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FROM TECHNOCRACY TO DEMOCRACY: ARE ECOLOGICAL ECONOMISTS PART OF A SOCIAL MOVEMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

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Abstract

In response to the present multi-faceted crisis there are protests and social movements. Also economists and other scientists respond in one way or other to what they perceive. Economists are not neutral observers of various phenomena but actors as part of society. "Values are always with us" (Myrdal 1978) as researchers and educators. Individuals (whether identifying themselves as economists or not) will be looked upon as political economic persons guided by their ideological orientations. Normal imperatives of democracy are relevant also for universities and departments of economics. A movement away from technocracy towards democracy implying pluralism rather than neoclassical monopoly in economics and an open discussion of paradigms and ideological orientations is needed.

A central role is attributed to the concepts of ideology and ideological orientation. Sustainable development interpreted in some way exemplifies an ideological orientation. Economics should be redefined as "management of resources in a democratic society" to allow for the priority of democracy over market. Ways of understanding minor and major institutional change processes are discussed.

Key words: democracy, technocracy, social movements, political economic person, political economic organization, ideological orientation, international trade theory, ecological economics

Introduction

Public debate about the future draws inspiration from many sources. It is argued here that the conceptual framework of economics, with connected story-lines, is such a source. Economics plays a role for many establishment actors, be they politicians, business leaders or civil servants. Even actors in social movements are influenced by ideas stemming from economics. At issue is however if economists are able to respond to such movements.

The focus in this paper is on the role of economics. If story-lines focusing on economic growth in GDP-terms continue to dominate as implying the solution (or at least a way of dealing with) all kinds

of problems then we have reasons to seriously reconsider research and education in economics, perhaps even in ecological economics.

Mainstream neoclassical economics was developed for specific purposes. Sustainable development is a relatively new challenge. We have learnt that neither our present national economies, nor the global economy is performing well in sustainability terms. At issue is now how this performance can be significantly improved. We can consider various practical measures to be undertaken but we can also start at a more fundamental level; What kind of economics is needed? What kind of ideological orientation will guide us?

It is not easy to respond in final terms to these questions. But some recommendations can be made that represent at least a partial answer to the questions. Mainstream neoclassical economics is socially constructed as a closed perspective. Economics need to be opened in relation to competing theoretical perspectives or paradigms and economics need to be opened in relation to competing ideological orientations in society.

Economics is a social science and each school of thought in economics is specific not only in scientific terms but also in ideological terms. I am here referring to Gunnar Myrdal who argued that “values are always with us” (1978, p. 778) as economists in research and education. Myrdal regarded himself as an institutional economist and was critical to the mainstream of neoclassical theory (Myrdal 1975).¹

The value-laden or ideological nature of economics would have been less of a problem if education and research at university departments of economics were pluralistic in terms of schools of thought. Then some diversity of ideological orientations in society would have been represented. But this is not the case. When introductory economics textbooks are concerned the present situation can be described as a monopoly for neoclassical theory. A specific market perspective is presented where individuals and firms are described in specific ways as the actors. The high degree of standardization of economics education globally means that millions of students each year are exposed to the conceptual and ideological orientation of neoclassical theory.

The theoretical framework of neoclassical economics with its models of consumers, firms, markets etc. may have something to offer but the exclusive reliance on neoclassical theory is a problem and can even – as with all monopolies and concentrations of power – be considered dangerous for society. University departments of economics are indoctrinating students in the specific ideology built into neoclassical concepts and theories. How can university departments of economics avoid the present role of serving as propaganda centers for a specific ideological orientation? It is argued here that our ideas about democracy can be helpful. Economics can become “democratized” (Söderbaum and Brown 2010).

My argument is that all actors in a democratic society are expected to behave in a responsible manner. Considering the role played by economic thinking in public debate there are reasons to focus on this discipline. Rather than exclusively looking at actors outside universities I think that we have reasons to focus on our own category. My “hypothesis” is that research and education in economics has failed in many ways to guide establishment actors in solving the financial and

¹ Myrdal received the Bank of Sweden Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel. He was however skeptical to the role played by this award.

ecological crises of the past and the present. If that is the case we have reasons to consider more than one story-line or discourse in our attempts to prepare the way for sustainable development.

