., 2014; Fletcher, 2010). Big international NGOs (BINGOs) have, with the neoliberalization of conservation, become more important and powerful (Fletcher, 2010). However, while conservation NGOs may be able to fill this gap, they are also increasingly tied to, and financially dependent on, corporations (Hoffman, 2009).

Neoliberal conservation adds another layer to the ways in which protected areas may affect local people, as market-driven conservation depends on marketing, essentially through (certain) representations and spectacle (Holmes and Cavanaugh, 2016). These representations serve the purpose of selling a commodity (not only goods and services, but also experiences) to potential tourists, which can ultimately also reshape the social landscapes they portray (Holmes and Cavanaugh, 2016; Kelly, 2011). Related to tourism, Holmes and Cavanaugh (2016) illustrate this representation quest for "authenticity" – a commodity sought by the post-modern tourism (Iorio and Corsale, 2010) - and how certain groups can become "iconic" for tourism operators. Ultimately, neoliberal conservation allows for private accumulation of what was intended as a public good (Kelly, 2011), albeit sometimes privately owned. This commodification of local culture can also lead to cultural changes especially through the elimination certain "undesirable" components of local culture, which do not fit with the "old way of life" romantic narrative that is portrayed to tourists (Overton, 1996). Moreover, working primarily through livelihood diversification, protected areas are, under a neoliberal

umbrella, likely to exacerbate already existing inequalities (Holmes and Cavanagh, 2016) and serve as a new way of directing money to the elite (Haenn et al, 2014). Corrupt politicians and state agents for example, may not support the establishment of protected areas "(...) without an extraordinary economic payoff" (Kelly, 2011:691) and only allow national park establishment over extractive activities in so far as the national parks provide financial resources for the state and thus the politicians and agents themselves (Kelly, 2011). Also, (eco)tourism is not a readily available livelihood strategy for all (Iorio and Corsale, 2010; Kiss, 2004), and as such neoliberal livelihood strategies may only provide benefits to the few.

A Case of Conservation and Political Ecology in East Central Europe

During the communist regime, privately owned lands and the Romanian commons (*obște* and *composesorate*) were nationalized. Bigger farms were merged into "state farms", which received state subsidized, while smaller farms were joined into "collective farms" (CAP), which did not receive subsidies (Dorondel, 2016). The state and collective farms were, in this time period, characterized by monocultures and changes in the agricultural species composition (Dorondel, 2016). During Ceausescu's rule (1965-1989), developing heavy industry became a political priority as a way of dealing with the "backwardness" of the countryside (Dorondel, 2016; Hitchens, 2015). At the same time, the forest was preserved for hunting grounds (Walentowski et al., 2013). Following the Romanian Revolution in 1989 not all of the collectivized lands were re-privatised in full, if at all (Măntescu and Vasile, 2009), and neoliberal ideologies dominating land management in Romania emerged (Dorondel, 2016). This development away from collective farming and nationalization of lands is exemplified by the first post-communist land reform passed in 1991 (Property Law 18/1991) and the second land reform passed in 2000 (Property Law 1/2000). The first law established land commissions at the

local level typically consisting of mayors responsible for implementing land and forest restitution. These reforms ultimately led to the privatization of land, based on ideas of restoring historical justice – that is, restoring landownership to previous landowners, excluding the previous Roma slaves (Dorondel, 2016).

In Romania, the EU accession also brought about a new political strategy regarding conservation. With the accession of Romania to the EU in 2007, conservation, as in many other ECE countries, took a new shape. Where ECE environmental management was dominated by central planning and top-down approaches, the characteristic of these new member states' conservation efforts was an increase in designations of protected areas, decentralization of protected area management, and restructuring of conservation policies (Yakusheva, 2017). While the land reforms worked towards privatisation of land, becoming part of the EU also led to the designation of public protected areas – a simultaneous privatization and public protected area designation strategy (Dorondel, 2016). One result of this was the designation of the Făgăraș Mountains as a protected area under the EU-wide Natura 2000 protected area network. Today, the Făgăraș Mountains are looking at a new potential landscape transformation: becoming an International Union for Convention of Nature (IUCN) category II - a national park. Establishing a national park has social and economic implications for the livelihoods of people living in or in the vicinity to the proposed park (Bennett, 2016; Pullin et al., 2013; West et al., 2006). Restricting access to an area can lead to loss of resources critical to livelihood strategies and culturally important practices, especially for marginalized people and minority groups (Cundill et al., 2017; Salafsky and Wollenberg, 2000), minority groups such as Rudari people and others who rely on natural resource use for their livelihoods (Dorondel, 2016). As the area is characterised by rural, forest and farming-dependent communities these could potentially be affected by a national park designation and the land use restrictions that follow. This study explores the potential conflicts that arise over the meaning of landscapes and visions for the future of the mountains.

The local communities are characterised by an aging population. Only nine percent of people employed with a contract. The livelihood makeup of these communities is one of semi-subsistence and characterised by so-called peasant-workers (Dorondel, 2016; Iordăchescu and Vasile, 2015). Resource dependence on the Făgăraș Mountains is generally low, however, timber is needed for firewood as other means of heating are, in many instances, either unavailable or cost prohibiting for some members of the communities. Deforestation and illegal logging are prominent issues (Aastrup et al., 2018; Dorondel, 2016).

Data collection & analysis

After an initial visit to the study area in March 2017, I spent three weeks in the counties of Brasov, Sibiu in the north and Argeș in the south in September – October 2017. This period served as an exploratory field season to identify issues around land use and management within the context of the newly proposed conservation area. As this work serves as the foundation for future work, I wanted to understand the differences in use of the Făgăraș Mountains, the challenges and opportunities the proposed conservation area might result in, and how different actors situate themselves in regard to this potential conservation development.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with twenty--nine informants including business owners, retirees, farmers, shepherds, a priest, a school principal, conservation NGOs present in the area, civil servants at a national level involved in forestry, protected areas, and tourism, and local decision-makers (mayors, vice mayors) in six communities and two bigger cities. It should be noted that local community members do not form a homogenous group with one common identity, but rather comprised of various constituencies, groups, and individuals holding diverse opinions and alliances (Horowitz, 2011). In this research, this "umbrella" term denotes people living in the area around the Făgăraș Mountains with various occupations. Interviews were transcribed and coded according to emerging themes. To insure intercoder reliability, coding was carried out by two independent coders. The interviews were coded under following themes: future of the Făgăraș Mountains; protected areas; national park; potential Făgăraș Mountains National Park; Natura 2000; land use; deforestation; tourism; and political situation in Romania. Each individual interview was also analysed to identify any contradicting statements (e.g. appreciation for protected areas, but not supporting the designation of national parks).

The Becoming of a National Park?

Deforestation is much debated in Romanian media and carries (negative) meanings for all informants as an action that "cut[s] down everything. Raze. Terminate the forest" as a female informant in the tourism sector defined deforestation. Putting an end to (il)legal logging activities and deforestation is at the forefront of the conservation agenda, where reforestation represents an important strategy. In the area, seeing naked spots on the mountains where there once was forest is not an uncommon sight. Local opinions are uniform in this regard, that deforestation is bad. However, the geography of deforestation seems to be a little less clear as the local narrative is one of deforestation happening "in other places". Local-decision makers are aware of the deforestation issues, but these appear to be of less pressing concern in comparison to that of fading rural communities characterised by an increasingly aging population, few job opportunities, and urbanisation and outmigration. It is not uncommon to encounter local community members who work abroad for the majority of the year – often in the Mediterranean or Central Europe - or have their primary residency in e.g. North America.

Hopes for the Future

Local community members appreciate the natural environment in the Făgăraș Mountains, a place which also holds great cultural importance to people living in the area. Most of the local informants grew up and lived for the entirety of their lives in the area, others moved to the area because they were assigned work there during the communist regime. When talking about the mountains and the forest, it is the beauty of the area, its place of religious importance as a host of the sacred springs associated with the Orthodox monk Arsenie Boca, and its history as a place of resistance that first come to mind. A strong historic connection to the forest exists in Romania, as illustrated by the Romanian proverb "the forest is Romanian's brother [sic]" (*Codru-I frate cu românul*) (Nicolescu, 2014:126), as pointed out by some of the in-

formants as well. This connection to the landscape also prevailed among local community members. As a one informant expressed:

> *"It [the forest] has a special function. In the first place, it gives us oxygen; the murmur of the forest gives us peace; its beauty grows naturally; it stops the wind. The trees give us firewood. For me, the forest is the most beautiful thing" (pension owner, October 4th, 2017).*

This way of the describing the area, the mountains and the forests, is not uncommon among local community members and corresponds to some extent to the prevailing vision among conservationists. As one informant working for an environmental NGO described the ideal future of the Făgăraș Mountains:

> *"Basically, I'd like to see the Făgăraș Mountains remaining on of the wildest areas in Romania and Europe (…) That is, no intervention, left to their own evolutionary dynamics. And the rest of the forests outside should be managed in a responsible and sustainable manner. So not intensive use for commercial logging, but let's say used for the benefit of local communities: employment, things like that. Basically, it resembles a national park" (conservationist, September 22nd, 2017).*

This idea of the Făgăraș Mountains becoming "the Yellowstone of Europe", a place without intervention, dominates among conservationists and somewhat reflects the early fortress conservation model as a "wilderness" without human intervention, enforcing the human - "nature" dichotomy (Neumann, 2015; Vaccaro et al., 2013; Jacoby, 2001; Cronon, 1996). This rhetoric is prevalent in the discourse around the "Făgăraș Mountains National Park", despite recognising the importance of gaining public support, having the "process start at the bottom", and attempting to showcase "biodiversity farming" and other such sustainability-oriented livelihood efforts undertaken by the private foundation in the area. The public support component for this potential national park designation sets it aside from previous initiatives as "when the other national parks were established, they deci-

ded overnight, it was a scandal, but people got used to it" as one conservationist put it. While local support for the initiative is highlighted by conservationists, there is also an understanding of the importance of national level support, elucidating the multi scalar connections sought out by the conservationists. At a national and subnational level, the story is far from unidirectional: one municipality in the study area received EU funding to develop skiing plans and the development of skiing also seems to be a priority at a national level in the Ministry of Tourism. On the other hand, the Minister of Regional Development and Public Administration signed a memorandum in 2016 for the initiation of establishing a national park in the Făgăraș Mountains. The signing of this memorandum caused a communication breach with local community members, with some confusion as to whether or not a national park had already been designated.