In questioning simplistic ideas of welfare in terms of 'growth', the idea of 'de-growth' has appeared on the scene (e.g. *Alternatives Economiques*, 2013). It plays a role of making people think once more about progress but my belief is that we also need to open up the conceptual framework of mainstream neoclassical economics more generally. How realistic is the de-growth discourse if it is assumed that the present political economic system will remain essentially intact? How can economics move away from its technocratic tendencies to become more compatible with democracy? Is it meaningful to rely on Economic Man assumptions when approaching issues of 'de-growth'? Or, do we need a different idea of human beings?

Democracy and economics

When politics and institutional change is concerned, the rules of the game are largely given by democracy. The development dialogue and decision-making should respect normal ideas about democracy. Democracy is a contested concept but there is also a consensus about fundamental rules to be respected.

Democracy is about respecting the voices or opinions of people i.e. of individuals and various groups of citizens. In this sense democracy stands for an open or transparent dialogue about various issues, such as sustainable development, that concern the people or some segment of persons. In this part, democracy can also be understood by considering its opposite, i.e. dictatorship. There is clearly – to use an understatement – an element of dictatorship in the present dominance of neoclassical economists and neoclassical theory at university departments of economics. Some degree of pluralism is needed as I have argued at various places (e.g. 2000, 2008).

If democracy is a matter of respecting the experiences and opinions of actors affected or concerned by particular issues then science and universities cannot remain innocent and unchallenged. There is also a tension between extreme reliance on experts, so called technocracy, and democracy. Democracy here points in the direction of interactive learning. Experts still have something to offer but overreliance on experts is a danger. Neoclassical Cost-Benefit analysis (CBA) is an excellent example of extreme forms of technocracy. We are told about correct prices of impacts when assessing alternatives and of the optimal conclusions that follow.

Neoclassical economists are certainly in some extent aware of ideas about democracy but they appear mainly to refer to divisions between science and politics, economics and political science etc. A very relevant observation here is that 'democracy' is not part of the subject index of introductory textbooks in economics. I have here consulted the main text in the Swedish context, Klas Eklund's book *Vår ekonomi* (Our economy), 2007 and Gregory Mankiw's *Principles of Economics* (2008). In what follows my ambition is instead to bring democracy and politics into economics, i.e. 'democratize economics'.

Different schools of political economics

From the above it becomes clear that neoclassical theory cannot claim value neutrality. This paradigm and any part of it, such as neoclassical environmental economics, should be understood as a case of political economics.² The same applies for other schools of thought in economics, such as specific versions of institutional economics, social economics, feminist economics, ecological economics.

Actually, the motives behind efforts to articulate alternative conceptual and theoretical frameworks in economics are often, if not normally, of an ideological kind. Economists who are concerned about the position of women in society or present unsustainable environmental trends try to develop an economics appropriate for such purposes. Compared to economists who are content with imitation within the scope of neoclassical theory, heterodox economists have a much better chance to contribute constructively to innovations or new thinking in economics or social science more generally.

The existence of different schools of thought in economics can also be regarded as a kind of responses to different social movements in society with their respective ideological orientations. It is then assumed that universities are not completely cut off from society.

The concepts of ideology and ideological orientation

‘Ideology’ stands for ‘means-ends relationships’ in a broad sense. Expressed in positional terms, it is about where you are (present position), where you want to go (desired future positions) and how to get there (strategies connecting means and ends). In this sense ideology or ideological orientation can be understood as a kind of compass and a necessary condition of human life and behavior.³

‘Ideology’ often refers to a collective level such as a political party. We may speak of conservative, liberal, left wing and now even green ideologies. Political parties do not differ in all respects and may share some beliefs and ideological elements. Growth in GDP and market orientation appears to be important for more political parties than one in present society. But its relative importance when compared with other issues may differ.