The nature conservation vision for the "future Făgăraș Mountains" is in opposition to that of local decision-makers. Local mayors' and vice mayors' visions have development and utilising the forests is at the forefront. This group describes the function of the forest primarily in terms of wood supply, job provisions, and tourism more so than recreation for local people. While the (negative) consequence of forest privatisation forms a common ground between these two groups, local decision-makers envision a landscape of plentiful (infrastructural) development and the establishment of skiing and winter tourism. Visions for the future among local community members are more diverse and reflect their heterogeneity (Horowitz, 2011) as these visions do not fall into neatly divided camps of "conservation" or "development". Three themes emerged from local community members' visions for the future: one of preserving nature as it is, one of preserving culture and cultural heritage, and one of enhancing tourism, each with apparent paradoxes. Preserving cultural heritage is important for local community members – also in relation to tourism. Local community members recognise that tourists seek out "authentic" experiences (Iorio and Corsale, 2010), which appear to install a sense of pride in local way of life (Simpson, 2007). A

prevalent theme among local community members is sustaining tradition and cultural representations' (potential) role in rural tourism. Cultural representations form a crucial part of the desired future, and the potential to capitalise on said representations is recognised. However, political ecologists have criticised the neoliberal nature of (eco)tourism and its potentially simplistic representation of local people, communities, and culture (West et al., 2006) and its commodification of nature (Li, 2008) – and even of people – as "authentic" cultural experiences become a selling point for tourists (West et al., 2006). Nevertheless, tourism development is also a cause of concern, especially with regard to environmental impact. This is illustrated by the future tourism scenario as presented by one informant:

> *"I think that in 20 years tourists will become less careful, less respectful to the mountains, so the situation won't be the same; there will be lots of pensions and hunting lodges. I think about what I would like to see there: offer visitors an authentic experience where they can try out some quiet, some home raised pork, be in silence, an authentic experience. (…) At the moment it's more like a dream but it would be possible" (priest, September 26th, 2017).*

These concerns align with the literature on tourism and its potential to disrupt local culture (Fennell, 2003) and have negative ecological impacts (Buckley, 2011; Kiss, 2004). Others yet, would "like it to remain beautiful and wild" and at the same time call for development of the area in terms of enhanced road system, development of skiing slopes in the mountains, and development of increased tourism facilities that would not only tailor toward "eco"--tourists. These preferences at first glance may seem paradoxical but relate to how local community members think about nature conservation and their need to satisfy basic livelihood needs.

Vision I: Nature Conservation

Protected areas are often seen as a panacea for mitigating habitat loss, putting a stop to extractive activities, and conserving biodiversity. The case of conservationists in the Făgăraș Mountains is

no different: establishing a well-managed national park is seen as a means to preserve the last stronghold of large carnivores in Europe, primeval forest, and endemic plant species, and the global discourse of "national parks" and IUCN categories are present (West et al., 2006). However, local community members do not appear to have a good understanding of what protected areas are and are unaware of Natura 2000 or Făgăraș Mountains designation of such. When asked about what protected areas meant to them, responses varied from areas for agricultural or forestry activities over private property to descriptions aligning more with those definitions employed by conservationists. While local community members generally painted a positive picture of protected areas, this does not hold true for understandings of national parks. Local community members' awareness and evaluation of national parks vary. Some hold little knowledge of national parks, some a lot; some see national parks as being generally positive, and yet others evaluate national parks negatively. Here, my findings suggest that protected areas are seen as a way of preserving beauty, where national parks, a certain type of protected areas, bring restrictions, loss of access, bureaucracy, lack of trust in management, and are expressions of hidden agendas. Nature conservation is also sometimes seen as theoretically possible and positive, but practically unattainable. This concern around loss of access mirrors local decision-makers viewpoints of both protected areas and national parks. Both are seen as an impediment of any sort of development and prosperity for the villages. This is illustrated by one local vice mayor who, when asked about national parks said:

> *"Another trouble, another trouble (…) I don't really agree with them. Apropos of national parks, not long ago there was a meeting with all the villages around here, all the people from the municipalities, even private owners of the forest and investors, and we had a meet up and signed some papers and agreed not to have a national park here. National parks cut down all investments, preventing all exploitation of the forest, even dead or fallen trees. No more hunting, no more building. It pretty much stops all possibilities. I also know this group of interest, foreign*

investors, that wanted to buy up forest land around here. (…) I don't really know, I don't think there's anything good behind it" (vice mayor, September 25th, 2017).

Local decision-makers question the intentions behind the purchase of land for the establishment of a national park and are sceptical of the ability of national parks to provide any community benefits. At the same time, local decision-makers hold positions of power at a local level and possess the ability create resistance to the proposed conservation area on a regional level, whereas the foundation has purchasing power and the ability to create multi-scalar alliances.

Vision II: Development

At a local decision-making level, the focal point is development. This include the development of tourism infrastructure and the upkeep of the major tourist attraction *the Transfăgărașan,* the only road running from the south to the north through the mountains built by the communist regime for military purposes between 1970-1974. Another primary concern is establishing winter tourism, especially building ski slopes in the mountains. Austria is often seen as a desirable model for (skiing) tourism development, occasionally also by local community members. As one mayor mentioned when asked if skiing would benefit his community:

"I think that for the winter season it would be the best option indeed. So, in those months, previously without visitors, one could have tourists here and a resort for visitors could offer opportunities to people of any age. People are looking for places like this, cosy, quiet, with very fresh air, nice nature and landscapes" (mayor, September 26th, 2017).

This vision is in complete conflict to that of conservationists. Skiing would represent a competing land use to that of conservation and if ski slopes were to be developed, it would mean cutting down (potential) primeval forest and disrupting the habitats conservationists are looking to preserve: a potential coup de grâce for

the wilderness reserve as it is currently envisioned by conservationists. Local decision-makers do not believe climate change will affect skiing opportunities, although climate change is employed by conservationists as a counter-argument for skiing, alongside that of biodiversity conservation.

On the other hand, job creation, livelihood diversification, and prosperity are part of the local decision-making narrative, just as it is for people working in conservation. From a conservationist perspective, efforts to ensure that protected areas derive benefits to locals are thus often centred around enhancing and diversifying (local) livelihoods through tourism initiatives, as an appropriate strategy to either replace or supplement already existing livelihood strategies (Bennett and Dearden, 2014; Tao and Wall, 2009). At the same time, conservationists in the area are showcasing various initiatives for "park friendly" livelihood strategies. However, local decision-makers do not believe that a national park will deliver any benefits to the communities, which corresponds with "[t]hose who see an industrial development project as providing continuous benefits for themselves and their descendants may be willing to allow natural resources to be sacrificed through over-harvesting or pollution" (Horowitz, 2011:1385).

Among local community members "nature" forms a greater part of the development narrative than among local decision-makers. Divisions exist with regard to the desirable type of tourism development: enhancing the number of tourists and touristic offerings versus a more strictly agro/eco-tourism focus. While positions of support or opposition of development initiatives can reflect anticipated outcomes and distribution of benefits (Horowitz 2010; 2011), divisions can also occur among actors who could potentially be beneficiaries of either type of future landscapes. For example, when talking about protected areas and Bâlea Lake, a lake located in on the Transfăgărașan in the Făgăraș Mountains, one informant said:

> *"[a protected area] is stupidity. The bureaucracy prevents you to make ski slopes. The government implemented these protected areas so that people can't develop the area. (…) Maybe*

it works on paper but not in real life. At Bâlea Lake a national park could be established. (…) Up there, Natura 2000, protected areas, they're bullshit because you can't do anything in the area. You can make protected areas, but not where there are thousands of tourists! Either or" (tourism operator, September 27th, 2017).

Here, conservation and development are seen as incompatible. At the same time, some level of adversity exists regarding any kind of state control over land that protected areas represent. Following the communist regime and the succeeding privatisation of land, issues around state control over private property became prevalent (Dorondel, 2016), an issue which requires further investigation in the context of the Făgăraș Mountains. This notion of development as a positive, while conservation is not, stands in contrast to another narrative presented by a female guesthouse owner in the same villages:

"It could be [a good idea to establish a national park], to protect the area and the environment because also on Bâlea Lake they're building new stuff and it's not good to do that on the mountain. Better to leave it wild. Bâlea Lake needs to stay wild, now there are many constructions but that is ruining everything, the beauty is destroyed. It can't be allowed to make that food market on the road. Before there was only a couple of lodges, not as many as nowadays" (guesthouse owner, September 29th, 2017).

This illustrates that these divisions occur both among and within subgroups. In the case of the local tourism industry, some focus on ecotourism while others focus on the development of infrastructure and winter tourism opportunities. The latter seem particularly important for people who are already part of the tourism makeup in the area, as tourism is currently facing great seasonality with hardly any winter attractions that would be beneficial to local tourism operators, resulting in guesthouses (often an addition built onto people's private homes, Dorondel, 2016) being the primary type of tourism development undertaken by local community members. Obtaining the necessary permits to open restaurants etc. is perceived as difficult and unfeasible due to the short tourism season.

However, harvesting the fruit of tourism development is far from democratically distributed. Although the entry barriers for tourism may be low, engaging in such activities requires an interest and willingness to change livelihood activities (for instance beyond subsistence use), having the necessary financial means for investment, the necessary marketing abilities and available marketing structures, appropriate language skills, and the presence of "innovation spirit" (Iorio and Corsale, 2010:153). This ultimately runs the risk of excluding marginalised groups from tapping into these benefits of protected areas (Holmes and Cavanagh, 2016; Pullin et al., 2013).

Conclusion

From the material collected, I conclude two things. First, my findings emphasize the role of contradicting ideas as competing visions for the landscape that the Făgăraș Mountains represent reflect different ideologies and landscape meanings that different actors wish to impose on the "future Făgăraș Mountains". These contradicting meanings of the landscape – as a unique pool of biodiversity which must be protected, or an opportunity to battle the fading rural communities and developing a landscape for national and international tourists mirroring Austrian skiing – manifest among actors that are powerful in their own regard and in different ways. Secondly, conservationists and local decision-makers are influential in different ways. Local decision-makers are instrumental in the rural development of their municipalities and have close ties with their constituencies. The scepticism towards the proposed park aligns with the local decision-making agenda, which is one of skiing development, an agenda that would be heavily impeded by the establishment of a national park. As such, they also have the opportunity to spark opposition to the potential national park and create ties with actors at different levels, with whom they share their vision. The conservationists hold another type of power in that they can purchase lands, have international connections, and are part of a global discourse on

nature conservation. This vision addresses audiences beyond the local scale - the scalar level which is the focal arena for local decision-makers, thus magnifying a potential conflict. In between these two competing visions are the heterogeneous visions of local community members, which reflect pride and appreciation of the mountains and the local culture. The potential conflict over the conservation initiative arise within the area's contemporary social and economic challenges and its complex legacy of changing land tenure, necessitating a political ecology analysis which situates conservation initiatives within the historical-geographic and political-economic context of the area,

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Mateja Slovenc

Can a "Good Farmer" and a "Bad Farmer" Cooperate?: An Examination of Conventional and Organic Farmers' Perceptions of Production and Environmental Protection

Abstract: This study aims to show how different positions on environmental conservation in agricultural management affect the ability of conventional and organic farmers to cooperate. The data for this study consists of semi-structured interviews with farmers from the Pomurje region in Slovenia and is analyzed by means of mutual comparison and relevant literature. It shows how nearly opposite views as to what constitutes "good farming", together with strong convictions about their peers' practices, impede cooperation between conventional and organic farmers.

Keywords: "good farmer", organic farming, conventional farming, cooperation, agricultural production, environmental protection

Introduction

One of the main challenges and objectives of the EU's most recent Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform in 2013 is the greening of the agricultural sector or reducing its environmental impacts (European Commission, 2013). Some practices and biodiversity strategies point to an attempt at developing and encouraging a collaborative culture among farmers and other stakeholders in order to achieve sustainable landscape-scale action (Prager, 2015: 59; Riley et al., 2018: 635–636). Although landscape-scale collaborative management has, according to different research studies, many economic benefits (strengthening farmers' position in commodity or input markets), environmental benefits (the development and dissemination of sustainable production methods), and social benefits (increasing social capital), it remains fairly rare (Jarrett et al., 2015: 14–18). According to Sayer (2000), the fundamental problem of green political economy is that "it challenges the valuation of nature purely on the basis of individual preferences expressed through market choices or cost-benefit analyses instead of through political and ethical argument" (p. 83–84). All economic institutions have ethical implications because they are founded on norms defining the responsibilities and rights of individuals and institutions with respect to others. The concept of "moral economy" refers to ways in which moral-political norms and sentiments influence economic activities and vice versa. These norms and sentiments can, through farmers' relationship to production, environmental protection, and cooperation, draw attention to issues regarding justice and equality and conceptions of the good (Sayer, 2000: 79–80; Sayer, 2007: 261).

In recent years, small, medium-sized, and large farmers have been compelled to intensify their operations in response to public policies and constantly declining terms of trade (Infante Amate and González de Molina, 2013: 31; Lockie, 2006: 24). Meanwhile, many small-scale farmers have changed their production orientation for pragmatic and/or idealistic reasons and started to offer value-added products and services. One of the results of this process is a

heterogeneity in farmers' beliefs and ways of life, which become even more complex in relation to rural newcomers. "Farmers are very heterogeneous and [...] cannot be assumed to be automatically willing to collaborate – or to have no problems with collaborating – with such policies and instruments" (Siebert et al., 2004: 319).

The purpose of this study is to examine how conventional and organic farmers' perceptions of environmental protection through agricultural management affect their cooperation. Cooperation requires a level of harmonization regarding ideas and interests, thus the concept of a "good farmer" is used to examine the harmonization level between conventional and organic farmers. The paper will discuss the differences in values between conventional and organic farmers and whether the contemporary beliefs regarding "good farming" of the two groups of farmers differ to such a degree that their cooperation is not possible.

The concept of a "good farmer"

The concept of a "good farmer" is a social construct. It is a set of ideas concerning the proper, expected, and desirable behavior of a farmer. These ideas are the result of ongoing socialization in a specific time and place. In other words, "farmers gain social standing through adherence to a set of principles based on values and standards embedded in farming culture" (Sutherland and Darnhofer, 2012: 232).

When explaining the negotiation process and the symbolic (re)construction of the "good farmer" notion, different authors draw on Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, the "rules of the game" (Sutherland and Darnhofer, 2012), hysteresis (Riley, 2016), and cultural and/or social capital (Burton, 2004; Burton et al., 2008; Burton and Paragahawewa, 2011; Sutherland and Burton, 2011). The concepts are used in studies of farmers' relationship to production (Burton, 2004), the environment or the landscape (Silvasti, 2003; Saugeres, 2002), the use of machinery, and access to labor (Sutherland and Burton, 2011). However, a majority of studies refer to farmers' responses to agri-environmental schemes

(Burton et al., 2008; Sutherland, 2010; Burton and Paragahawewa, 2011; Sutherland and Darnhofer, 2012; Riley, 2016).

Sutherland and Darnhofer (2012: 232–236) point out that the focus of "good farmer" studies is primarily on current symbols, while little attention has been devoted to how ideas about "good farming" and their meaning in different geographic settings change. They show that for conventional and organic farmers the definitions of "good farming" are contested and in flux. The meanings of negotiation and change are also in the foreground of several studies on farmers' relationship to nature and the landscape (Saugeres, 2002; Silvasti, 2002; Soini and Aakkula, 2007). These studies directly or indirectly apply to contested identities and unequal relationships between farmers. Furthermore, the majority of all these studies do not consider cooperation among farmers. The exceptions are two studies on the role of social (and cultural) capital between neighboring farmers regarding the exchange of machinery and labor (Sutherland and Burton, 2011) and regarding farmland conservation practices (Riley et al., 2018).

Methodology

The research was conducted between March and April 2018 as part of doctoral fieldwork on the opportunities and challenges of rural cooperation. The research was carried out in the northeasternmost part of Slovenia, in the Pomurje region; specifically, in eight different villages across the Landscape Park.[1] The case study location was chosen in an area with an identified need for increased farmer cooperation and delivery of landscape conservation.

The empirical data is informed by semi-structured interviews with thirteen farmers from nine farms. The choice of informants was based on their recognized willingness to cooperate for different reasons, in particular, market initiatives and in order

[1] The area of the Landscape Park is an ecoregion of low quality in terms of modern agriculture, although it is part of a region with the best conditions for agricultural production. The full name of the park is intentionally not given in order to protect the identity of the interviewees.

to connect young farmers. Most of the contacts were provided by the Slovenian Rural Youth Association; others were included by snowball sampling. The interviews (except one) took place at the respondents' homes and ranged in length from one to two and a half hours. They were recorded and transcribed in full. During each conversation, the following themes were discussed: (domestic) farming practices, the local community and knowledge, relations to the environment and the Landscape Park, and cooperation between farmers (and agricultural institutions).

The respondents' farms ranged in size from 0.85 hectares to 56 hectares, with an average of 27 hectares. Most, three, were mixed crop-fruit farmers, followed by two livestock and two mixed crop-livestock farms. One farm was dedicated to crop production and another to tourism with a little bit of everything else mentioned above. Of the nine farms, one was an organic farm and one was in the process of converting to organic. The interviewed conventional and organic farmers covered a broad range of farming practices, from self-sufficient to intensive dairy farms, as they defined themselves. Two farmers had moved to Pomurje from an urban area.

The names of the farmers in the text are pseudonyms. They indicate the gender of the person. Due to the explanatory potential of a farm's type, it is given in brackets.

Results

The following answers reflect the complex relationship between organic and conventional farmers. The heterogeneity of beliefs as to what constitutes well-managed agricultural production and environmental conservation generated opposing ideas about what is a "good farmer".

An organic farmer is not a "good farmer"

The intensification of farming practices was actively encouraged through governmental programs after World War II for decades (Sutherland, 2008: 422). Intensified production provided farmers

with income growth and higher yields per hectare (Rudel et al., 2009: 20675). Thus, many older farmers, who are successful as measured by the good (economic) condition of the farm and guaranteed succession, appreciate high yields and production intensification. The inter-generational transfer of technical knowledge, managerial skills, beliefs, and norms occurs during the family farm succession process (Fennell, 1981). As a result, young conventional farmers are skilled in agricultural production and have a strong preference for features typical of intensive farming (high-input farming, farmland care, high yields) (Burton et al., 2008: 22). High yields remain one of the central symbols of "good farming" (Sutherland and Darnhofer, 2012: 235). Some of the interviewed farmers were dismissive of organic farmers due to their low production.