Actors connected with political parties communicate elements of their ideological orientation to citizens and hope to strengthen support in coming elections and more generally. Citizens in turn refer to their ideological orientations when responding to the activities of political parties as part of public debate or elections.

² According to this view it was a mistake to abandon the term ‘political economics’ as a result of the so called marginalist revolution around 1870. It was rather one kind of political economics replacing or being added to another.

³ While ‘ideology’ tends to be used in a neutral manner in Europe, one can easily find examples in the US of authors who assure their readers that they have tried to present their arguments in ‘non-ideological’ form. In an otherwise thought-provoking contribution to the sustainability dialogue, Bryan Norton adds a title “Beyond Ideology” to his preface (2005, p. ix). Peter Nolan similarly tells the readers that he is looking for a “pragmatic, non-ideological” approach (2009 p. 7). Ideology then tends to be limited to means-ends relationships of a fundamentalist kind. Words can of course be used in different ways but I regard this tendency to use ‘ideology’ in a derogatory and limited sense as a mistake and part of attempts to avoid serious debate about radical change.

In what follows ideology and ideological orientation will be understood as providing guidance also at the individual level. The individual is understood as a political economic person, i.e. an actor guided in decision-making by her or his ideological orientation:

- The ideological orientation of an individual is something to be investigated rather than taken as given. An individual may bother more or less about other people, environmental issues, GDP etc.
- The ideological orientation of an individual may be expressed in qualitative, quantitative and visual terms
- The ideological orientation of a person is typically fragmentary and uncertain rather than a mathematical objective function to be optimized
- Decision-making is understood as a matching process between an actor's ideological orientation and expected impacts of each alternative considered. Sometimes the profile or pattern of impacts match the person's ideological orientation quite well (and better than other alternatives) suggesting that the alternative can be chosen. Rather than thinking in terms of 'matching', it is possible to think in terms of 'pattern recognition' or look for 'appropriate' alternatives.

Defining economics as “management of resources in a democratic society”

Democracy has to be brought into economics. A first step is to define economics as “management of resources in a democratic society”. Issues of ideological orientation have to be taken seriously in economic analysis. If politicians and political parties refer to their ideological orientations then there is no reason for economists to avoid such terminology. Sustainable development, or rather some specific interpretation of sustainable development, is itself an ideological orientation that departs from more conventional ideologies. The lack of success in terms of counteracting unsustainable trends can partly be seen as a result of the present tendency to avoid debate about sustainability at the ideological level.

Neoclassical economists claim to know the meaning of efficiency telling us that one project is more efficient than another. But if you take democracy and efficiency seriously, it is the ideological orientation of each citizen that becomes the norm. There is seldom consensus in a democratic society about efficiency or methods to make judgments of relative efficiency in relation to social and environmental issues being part of the sustainability challenge. Again we are back to conditional conclusions where ideological orientation A suggests one ranking for the alternatives considered and ideological orientation B a different ranking.

But analysis is not just about approaches to efficiency and decision-making. In a democracy, citizens are encouraged to participate in various forms. Rather than being passive, they are active and visible. This also means that they are responsible and accountable for their behavior. Since sustainability problems partly are a matter of the thinking and power positions of specific actors these actors have to be part of a holistic analysis. Qualitative methods with interviews, study of newspaper articles and other media contributions are part of meaningful analysis. The stories told by specific actors may reveal many aspects of barriers and opportunities to action by actors in specific positions.

To emphasize the ideology and democracy aspect of economic analysis, a specific conceptual framework and language is needed:

- Political economic person (PEP) assumptions. The individual is understood as an actor guided by her ideological orientation. Individuals are understood in socio-psychological terms with emphasis on identity, roles, relationships, resource position etc. Each individual is interacting with her social, cultural and physical context, influencing it and being influenced by the context.

- Political economic organization (PEO) assumptions. The organization is regarded as a polycentric actor guided by its mission or ideological orientation. The organization consists of individuals that are more or less close to each other with respect to ideological orientation. There are shared values and cooperation but also tensions. The PEO concept is applicable to all kinds of organizations for example universities in addition to business corporations.

- Political economic view of market (PEM) assumptions. The actors in the market place are understood as PEPs and PEOs. Market actors may be connected in supply chains or networks.

It is similarly possible to refer to a political-economic approach to international trade or a political economic approach to decision-making. For present purposes it is only argued that the political economic terminology and language serves as a reminder of an ethical-ideological aspect in economic thinking and analysis that should be made visible rather than remain hidden.⁴

A number of phenomena that are not dealt with in neoclassical theory but play a role in public debate become understandable as part of a political economic framework. Actors in business corporations sometimes refer to their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), point to their Sustainability Reports and Environmental Management Systems (EMS), such as ISO 14001. 'Exploitation' and 'fairness' are sometimes relevant words in attempting to understand specific market relationships etc.

A holistic and multidimensional conception of economics

Not only economists but individuals more generally have specific ideas about 'economics'. For many 'economics' is about money and monetary aspects of all kinds of impacts. This view gets some support from textbooks in economics and management science. The road ahead is then to find correct prices for all kinds of impacts as part of a calculation in monetary terms. A "total economic value" is estimated in a procedure where all kinds of impacts can be traded against each other. As part of neoclassical Cost-Benefit analysis, the idea of correct prices refers to actual market prices at the time of calculation, or so called hypothetical market prices based on questionnaires where citizens are asked about their "willingness to pay" for specific commodities.

This approach to decision-making at the societal level is of course not neutral or innocent in value terms. It is built on a market ideology of a specific kind rather than other ethical and ideological viewpoints. Citizens or actors representing specific groups or organizations may refer to identities and ideological orientations of a different kind. For them the focus on actual market prices may be

⁴ I sometimes think that neoclassical theory with its mechanistic view of actors and markets is socially constructed to hide or downplay ethics and ideology.

part of the problem rather than any solution. Do actual market prices consider the possible interests of future generations, for example?

A case in point is an ambitious study of *The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity*, the so called TEEB-study, edited by Kumar Pushpam (2010) and coordinated by actors from United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP). A large number of neoclassical environmental economists and also ecological economists participated in an effort to find a compromise by “mainstreaming biodiversity economics”. In the study, reference is made to early contributions in neoclassical environmental economics by David Pearce and his group (Pearce et al. 1989, Pearce et al. 1990). In a book of 400 pages the authors show that they are conscious about some of the limitations of CBA but still end up arguing in favor of a technocratic idea of correct values or a correct ideological orientation made legitimate by science or more precisely neoclassical economics. A number of ecological economists participated in the preparations of the TEEB 2010 book and related publications. These persons of course share some responsibility and are accountable for the results. As I have made clear at other places (2012) I fully understand that neoclassical economists are disturbed when the monopoly of their paradigm is threatened. But for some of us ecological economists the simplistic idea of “Total Economic Value” as formulated by David Pearce has been and remains a symbol for that which we dislike in neoclassical theory.

The way out of this is, as I see it, to downplay the idea of economics as centered on the monetary aspect. Economics is about management of resources and resources are of a monetary and non-monetary kind. The alternative to the CBA trade-off philosophy is to keep monetary and non-monetary impacts separate in economic analysis. A multidimensional analysis is recommended where the idea of putting a price tag on all kinds of impacts is abandoned. It is believed that ecosystems are best managed in non-monetary terms where the ambition can be to avoid degradation, for example. Monetary reductionism of the kind recommended in the TEEB-study is replaced with a holistic, multidimensional analysis.

A classification of impacts in economic analysis is suggested in Table 1. Impacts can be monetary or non-monetary in kind. They can be expressed as flows referring to periods of time or positions (states), referring to periods in time.