> Peter (conventional livestock farm): *Organic farming – it's ok, it must be and let them work – but still, I can see that many people here are organic farmers just because of the subsidies. However, there is no yield. Organic subsidies should be connected to the yield. Then maybe someone would try to produce something smart. I can assure you, based on my own experiences and the observations of others – here on one organic farm* [...] *a combine has not been present for four years. That is sad.*

> Tom (conventional livestock farm): *Someone on Facebook posted some statistics that Slovenia will be organic by 2025. Yes, ok, organic, but organic farmers do not produce almost any food.* [...] *Organic farming is good but they should be somehow obliged to produce. Do they think we will feed ourselves? No way.* [...] *What is a five- or six-hectare organic farm? You cannot survive with that, not in the long term. Nowadays, times are different. Organic farming was, as my father says, 100 years ago. It was enough for the survival of the family and animals. Now, you cannot cultivate everything by organic farming, hmm, only if everyone were vegetarian or vegan, then maybe it would work. To feed the world with organic farming? I doubt it, I doubt it. We will see what time will bring.* [...] *Furthermore, for our farms of 25 hectares you need to have, for manual*

work, this would really be organic, around 20 Chinese people. Who would want to work like that? No one anymore.

Tom views organic farming as an old-fashioned way of farming that cannot fulfill the global demand for food production. This is also the main criticism of organic farming in general. The fact is that without price premiums, governmental supports, and lower costs, organic farming would be less profitable than conventional farming (Röös et al., 2018: 2–13). Crowder and Reganold (2015: 7611) examined the financial performance of conventional and organic farming by means of a meta-analysis of a global data set. They found that organic yields were 10–18% lower and labor costs were 7–13% higher with organic farming practices.

"Good farming" also reflects the traditional farmer's image as a hard worker. The agricultural labor force is a critical and appreciable resource on a farm. Caring for the animals, working in the fields, and so on, serve as a good example of "real work". But in the eyes of conventional farmers, maximizing yield and quality are basic characteristics of "real work". Anything less demanding is not suitable work for a "real farmer" (Silvasti, 2003: 145).

David (conventional crop-fruit farm): *I am sure that no one who converted to organic farming did it from a nature protection point of view, or maybe just a few. Higher subsidies, less work – that's the reason.*

Conventional farmers often accuse organic farmers of chasing after subsidies.

Denis (conventional crop farm): *Personally, I am strongly opposed to organic farming. I do not want to hurt anyone. In my view, organic farming is not farming, it is only the collection of subsidies, nothing else.* [...] *Organic farms produce something but they live on account of subsidies.*

Conventional farmers deem this to be immoral because organic farmers are rewarded for doing nothing and for not being a "good/real farmer" (Silvasti, 2003: 146).

According to conventional farmers' beliefs, organic farmers are not "good/real farmers" because they also do not display the skills associated with the production of agricultural goods (Burton, 1998).

> Denis (conventional crop-fruit farm): *I know some organic crop farmers. That's just grass. That's not production.* [...] *There are some organic livestock farmers, this somehow works, but for crop production – there are farms but I do not know what they reap. They cannot... The weed defeats them.*

"Tidy farming" is connected to the elimination of weed species. Farmers consider weeds to be harmful, because they reduce the quality and quantity of the crop yield. Furthermore, fields without weeds are a visible sign of a farmer's dedication and skill, thus "tidy farming" has a strong symbolic meaning for conventional farmers and their communities (Soini and Aakkula, 2007: 314). The interviewed newcomers also recognized weed-free fields as a sign of good farming practices within their community.

> Laura and Mark (nearly organic mixed crop-fruit farm; newcomers):
> Laura: *Here you need to have nice and clean fields.*
> Mark: *Here you need to get rid of the weeds immediately.*

A comparative and qualitative study of farmers' knowledge of and interest in farmland wildlife and their understanding of biodiversity in Estonia and Finland "confirm that farmers' comprehension of the 'biodiversity' concept was largely restricted to the realm of wild nature outside the fields, with weeds and pests often not accepted into the concept" (Herzon and Mikk, 2007: 20). Conventional farmers do not like "untidy farming" and perceive it as bad farming (Burton and Paragahawewa, 2011: 98). Burton (2004: 209) has pointed out that farmers with "untidy" fields can be seen as poor and lazy managers, but not necessarily from an economic perspective. "Untidy" fields first of all symbolize a farmer's lack of commitment to the traditional custodial and nurturing roles of the farmer and to agriculture as a way of life.

A conventional farmer is not a "good farmer"

In the discussions regarding "good/bad farming" practices, the organic farmers and newcomers associate modern intensive agriculture with the exploitive and alienated attitude of conventional farmers toward nature (Saugeres, 2002: 373).

> Filip (self-sufficient mixed crop-fruit farm; newcomer): *You see a farmer along a bank, fertilizing with liquid fertilizers, with a stream below. And a bit further down there is a water pumping station. This shows how they do not think about the environment at all. Or just a few of them* [think about the environment; author's note].

> Mark (nearly organic mixed crop-fruit farm; newcomer): *They do not care how to work with the soil, how to restore the soil, how they are actually ruining the soil, those conventional farmers, they do not care. They only care about the selling price of that pig, and how much corn they can produce, to produce as much as possible. That is more or less it. They watch for rain, but nobody actually cares much about the soil.*

It is often the public that recognizes the harmful side effects of economic growth and casts doubt on its priorities. In public (environmental and health-related) discourse, agriculture is presented as a "villain" and farmers are portrayed as "destroyers" of the countryside rather than as "stewards of the land" (Wilson, 2001: 82). The newcomers and some of the organic farmers generally took part in the public discourse on the negative aspects of intensive farming even before they became engaged in organic agricultural production, while other organic farmers have only recently joined by declaring themselves to be "sustainable" or "alternative" farmers (Finan, 2007: 133).

Most of the organic farmers see conventional farmers as "bad" farmers because they have neglected their connection to the land in favor of financial profit (Saugeres, 2002: 379).

> Ana (organic livestock farm): *I think they* [intensive farms; author's note] *are looking for the highest yield, to have more*

and more, and for profit maximization. [...] *It is also problematic that they are not sufficiently aware of the damage they are causing. I think most are not aware.*

Keleman et al. (2013: 318–323) conducted a discourse-based deliberative valuation study of farmers' perception. Therein, focus groups of conventional and organic farmers from France, Hungary, and Italy showed that farmers acknowledge the wider landscape processes due to their daily interaction with the environment through management activities. Although the concept of biodiversity is complex and intangible and farmers lack knowledge of some animal and plant species or chemical processes, farmers are, nevertheless, aware of their impact on the environment on some level (Keleman et al., 2013: 324).

As stated above, conventional farmers give priority to production, which provides them higher yields per hectare and growth in gross income. This prospect can induce them to expand the cultivation area (Rudel et al., 2009: 20675).

Interviewer: *How about preserving those hedges and some other things, as the Park strongly emphasizes that?*
Peter (conventional mixed crop-livestock farm)*: Yeah, I know they emphasize it, but we do not really have a lot of options. They were once... there used to be many more of them once, but we plowed over a lot of them.* [Silence, author's note.] *We are forced to. For us to have plots... there used to be one field, a road to make it easier to get there, a bit of road there, because there were hedges before, these machines got bigger. Hmm, we did that a lot. Maybe it is wrong. Hmm, you make work easier, and lower your costs. That is why. We farmers need something; you get it done faster. You can earn more.*

Stewardship of the land with cultivation, on one hand, and protection, on the other, is still very much the core of the conventional and organic farmers' identity. Contrary to the practices mentioned above, organic farmers deem themselves to be "good farmers" because they do not destroy nature or reduce biodiversity (Saugeres, 2002: 379).

Laura and Mark (nearly organic mixed crop-fruit farm; newcomers):
Laura: *Nature is diverse, not monotone.*
Mark: *I think they are poisoning the earth. They are poisoning their own earth.*
Laura: *No, they are poisoning themselves.* [...]
Mark: *I try, we sometimes try to bring them to, maybe a little, to start to do things more ecologically, naturally, well, to start thinking about maybe poisoning a bit less. I think that is the only major problem.*

Conventional farmers perceive crop protection practices as a guarantee of market-quality products, while organic farmers emphasize the importance of healthy, quality products. Conventional farmers admit the harmful impacts of pesticide and herbicide use, but they emphasize the need to preserve the viability and well-maintained character of the rural landscape (Soini and Aakkula, 2007: 314). Organic farmers cite the fact that they do not use pesticides and herbicides: *There is no spraying here, nothing, really nothing* (Simon, organic livestock farm). When organic farmers talk about conventional farming and plant protection, they often mention "poisoning". The use of this concept is also frequently present in the public discourse of non-farmers (Soini and Aakkula, 2007: 314).

The interviewed newcomers have a strong belief in what is "right" and "wrong" with regard to intensive farming and they are strongly opposed to cooperation with "the Other" farmers.