Table 1. Classification of impacts and indicators in economic analysis (Source: Söderbaum 2000, p. 62)

	Flow (referring to a period of time)	Position (referring to a point in time)
Monetary	‘a’	‘b’
Non-monetary	‘c’	‘d’

GDP exemplifies a monetary flow since it is expressed in monetary terms and refers to a year, i.e. a period of time. The balance sheet of a business company is a monetary position. Pollution of mercury from a pulp factory is normally measured per period and is therefore a non-monetary flow while mercury content in fish caught in a nearby lake is measured in terms of states or positions.

It is here argued that positional changes in non-monetary terms are of special importance in relation to the challenge of sustainable development. Various forms of inertia, such as commitments, lock-in

effects, path-dependence and irreversibility have to be taken seriously in economic analysis. To this I will now turn.

Inertia in its different forms and dimensions

In 1973 I presented my PhD-thesis *Positional Analysis for Decision-making and planning. Economic Analysis on Interdisciplinary Ground*.⁵ Positional analysis (PA) as a method claims relevance for decision-making at all levels from individuals and organizations to the societal level. PA has mainly been regarded as an alternative to CBA.

Inertia is discussed mainly in natural sciences, such as physics. Among ecological economists Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen (KK) pointed to inertia and irreversibility in energy terms (XXXX). In my thesis I argued however that inertia in its different forms is relevant also for disciplines other than physics for example sociology and psychology.⁶ I made a long list of dimensions connected with various disciplines and discussed relevant scales for measurement of inertia and change in positional terms.

Measuring the states or positions of various objects of description over time is a way of studying the health of human beings or of ecosystems. Such indicators of health and environmental conditions at specific points in time are expressed in non-monetary positional terms and it does not seem very meaningful to attempt a transformation of these indicators to the monetary dimension.

As already indicated there are different and partly over-lapping forms of inertia. Commitments, lock-in effects, irreversibility and path-dependence are examples. These forms refer to multiple stage processes. Each first step decision leads to a new position and decision situation which opens the door for new alternatives while excluding other options. A decision process may start with cognitive and emotional commitments to a specific project by one actor and be followed by social commitments when additional actors become involved. At some stage there may be political commitments and even legal commitments (when contracts are written with suppliers, for example) suggesting that it may be difficult to change the direction of the process.

Multiple stage processes can be illustrated with decision-trees starting with an initial position followed by different future positions at a later point in time depending on which one of the first-choice alternatives is chosen (Söderbaum 2008 p. 104) Some alternatives may imply irreversible change of a negative kind in specific ways while other alternatives avoid such impacts.

In the case of road-building for example the construction of a new motorway between two cities, those responsible for the planning process certainly focus on construction costs and operational costs in monetary (and financial) terms. Irreversible changes in land-use when hundreds of hectares of agricultural land are transformed to asphalted surface or land of limited usefulness may easily be forgotten. Those who emphasize calculation in monetary terms may perceive all relevant costs as

⁵ The thesis was written in Swedish (with an English summary) but the method has later been presented in English for example in my books from 2000 and 2008.

⁶ My own tendency to return to what I wrote on PA in 1973 can be seen as one case of cognitive and emotional inertia!! The difficulty to make establishment actors who believe in economic growth (or neoclassical economic theory) change their minds is another case. Flexibility is a possibility but there are also limits to our abilities to change world-view or ideological orientation.

being covered by the financial outlays when the land is bought from farmers or other real estate owners and thereby being considered as part of monetary construction costs.

More recently “path dependence” has been discussed in connection with institutional change processes by Douglass North (1990, 2005) and others. It is clear that minor as well as major changes in institutional arrangements play a significant role in attempts to get closer to sustainable development. Our present political economic system is not easily changed but at issue is if minor changes in this system can be enough for sustainability. I personally believe that just as present market fundamentalism in establishment circles (with neo-liberalism etc.) has to be reconsidered also our present institutional arrangements at the global and national levels need to be taken into account. And economics has a role in this. The dominance of neoclassical economic theory will not facilitate necessary institutional change.

Institutional change as a matter of social, ideological movements

Institutions and institutional change can be approached in more ways than one. Within the scope of the present conceptual framework, single actors and social movements with their world-views or ideological orientations play a role. Some kinds of institutional change are taking place in all economies and societies. A power game is going on at various places about the direction of such institutional change.

A distinction may be made between minor and major institutional change. Let us take the establishment of an Environmental Management System (EMS) as example of minor institutional change. A series of events may start by an actor interpreting specific phenomena in a particular way. The individual is employed in a business corporation and she may realize that not only monetary or financial performance of the company is of interest but also various kinds of non-monetary performance, such as environmental performance. This actor’s perception and interpretation may be manifested when other members of the corporation with similar ideological orientation support the idea and when the corporation applies for certification according to ISO 14 001. This EMS is furthermore made more legitimate when other members of the company and people outside it actively contribute to the strengthening of Environmental Management Systems in society. Reasoning in terms of interpretation, manifestation and legitimacy is thus one way of understanding minor institutional change.

Major institutional change has to do with interpretation or changes in perspective at a more fundamental level. Our political economic system will change or remain unchanged depending upon what happens with respect to three kinds of (related) more fundamental perspectives:

- dominant theory of science and ideas about the role of science in society as well as alternatives to this view
- dominant economics paradigm, the existence of competing paradigms or schools of thought
- dominant ideological orientation as well as competing ideological orientations.

Dominant ideas about the role of science in society (connected with positivism, dominant ideas of economics (equal to neoclassical theory) and dominant ideological orientation (focusing on markets, economic growth, privatization etc.) largely explain our present political economic system. Neoclassical economics can even be regarded as the ideological fundament of our present market economy or capitalist system.

A large number of actors, some of them powerful, perceive themselves as locked into the present kind of capitalist economy and use their power positions to defend it. But this defense risks to aggravate the crisis experienced in relation to sustainable development.

Democracy is our hope. Single actors and organizations can be part of social movements for change in ideological orientation and institutional arrangements. Universities have a responsibility in these processes. We cannot claim value-neutrality but will act as facilitators of change in specific directions or as barriers to change. Personally, I believe that a move away from the close to monopoly position of neoclassical economic theory with connected ideological content is a key element in the transition needed.

A transition toward a sustainable society can be discussed in many ways. Murray Gell-Mann, Nobel Prize winner in physics, suggests 7 dimensions of necessary transition in his book *The Quark and the Jaguar. Adventures in the Simple and the Complex* (1994, pp. 345-366). These are demographic, technological, economic, social, institutional, ideological and informational. It can be observed that this broad-minded representative of physics as a science includes an ideological dimension in his list as being essential. In a PhD-study of the mining industry in South Africa (2012), Maria, Fátima Freitas Ferraz refers to the dimensions suggested by Gell-Mann but changes the order a bit with a priority for the ideological dimension followed by transition in institutional, economic, social, demographic, informational and technological dimensions (Ibid p. 20). The list of dimensions for needed transition points to the complexity of the task ahead of us. Synergies between changes in different dimensions may increase the chances of progress.

Advantages and disadvantages of international trade

In the early 1960s I was employed by the department of economics, Uppsala University. One of my tasks was to teach a course in international economics. A textbook by Charles Kindleberger (1958) was used and I presented the neoclassical argument about the advantages of international trade as well as I could. Theoretical contributions from David Ricardo to James Meade and Bertil Ohlin were touched upon. Models based on different assumptions are used to demonstrate that trade is good for both trading countries.

Statements about what is good for country A (or for country B) must be based on specific values. Our argument in terms of democracy and the right of each citizen to value different phenomena in her own way (referring to her ideological orientation) suggests that science cannot dictate what is good for society or the trading countries. What is good for society is a matter of an individual's (or political economic person's ideological orientation). Our PEP may have internalized sustainable development in some sense into her value or ideological orientation. If our PEP has read the so called Brundtland report *Our Common Future* (United Nations Commission on Environment and Development 1987),

then he or she may regard it as less relevant to think in terms of single countries and the present generation. We should also consider a common future for both trading countries and indeed all affected countries.