Simon (self-sufficient mixed crop-fruit farm; newcomer): *We are even planning to create a common trademark and then to market that somehow; however, we do not have any intention to expand a lot, to make it become some sort of giant commercial union or anything like that. We are a bit constrained, how should I put it, we do not want to involve conventional farmers. We somehow do not live those ideas, and simply put, they do not belong with us.*
Laura (nearly organic mixed crop-fruit farm; newcomer): *Other farmers think differently. The old way, as they were taught. It is impossible to cooperate with them.*

Discussion

The productivist paradigm has been the dominant mode of agricultural production for generations (Bjørkhaug and Richards, 2008: 106). The concept of "agrarian product" is understood as the main output of the agrarian sector (Infante Amate and González de Molina, 2013: 27–28). Although production seems to be a natural part of farming, the values assigned thereto are an arbitrary social construct. With their excessive investments in agricultural production, (conventional) farmers constantly strengthen the illusion that the value of production is something natural (Bourdieu, 2002: 209). They wrap this idea up in a "Feed the World" discourse, which was the foundation of the CAP. Although this discourse is no longer so ubiquitous, it still has an important role in famers' identity and the CAP (Finan, 2007: 42; Westhoek et al., 2006: 7). "The "Feed the World" discourse incorporates aspects of formal rationality, especially the efficiency of agricultural production, with substantive rationality, especially the value of charity," and contributes to sustaining existing power relations (Finan, 2007: 42–46). In the mid-80s, the logic, morality, and rationale of the productivist regime were increasingly questioned by various actors (the public, the state) on the basis of the economic, environmental, ideological, and structural problems of agriculture (Whitby and Lowe after Wilson, 2001: 81). This led to a (partial) loss of the economic and ideological sense of security for farmers (Wilson, 2001: 82). Organic farming practices are representative of a shift from the productivist paradigm that is shaking the knowledge base, identity, and producer role of conventional farmers on a daily basis (Bjørkhaug and Richards, 2008: 106).

The landscape is not simply something observable and visible. It is an actual process through which different identities and lifestyles are created and contested (Saugeres, 2002: 375). Farmers maintain the productive environment. This is highly symbolic especially to conventional farmers and tied to their identity as "good farmers" (Soini and Aakkula, 2007: 319). The farmers' understanding of the skills related to production provides them with

a unique self-perception and perspective on their appearance in the farm family and community. Through their land use practices – actually through the results of such activities visible in the landscape – farmers display their "good farming" skills and concerns regarding the nurturing role of farmers and their connection to the land. By showing this to other farmers, they reinforce their symbolic capital (social status or prestige) and symbolic power (Bourdieu, 2003: 29; Burton, 2004: 208–209; Burton et al., 2008: 22–26). Displays of material and symbolic power are often a guarantee of material profit (Bourdieu, 2002: 204). The landscape represents power relations in society and is concurrently an instrument of symbolic power (Saugeres, 2002: 375).

Different social groups have given the landscape different meanings. These meanings are not equal. For decades, the dominant meaning of an agricultural landscape has been connected to production. However, this meaning is not static. It is subject to constant renegotiation through people's everyday discussions and practices (Saugeres, 2002: 375–379). Sutherland and Darnhofer (2012: 235) have already shown that the shift in EU agricultural policies from guaranteed price policies to direct payments along with the other social processes in agriculture have induced a change in the practices and thinking of farmers in England. These changes have undermined high yields and "field tidiness" as central symbols of "good farming". For farmers, the opposition between a "good farmer " and "bad farmer" is a tool for locating their identities "in order to make sense of, and cope with the rapid changes that have taken place in the community and the existing pressures and uncertainties that they face in contemporary agriculture" (Saugeres, 2002: 382).

Identities are (re)produced in the opposition between organic and conventional farming and between "good farmers" and "bad farmers" (Saugeres, 2002: 381). In Pomurje, where conventional farmers prevail over organic farmers in numerical terms and dominate as to land use practices, some organic farmers and newcomers accumulate their symbolic capital by demonstrating strong opposition to the ideas of conventional farming. According to Kelemen et al. (2013: 326), organic farmers belong to the

same agricultural movement. They share a unified philosophy of farming and the environment. Their relatively homogeneous beliefs and norms, as well as the fact of belonging to a minority group of farmers, help foster their cooperation. This can lead to them occupying a stronger position in society and induce changes in the perception of what a "good farmer" is.

These perceptions are constantly negotiated between the individual or group and the community (Setten, 2004: 400). What is evident from the respondents' answers is that the concept of a "good farmer" is a useful tool for judging others. Emery and Franks (2012) have addressed the potential for collaborative agri-environmental schemes in England. They argue that the main reason for the lack of communication and mutual understanding between farmers, "and its association with a value in independence, is a fear of exposure to the potential judgment of others" (p. 228). Although longstanding relations of high social capital may not be easily carried over or translated into new contexts of cooperation, a history of positive interaction can be a good basis for such (Riley et al., 2018: 641; Sutherland and Burton, 2011: 244).

The ongoing production of moral judgments recreates beliefs about who is "right", "good/bad", or "(un)natural" (Setten, 2004: 407). What is shared between the ideas about "bad farmers" among both organic and conventional farmers as pertaining to the other is the projection of a "greedy farmer" (Harrison et al., 1998: 316). The difference between the instrumentalist aspect (the main goal is to gain money; how to earn it is not significant) and intrinsic work value (the nature of the work itself is in the foreground) is important (Silvasti, 2003: 145). All farmers claim to value the intrinsic aspect above the instrumentalist aspect; they attribute overemphasizing the instrumentalist aspect to "the Other". "Bad organic farmers" are opportunists in the eyes of conventional farmers, who, according to organic farmers, in turn disregard nature – each side assumes the other to be economically driven. "All symbols of good farming ability relate to some extent to the economic efficiency of the farmer" (Burton et al., 2008: 23). Maintaining financial viability is a legitimate concern

of every farmer (Sutherland, 2010: 419); the way to achieve, maintain, and especially "exceed" such can be seen as immoral. I believe that this is the main reason why organic and conventional farmers cannot cooperate.

The growing social gap between organic and conventional farmers is a result of their non-communication, on one hand, and tension between the "rustic" and "productive" agriculture landscape, on the other (Silvasti, 2003: 147). Like farmers, the CAP is caught between contested landscape imaginaries that are constantly reproduced by its "captives". The CAP is, to a great extent, responsible for the "immoral" actions of organic and conventional farmers, because it has enabled and supported them by its past and current measures. These measures indicate concerns about distributional fairness in the allocation of financial resources within farming communities (Taylor and Van Grieken, 2015: 18) instead of universalizing certain values towards the environment (Sayer, 2001: 639).

Conclusions

Studies (Siebert, 2006; Soini and Aakkula, 2007) have shown that the active acceptance of environmental protection can only be achieved through a process of dialogue that implies cooperation. Organic and conventional farmers cannot agree on a common meaning of "good farming" regarding agriculture production and environmental conservation. A discrepancy of beliefs and images negatively affects mutual cooperation because it feeds on and deepens the distortions of the other farmer group (Sen, 2006: 7). The misdescriptions and generalizations voiced by one side as regards the other concerning the conventional/organic divide hinder cooperation. In order to achieve and foster cooperation among farmers, they need to see and understand the pluralities of their identities (as "good farmers") and participate in generating a common vision for the future of their community (Chodorkoff, 2014: 11). Collective responses "require a degree of closing down in the sense of bracketing unresolved uncertainties and establi-

shing a degree of discursive common ground in order to determine a specific course of action" (Dryzek and Pickering, 2017: 356). Holistic community development based on a self-conscious understanding of the farmers' interrelationships and cooperation is a process that integrates all facets of a community's life (Chodorkoff, 2014: 21). Regarding the social, political, economic, and ethical dimensions of the interviewed farmers' everyday lives, there is little that suggests that achieving this is possible; in fact, it would seem that the discrepancy of beliefs and images as to "good farmers" and "bad farmers" will only grow in the coming years.

The choice to cooperate depends on one's personal awareness and intentions within the broader economic and social contexts (Kelemen et al., 2013: 325). This means that we need to improve our understanding of social inequalities by taking into account the local and global contexts (Biermann et al., 2016: 344). The segments defined by personal awareness and intentions need to be further examined to fully understand why farmers do not cooperate to a greater extent. This research provides broad insight into the mutual beliefs and ideas of conventional and organic farmers. The next step would be to gather more data on how the farmers perceive themselves.

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Furculita, Adrian

The Role of Payments and Subsidies in the Implementation of the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Agricultural Sector of the Republic of Moldova

Abstract: Sustainable development of the agricultural sector is essential to the steady and accelerated growth of the economy as a whole, as it represents the largest real sector of the Moldovan economy, with an approximately 15% share of GDP, but also because it is the largest user of natural resources. This article analyses the links between sectoral policies, strategies, and public spending in the field. The purpose of the research is to present the context and role of public spending in agriculture in order to stimulate the rational use of natural resources.

Abbreviations

AIPA - Agency of Intervention and Payments for Agriculture
EAC - Europe and Central Asia
FAO - United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization
FNDAMR - National Fund for Agriculture and Rural Area Development
MAIA - Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry
OECD - Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAC - Common Agricultural Policy
GDP - Gross Domestic Product
SNDAR - National Development Strategy for Agriculture

Introduction – Natural resource management

"Sustainable development is a development that meets current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."
The Brundtland Commission (1983)

Since the 1960s, global food production has at least kept pace with world population growth, providing more food per capita at generally declining prices but at a cost to natural resources. According to the OECD publication *Sustainable Management of Water Resources in Agriculture*, the world today is faced with the challenge of producing nearly 50% more food by approximately the 2030s and doubling production by the early 2050s (OECD, 2010).

Natural resources, especially soil, water, plant and animal diversity, vegetation coverage, renewable energy sources, and climate and ecosystem services are fundamental to the structure and functioning of agricultural systems and to social and ecological sustainability in support of life on earth.