International trade theory is naïve also in the sense that no conflicts of interest are considered within each of the trading countries. A specific market transaction between business corporations in country A and B may benefit some stakeholders in A and be negative for other stakeholders in A. This argument can be continued by pointing to the previously discussed possibility of exploitation in any market relationship. Those with power can exploit others and those exploited may not perceive any better alternative. Chinese companies are involved in land-grabbing activities in Africa and as citizens in specific countries we are allowed to express our opinions about this.

Neoclassical theory tends to provide us with ideological elements such as the “invisible hand” attributed to Adam Smith and with expectations of the benefits of markets that are exaggerated, to say the least. While markets certainly have a role in our societies we have now seen so many examples of financial and other markets that according to many actors have negative impacts on our societies. I like here to point to a book edited by a group of scholars in Prague *Is Globalization Overpowering Democracy?* (Lapka et al. 2007). The priority of democracy over market should always be kept in mind. The legitimacy of the World Trade Organization (WTO) is built upon neoclassical theory and ideology. It is clear that some other organization built on democracy and sustainable development would be preferable.

On the ideological orientation of ecological economists

Economists seldom refer to democracy as their point of departure. One exception that comes to my mind is a PhD-study by Peter Jakubowski *Demokratische Umweltpolitik. Eine institutionenökonomische Analyse umweltpolitischer Zielfindung* (1999)⁷. Taking democracy seriously means that each economist or other scholar is a political economic person guided by her ideological orientation. At issue is now whether ecological economists depart from other economists in terms of ideological orientation. Are we (or they) part of something that one can describe as a social movement?

The ISEE-organization and the journal *Ecological Economics* was initiated by persons who were concerned and felt that some alternative to neoclassical environmental economics was needed. Considering the situation today it appears appropriate to argue that the ecological economics community (in the sense of those of us who contribute articles to the *Ecological Economics* journal for example) is not homogeneous. There are still some quite radical scholars but the TEEB experience suggests that quite many ecological economists do not differ much (if at all) from neoclassical economists in terms of preference for technocracy and in other ways.

I hope this situation will change. A lot happens these days among economists for example the establishment of the World Economics Association (WEA), now with more than 10 000 members and with its own journals and conferences. Starting with the post-autistic economics movement in Paris,

⁷ In his study Jakubowski used early versions of political economic person assumptions and wrote an article “Mit PEP zu mehr Nachhaltigkeit” (2000).

students of economics actively question the lack of pluralism in Introductory Economics courses (Fullbrook 2003, see also Parrique 2013). The Occupy Wall Street social movement is another example (Graeber 2013). I see no reason why we ecological economists should look upon ourselves as standing outside claiming value-neutrality when observing unsustainable trends.

Conclusions

Economics need to be redefined as “management of resources in a democratic society”. In a democracy the individual as citizen is the final judge about what is good or bad for society. Technocratic methods such as neoclassical Cost-Benefit analysis (CBA) should be abandoned.

The neoclassical monopoly in economics education is a danger for society since the ideology built into neoclassical theory differs considerably from what is needed for sustainable development.

Mechanistic ideas about market equilibrium in neoclassical theory need to be replaced with multidimensional economic analysis with inertia as a key concept. Irreversible degradation of biodiversity or natural resources exemplify cases where thinking in terms of positions is constructive.

Present growth of international trade, so called globalization, is largely made legitimate by neoclassical economic theory. But this theory is not compatible with democracy and should therefore be given a peripheral role.

Ecological economists as well as other economists should increase awareness about their own ideological orientation and that of others. “Mainstreaming” the economics of biodiversity as proposed in the TEEB study (Kumar ed.2010) by referring to “Total Economic Value” is a step backward for the ecological economics movement and community.

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