The Republic of Moldova, unlike most EAC countries, is a net exporter of agro-food products. Agriculture accounts for almost half of the country's export revenues and an analysis of the share of the gross added value of agriculture in the GDP of the country demonstrates the agrarian character of the economy and that agriculture plays a vital role as a whole. However, agriculture in the 21st century confirms through its multifunctional character that it does not merely entail the production of food. We can assert with certainty that being in a clear cohesion with rural areas, agriculture has links with the environment, which, in addition to its important economic role, assigns an ecological and social role (The National Agricultural and Rural Development Strategy for 2014-2020, 2014). Even if the most important policy document on the development of agriculture and the rural environment recognizes agriculture's environmental role in the protection of natural resources, the Republic of Moldova is far from doing a good job in developing and implementing an effective resource management policy.

The specific nature of the Republic of Moldova in terms of natural resources lies in the fact that it has comparatively little area and limited resources, which are used rather inefficiently, as the admittedly numerous instances of waste and the worsening qualitative and ecological state of resources have largely ruined their economic potential. Although several measures have been taken regarding the management of natural resources since 1991 in Moldova, the state of things in this regard has not changed for the better. For a long time, each of the four basic resources – soil, minerals, water, and vegetation – has been managed separately by a specialized state institution (S. Florea et al., 2009).

Considerable declines are being recorded regarding the ecological status of soils. Over at least the last four decades, the surface area with eroded soils has grown on average by 7,000 hectares annually and the humus content in soil is decreasing. About 40% of the soils of the Republic of Moldova are affected and in absolute terms this would mean approximately 20 million tons of soil are lost every year (Nat. Inst. Of Ecology, 2005: 40-41).

The state of the management of the quality and use of water resources is deemed to be barely satisfactory and even unsatisfactory. These resources are known to be limited. The average consumption of an inhabitant of the Republic of Moldova is approximately 330 m^3 of water from local resources and 1,700 m^3 when considering the volume of water from cross-border rivers, which is 2.5 times less than the European average (approx. 4,800 m^3/inhabitant) (S. Florea et al., 2009).

Given that the Republic of Moldova has a comparatively small area with quite limited natural resources, which, however, are particularly important in the specialization of the economy and in ensuring the vital needs of the population, and that any change in the environment affecting a resource is directly reflected in the others, it would be logical to improve resource management by sensitizing the opinion of one of the largest groups exerting pressure on the resource – farmers (The Global Soil Charter – The 13 Principles for the Sustainable Use of Soil Resources). For too long, agriculture was perceived only as the economic activity of food production,

which led to the overexploitation of natural resources and endangering their physical and chemical integrity, which has had a severe impact on the ecological state of the environment and the health of the population. A more holistic or systems-oriented approach is preferable because it can address the difficult issues associated with the complexity of food and other production systems in different ecologies, locations, and cultures (IAASTD, 2009).

How can agriculture make better use of natural resources ?

Government payments in agriculture are an important tool for government to promote economic growth and poverty reduction in the agricultural sector and the economy as a whole. There is a great deal of international evidence on the impact of public spending on agriculture and beyond (W. Sutton et al., 2005). The development of the agrarian sector is essential for the steady and accelerated growth of the economy as a whole, as it represents the largest real sector of the Moldovan economy with a 30% share of GDP as of the end of 2000, which subsequently decreased dramatically (The National Agricultural and Rural Development Strategy for 2014-2020, 2014).

Currently, the subsidy process in agriculture is carried out in accordance with the Regulation on the Conditions, Order and Procedure for Granting Financial Resources from the National Fund for Agricultural and Rural Development.

The financing of the agricultural sector was rather chaotic at first, mostly as a result of political pressures. Thus, the annual budget was drafted, in the absence of forecasts and on the basis of previous expenditure, without taking into account their correspondence with the sector's priorities in the economic environment. In other words, there was no effective mechanism to link the agrarian sector strategy and its priorities with the institutional structure of the MAIA and the budget allocations. Thus, the contribution of the financial resources allocated to the development of the sector was rather ineffective (W. Sutton, 2005).

The financing of the agrarian sector started in the absence of an appropriate strategic framework, so at the beginning of the 2000s the MAIA elaborated a series of documents for the development of the strategic agricultural sub-sectors, which were only aimed at restoring previous production structures that were not adapted to the economic realities of the period.

In accordance with the Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy and following the creation of the Agency for Intervention and Payment in Agriculture, Moldovan farmers can access a range of support measures that have proven to be the most relevant since the onset of the financing of the agricultural sector in the country. Thus, one of the three support priorities was dedicated to ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources.

From the considerations identified in this paper, one can clearly note an emphasis on reviving the production potential and renewing machinery and equipment. A component that is still lacking or that is very little developed in the overall philosophy of the Regulation on the Conditions, Order and Procedure for Granting Financial Resources from the National Fund for Agricultural and Rural Development is the aspect of the sustainable management of the use of natural resources.

In the Republic of Moldova, agricultural production has undergone slow and unstable growth, to some degree determined by external factors (climate conditions), especially since 2000 in comparison to other sectors of the economy (The National Agricultural and Rural Development Strategy for 2014-2020, 2014). However, in search of the lost paradise and productivity of the past, the development of a concept of agriculture that fails to see the symbiosis between the state and the protection of the required resources threatens its welfare and availability. The overuse of resources has caused the degradation of about 40% of the arable land, the nitrate pollution of the phreatic waterbeds and drinking water, as well as the destruction of biodiversity.

Thus, in order to halt the process of the ecological degradation of the environment and to identify viable solutions for efficient but less harmful agriculture, it was necessary to change the

paradigm. The review of the agricultural and rural development sector identified a number of major issues that are addressed in the National Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy for 2014-2020. A key policy document in the field of agriculture, the Strategy promotes agriculture in direct interaction with the dimension of sustainable rural development. At the same time, the Strategy recognizes the problem of the degradation of natural resources largely due to agriculture activity.

It is welcome that in the main policy document in the field the pressure of agricultural activity on the state of natural resources is identified and as a result Priority 2 plays a role in the overall picture. However, there is a certain superficiality regarding the integration of the environmental component within the SNDAR and in the Regulation on the Conditions, Order and Procedure for Granting Financial Resources.

While ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources is well grounded in the strategy, the proposed measures seem to focus more on adapting the agriculture sector to climate conditions (increasing demand for water) than on promoting activities that will use natural resources more efficiently and responsibly.

Sub-measure 2.2. *Stimulating investment to purchase irrigation equipment* supports investments in irrigation services. It is, however, difficult to understand the logic underlying this argument, because as an economic activity (in the context of irrigation), agriculture actually puts pressure on the water resource and does not support it. It is important to distinguish the discourse of promoting sustainable practices in relation to natural resources and the rehabilitation of the irrigation potential. But both have an important role and are needed to build the overall structure of viable agriculture. In any case, feigning concern for the sustainability of the water resource by filling the gap with other types of measures cannot be accepted.

And confusion continues when analyzing the proposal of the support measures found in Priority 2 of the above-mentioned Regulation. While in Sub-measures 2.1 (*Stimulating investment in agricultural land consolidation*) and 2.5 (*Supporting the promotion and development of organic farming*) the relevance of the support

measures does not require additional argumentation, in Sub-measure 2.4 (*Stimulating investment in the purchase of no-till and mini-till equipment*) there is doubt as to how sustainable the practice of no-till technology is, given that it still has side effects. Although there are followers of this practice in the Republic of Moldova, the technology raises the suspicion that it requires a larger quantity of chemicals in the production process. At the very least, no-tilling and/or mini-tilling as a practice must be complemented by other practices in order to achieve the true sustainability of an agricultural system in which the environmental footprint of both soil management and the use of input agrochemicals is less than the natural ecosystem's recovery capacity (T. Friedrich et al., 2012).

But when we come to the analysis of Sub-measures 2.2 (*Stimulating investment to purchase irrigation equipment*) and 2.3 (*Stimulating agricultural producers to compensate for irrigation costs*), which refer to encouraging agricultural producers to purchase irrigation equipment and paying compensation for agricultural expenses, we can identify the inconsistency and irrelevance of these support sub-measures regarding the management of water and soil resources. Or, this support measure could very well be integrated by "Priority No. 1 – Increasing the agro-food sector's competitiveness through restructuring and modernization". The logic of including these support measures under the umbrella of sustainable management seems wrong to me and bankrupt in terms of promoting a healthy agricultural system concept.

Examining the sub-measures of support measure No. 3 of the above-mentioned FNDAMR Regulation, which refers to agricultural land management practices, gives the impression that it opted for the purchase of equipment and less on promoting the adoption of environmentally sustainable practices by farmers.

The concept of sustainable agriculture

Techniques for resolving problems regarding the sustainable exploitation of natural resources, e.g. diminishing soil fertility through synthetic inputs and other natural processes, are often

available and well understood. However, addressing natural resource challenges will require new and creative approaches by stakeholders with different experience, skills, and priorities. Although the concept of sustainable agriculture is simple and explicit and the available recommendations give farmers/producers a "basket of choices" regarding what they should do, the capacity to work together on multiple stages and in different social and physical environments is not well developed. For example, there were few bidirectional learning opportunities between farmers and researchers or policymakers. As a result, farmers and members of civil society have rarely been involved in shaping the policy of managing natural resources. Community-based partnerships with the private sector, which are at an early stage of development, represent a new and promising path (IAASTD, 2009).

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations disseminates good agricultural practices as a collection of principles that apply to production and post-production processes on farms, resulting in safe and healthy food and non-food agricultural products, taking into account economic, social and environmental sustainability. Moreover, according to the "*Background Paper for the FAO International Workshop on Good Agricultural Practice*", in the past thirty years, the perceived failure of research and expansion in developing countries to disseminate these good 'codified' practices for farmers and to take into account the variety of farmers and local and indigenous knowledge has spawned the development of participatory technology development approaches, farmer knowledge and farmer attitudes and practices, and more farmer-friendly farming to better identify and support better farming practices. (FAO, 2004)

This concept has also been adopted by the CAP within the European area, which aims to improve the state of natural resources in the agricultural sector. Agri-environmental measures are a key element in integrating environmental issues into the Common Agricultural Policy. They are intended to encourage farmers to protect and strengthen the environment on their own agricultural land by paying them for the provision of environmental services.

Given that the Moldovan agricultural subsidy system is at its beginning and has a rather rigid institutional structure, the implementation of agroecological payments to farmers, who are engaged for a minimum period of at least five years, for adopting organic farming techniques can have a significant impact on satisfying society's demand for organic output from agriculture.

Conclusion

Sustainable agriculture has many forms, but in essence it is a reflection of the industrial approach to food production developed in the twentieth century. This system, based on monoculture, mechanization, chemical pesticides and fertilizers, biotechnology, and government subsidies, has made our diet rich and accessible. However, the ecological and social price has been high: erosion, the depletion of soil and contaminated water resources, biodiversity loss, deforestation, labor abuses, etc. In response to these challenges, we now have at the global level the concept of sustainable agricultural practices, and in the EU the Common Agricultural Policy, which through its agri-environmental measures promotes the efficient and reasonable use of natural resources.

In the Republic of Moldova, unfortunately, the agricultural policy implemented by MADRM through the AIPA does not seem to devote attention to the sustainable use of natural resources. Furthermore, according to the AIPA Activity Report for 2017, the share of resources allocated for sub-measures "Supporting the promotion and development of organic farming" and "Agricultural land consolidation" altogether amount to less than 0.25 % of the total amount paid (AIPA , 2017).

In light of the above, confidence in the effectiveness of these measures and the supporting philosophies thereof as relevant and appropriate for the Republic of Moldova can be confirmed. However, after studying the EU policies in agriculture and analyzing the administrative and economic context, it can be concluded that there are some elements that can be imported in the short and medium term in order to improve the framework and

financing mechanism of agricultural producers in the Republic of Moldova; thus, I have elaborated several recommendations:

- To review the range of support measures and sub-measures under Priority 2 of the Regulation on the Conditions, Order and Procedure for Granting Financial Resources – the range of measures proposed by the version of the Regulation approved for the period 2017-2021 is rather superficial and insufficiently focused on improving the state of the natural resources that agriculture as an economic activity uses.
- To complete Priority 2 with agroecological measures that are in line with the concept of sustainable and efficient agriculture in relation to the rational use and protection of natural resources.
- For the AIPA to develop a public-private partnership with the participation of the private sector in the agricultural sector and the associated structures (NGOs) in order to disseminate more sustainable practices regarding the use of natural resources.
- To decentralize the mechanism for managing FDAMR financial allocations. Starting from the fact that local actors know the local context better and thus are more efficient at finding faster and more viable solutions, they believe that increasing their role in the governance of the region will allow them to develop the skills and capacities needed to develop the local space. I also consider that the direct disbursement of financial means to the territorial offices of the AIPA or the agricultural directorate within district councils and the delegation of the approval and authorization function regarding projects at the local level would help to increase the relevance of the authorized projects.
- To complete the element of the FDAMR Regulation regarding the eligibility criteria for the projects submitted under Priority 2, with the need for the advisory opinion of the agricultural directorate of the district council and of the territorial subdivision of the environmental protection inspectorate.

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Notes on Agricultural Policy - Public Expenditure on Agriculture Development.

Blaise Nkfunkoh Ndamnsah

Political Ecology, Governance, and Armed Conflicts: The Case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

Introduction

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is a fragile post-conflict state that is immensely rich in natural resources. Effective management of its mining and forestry resources is key to its future economic progress. Academic studies on the causes of conflict can be usefully linked to research on governance to improve the management of natural resources in conflict-prone societies. For instance, studies have revealed that countries with high-quality institutions dedicated to the management of valuable natural resources minimize potential problems faced by resource-rich and conflict countries.

However, natural resource management can be complex and difficult due to political, social, economic, and environmental goals even in peaceful societies. Conflict societies such as the DRC present even more complex challenges given the underlying political and historical reasons for the conflicts. Despite these significant difficulties, best governance practices, such as incorporating

stakeholder input and financing strategies could both prevent and resolve conflicts.

This article summarizes findings about a number of important external and internal factors fueling conflict and institutional challenges in managing resources and highlights a number of ways in which donor institutions have worked with policymakers to improve resource governance in the DRC. The crucial task is to analyze the relationship between natural resource governance and a war.[1] Is it the abundance of natural resources that causes war or does the mismanagement of resources cause war?

Conflict financing and the exploitation of natural resources

Research focused on the role of conflict financing through the exploitation of natural resources is common today. Valuable natural resources such as diamonds, gold, oil, timber, and even drug crops and medicinal plants, have been found to be prone to misappropriation. The control of these resources may allow rebels to generate conflict financing.

Along similar lines, several political science studies have demonstrated that an abundance of natural resources increases the risk of armed conflict.[2] Nevertheless, the concept of competition between groups over the distribution of resources is pertinent to an understanding of the current violent, community conflicts over land and forest usage in the DRC.

In terms of human casualties, the war that ripped apart the DRC was the worst since World War II, resulting in over four million deaths, and is perhaps the greatest example of a resource-fu-

1 According to P. Le Billon "There is growing concern that whereas resources were once a means of funding and waging armed conflict for states to a political end, armed conflict is increasingly becoming the means to individual commercial ends: gaining access to valuable resources (Keen, 1998; Berdal & Malone, 2000 in; P. Le Billon Political Geography 20 (2001) 561–584)

2 Ibidem "From competition over wild game to merchant capital and imperialist wars over precious minerals, natural resources have motivated or financed the violent activities of many different types of belligerents" Westing,1986.

eled war. The armies and proxy militias of six different countries as well as those of the Congolese government and numerous rebel groups plundered and looted the country's vast natural resource wealth, including coltan, gold, cassiterite, copper, cobalt, timber, diamonds and other precious stones. DRC's neighbors, Rwanda and Uganda, played an active role in the exploitation of the country's natural resources throughout the conflict.

A prime example of conflict is the Virunga National Park in the north of the DRC, on the border with Uganda and Rwanda. The Park was the site of some of the large-scale armed conflicts that occurred in the Kivu Provinces. The Rwandan genocide and resulting refugee crisis led to the presence of about 700,000 refugees on the edges of the Park. These displaced groups increased the consumption of resources both inside and outside the Park, furthering the impact on the environment and leading to mass deforestation.

In the absence of alternative income opportunities in commerce, access to land is essential to livelihoods in the DRC. There have been several historical conflicts over grazing land and land ownership between the Hema and Lendu peoples in which approximately 10,000 persons were killed and 50,00 displaced.[3]

Conflict over natural resources in the DRC

The DRC includes most of the Congo Basin region, an area of enormous wealth in terms of timber, and mineral resources. Despite this natural wealth, however, the DRC is one of the poorest countries in the world with significant infrastructure deficiencies and an economy that is highly dependent upon agriculture and forestry. Control over mining areas in the eastern provinces continues to shift between different independent armed groups and units of the Military of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The struggle for control over these resources has exacerbated conflict and led to greater difficulty in managing the resources.

3 Ibidem" With the sharp drop in foreign assistance to many governments and rebel groups resulting from the end of the Cold War, belligerents have become more dependent upon mobilising private sources of support to sustain their military and political activities; thereby defining a new political economy of war (Berdal & Keen, 1997 in; Le Billon, 2000a)".

Despite the recent transition towards peace, conflict and insecurity remain in the eastern provinces of North and South Kivu, Orientale, Maniema, and Katanga. These conflicts are particularly acute in the north-eastern provinces of Ituri in Orientale, and in North and South Kivu, where local militia and foreign rebel forces continue to terrorize the regions on the border with Uganda and Rwanda.

Government challenges and natural resource management

The main challenges of government for the DRC are to provide security for all of its citizens and to build democratic, transparent, and accountable institutions capable of managing its resources. Although the existing legal framework recognizes the right to use land via customary law, it also allows for the purchase of occupied land, and the eviction of tenants. The issue of who is entitled to land rights is highly politicized. Another source of tension stems from the unclear role of formal and customary authorities. Legal reform is necessary to prevent future land-grabbing opportunities that could cause armed conflict.

Legitimizing certain existing customary systems of land administration and providing a forum for land use disputes could help diffuse both future conflicts and lay a framework for sustainable land management. The demarcation of conservation areas in the DRC is also a contentious political issue. The existence of conservation areas has been linked to colonial land demarcations, which are not always understood or accepted by the communities affected.

Furthermore, the DRC continues to face significant challenges in its reform processes in all the natural resource sectors. The DRC's National Statistical Institute lacks the resources to collect the necessary information by which the performance of ministries can be assessed. Even in areas where periodic reporting is mandatory, such as the mining industry, it is still difficult to find reliable data on mining operators, production, or exported commodities.

Transparency in governance remains another main challenge to effective natural resource managements in the DRC. The country ranked 161st out of 180 in the 2017 Transparency International Corruption Perception Index.

Capacity building

There is a clear need for institutional capacity building in the DRC to ensure compliance with the international norms and agreements relevant to environmental management. At the individual level, capacity building is implemented through the processes of teaching and skills training. At the local and national institutional levels, improvements in the functioning of institutions and the capacity of administrators could help civil services to more effectively use revenue and natural resources to reduce poverty.

Administrators are increasingly using capacity building to encourage ownership through participation and the mutual exchange of knowledge. Building individual capacity in terms of natural resource management would involve increasing the level of legal, scientific, and technical expertise. For example, increasing expertise in the implementation and monitoring of regulatory compliance or increasing awareness of the risk of conflict in managing natural resources would increase the ability of the government and various communities to address these conflicts.

Moreover, increasing scientific expertise in the geological field would allow the DRC's institutions to improve their negotiating power with extractive industry counterparts. Similarly, capacity building for local businesses could help to promote the development of home-grown industries in the minerals sector.

On the international level, governance initiatives relevant to the environment in the DRC are conditioned by the various international treaties and environmental agreements. These initiatives and treaties specify actions to protect the DRC's biodiversity, timber, and wetlands as well as to mitigate climate change. Both USAID and the European Development Fund have agreements with the DRC to fund programs that encompass regional con-

servation. Given this outside support for local and national institutions, it is vital to create an implementation framework that creates coherent sector-wide programs.

Specifically, the DRC is currently developing a framework for the forestry sector. The population is highly dependent on the forestry sector and, although precise data is not available, the expansive forests of the DRC provide a wide array of benefits, including timber for domestic use and export, fuel wood, a variety of forest foods and medicines, and a carbon sink for sequestration programs. It is estimated that the DRC's timber resources are equal to that of all the other African countries combined and the timber industry is expected to benefit from increasing demand in China and India. Therefore, this sector is a high priority for reform. The ongoing forestry reforms are part of the preparation of a national strategy for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation by the Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation and Tourism.

Some best practices in the management of conflict natural resources:

Land use conflicts between different resource users and managers have often arisen in eastern DRC. Although individual organizations managing land within or adjacent to protected areas have addressed the conflicts differently, a number of good practices have been proven to reduce usage conflicts. Such practices include devolving rights to local communities, diversifying economic activities around protected areas, improving land use planning and zoning, securing tenure to land and resources, ensuring stakeholder participation in resource management, integrating policies relating to natural resources, and legitimizing community-based management initiatives. Given the success of these tactics, many national programs in the DRC are beginning to embrace these concepts. Accordingly, donors and the government of the DRC are working together to build institutional and individual capacities for the participatory management of natural resources in various sectors.

a. Forestry

The harvest, transport, sale, or purchase of timber in violation of local, national, or international law falls within the so-called "Basic Law on Forest Legality" of the DRC. For the purposes of this tool, "forest legality" means the set of conditions that allows the harvest of and trade in forest products that comply with applicable local, national, and international legal requirements that have been adopted. These may include the following:

- national laws governing the right to harvest particular species or from particular areas;
- international agreements that cover trade in certain types of timber;
- consumer-country laws that support trade in legally harvested forest products.

In 2014, following the signing of the Community Forestry Decree, a number of pitfalls and challenges to the successful development of community forestry in the DRC became evident. A National Roundtable was initiated in 2015 to address such risks by bringing together different stakeholders involved in the development of community forestry in the DRC and to agree on a common national strategy and approach, developed through consensus. The Roundtable on community forestry represents a unique national platform for consultation, coordination and dialogue between the diverse actors involved in community forestry.

The roundtable on community forestry was convened with the following objectives:

- to develop and validate the National Strategy on Community Forestry (SNFC) in a participatory manner, with a view to formal government endorsement;
- to monitor the implementation of the SNFC and related action plans;
- to provide a space where stakeholders and practitioners regularly exchange views on all issues related to the controlled development of community forestry, and to reach consensus on points of divergence;

- to inform discussion on policies that can be adopted to support the development of community forestry, based on knowledge gained in the field and in collaboration with other policy processes such as the ongoing land reform, the decentralization process and land use planning initiatives;
- to share ideas, experiences and best practices stemming from the implementation of community forests in the DRC and elsewhere including through the identification and monitoring of a limited number of existing and planned pilot projects in different social, political and geographic contexts across the DRC;
- to strengthen collaboration among stakeholders involved at all levels (national, provincial and local) in the DRC.

The national strategy has been the most significant achievement of the Roundtable on community forestry thus far, and this platform will hopefully continue to demonstrate its value as an inclusive and transparent process for developing community forests in the DRC.

The International Development Association is also supporting the Forest and Nature Conservation Project by providing infrastructure, equipment, training, and project coordination. Implementing best practices strengthens institutional capacity and community participation in sustainable forest management initiatives. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme is collaborating to manage conflicts linked to land tenure bordering protected areas in eastern DRC, combining participatory demarcation with conflict mediation and land administration.

b. Mining

Much of the mining is done by artisanal miners, who work using hand tools. Artisanal miners often receive very little for the minerals they extract and face systemic exploitation where mine sites are controlled by powerful individuals sometimes by politicians and rebel leaders. Artisanal miners have also been subjected to

threats, physical assault and bad treatment on mine sites at the hands of the mine police, or the private security guards working for those who control the sites.

The minerals extracted are usually sold outside of the country, after having passed through a number of actors and processes, in an often very complex supply chain system. In recent years increasing attention has been devoted to the issue of supply chains and the companies and countries that usually receive minerals from the DRC, as these actors could play an important role in preventing human rights violations and abuses.

Trade restrictions have also been introduced to reduce availability of resource-based financing to conflict actors. For example, the Kimberley Process for Conflict Diamonds is an intergovernmental process established to regulate and reduce trading in diamonds from rebel-controlled areas. This and other similar initiatives require companies to report whether their supply chain contains minerals sourced from conflict zones that may have contributed to the financing of armed groups.

A number of traceability initiatives also exist. At the national level, the Mining Law of 2002 requires community consultations, the disclosure of contract terms by both companies and the government, and revenue transparency. At the regional level, several regional groups have adopted traceability and accountability mechanisms. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, for example, has drawn up auditing guidelines for mineral processors.

The International Conference of the Great Lakes has also committed to a regional certification mechanism, that ensures a clear procedure and adequate records of mineral origins. The International Tin Research Initiative has also improved traceability, and certification processes for tin through the Tin Supply Chain Initiative.

The German Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources has supported the establishment of Certified Trading Chains. These initiatives would assist in reducing resource-based financing to conflict actors through international trade channels.

The challenge for the DRC is to improve the functioning of institutional and political processes to ensure that natural resources are used in a sustainable manner to improve the lives of communities. International examples of successful resource management are often supported by international organizations and NGOs. The World Heritage Institute, the Congolese Institute for the Conservation of Natural Resources, and local NGOs are currently collaborating on Biodiversity Conservation in the Regions Affected by Armed Conflict.

As another example, the World Wildlife Fund's has responded to the deforestation by refugees in the southern part of the Virunga National Park in the North Kivu Province by introducing legal fuel wood plantations. This project increases the availability of sustainable energy for the area around Goma and reduces rural poverty.

With the normalization of relations between the DRC and Rwanda through the integration of some armed groups into the state army and police forces, the most important conflict management processes affecting the Kivu Provinces have taken place at the national and international level. Security sector reform is also ongoing. The most immediate challenge for policymakers is to end illegal control over mining by both the Congolese Army and armed groups.

Additionally, the government needs to stop those at the highest military and political levels from seizing the profits from minerals. A number of specific recommendations have been made by expert organizations working in the field, who advocate monitoring and inspection systems for mining areas where the Congolese Army is deployed and the intensification of military sanctions to end the impunity of and increase accountability in the military.

Conclusion

Many violations of human rights have occurred in the context of mining in the DRC. Private actors have been directly responsible for abuses and have acted alongside state agents who have committed breaches of international human rights law.

Theories that posit environmental scarcity and natural resource wealth as causes of conflict in the DRC are well documented and substantiated. What remains unclear, however, is why large--scale armed violence persists in some provinces of the country, while other, equally resource rich provinces, such as Katanga and the hinterlands of the Kivu Provinces, escape such violence. This suggests that additional tensions, such as those between industrial and artisanal miners and those linked to local socioeconomic factors are of the upmost relevance. Furthermore, natural resources management is not a priority for the government.

The political, economic and social contexts in which natural resources are used and the manner in which they are managed are of paramount importance in preventing and managing conflicts. The nature of the conflicts are different and, therefore, the management approaches should be different.

Some donor institutions have worked with policymakers to improve governance in the DRC. Some of their initiatives have supported alternative income opportunities for local communities, the redistribution of revenues from some extractive industries, and the prevention of local resource usage conflicts. Many natural resource management activities have enjoyed the active participation of communities as a key component.

The government objectives are broadly formulated to build institutional and human capacity and improve the rule of law. Some of these institutional structures and processes are already in place, but it will still require a long planning process and significant additional resources together with the political will to achieve the needed transparency and accountability in the management of all-natural resource sectors in the DRC.

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NASLOV ZBIRKE: OIKOS, Modra

UREDNIK ZBIRKE: dr. Andrej A. Lukšič
TAJNIK ZBIRKE: Nejc Jordan

UREDNIŠTVO ZBIRKE:
Marko Hočevar, Nejc Jordan, Andrej A. Lukšič, Denis Maraž, Maja Bahor, Izidor Ostan Ožbolt, Taj Zavodnik

MEDNARODNI ZNANSTVENI SVET ZBIRKE:
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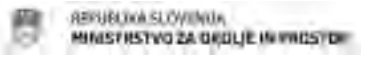

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This book presents eight students' scientific texts presented at the Summer School of Political Ecology 2018. While some texts focus on reflecting the existing mental forms in order to reproduce or recreate them by changing the point of the view, the unconcealed intention of other texts focusing on different levels - polity, policy, politics - is to find new answers that will contribute to an understanding of the social and political dimensions of the existing reality and initiate the formation of alternative ways of changing them. Some important issues of political ecology are thereby opened from a new perspective. Therefore, we can state with confidence that these scientific contributions by the participating doctoral students have enriched the Slovenian intellectual public space with in-depth ecological and environmental insight into the field of political ecology.

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