CITY AS ECO ADDICT

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In the middle of 1970s Harvey Molotch launched the concept '*city as growth machine*'. In a way he was voicing an opinion that was already current among researchers about the moneymaking role of the cities. With the rapid globalisation of the world economy during the last two decades, this concept has become a mantra among policy-makers who see cities as a crucial premise for a nation's successful participation in the global competition for rapid economic growth. In this article I present a contrary concept namely '*city as eco addict*'. I mean thereby that cities in their present role as growth machines have become habituated to consume large amount of ecological resources. Just as in the case of drug addicts, there are potential ways of reducing this addiction but cities are snarled in increasingly faster and faster roundabout of economic competition, seemingly unable to get away from their resource consuming practices.

The current international development provides several compelling reasons for my contention. I shall briefly discuss some of them.

The present-day roundabout of competition is destructive. Cities have become more and more like large multinational corporations. Their prosperity depends on how successful they are in space marketing and thereby attracting international capital. The industrial rich world, or in fact a few thousand multinational corporations, that set the terms of trade pays little attention to conditions prevailing in a large part of the world. Cities therefore have to subordinate themselves to global market relations. While a major part of manufacturing industries have moved or are in the process of moving to cities in the less developed world (including Eastern Europe), cities in the rich industrial world are increasingly competing for bio-tech, electronic and service industries. Much of this development is taking place without paying adequate attention to ecological consequences. For example, in rich industrial cities, strip development of space that characterises much of post-modern development, is not sensitive to issues related to neighbourhood environment. In the less developed world, e.g. in China, historically unparalleled industrialisation entails extensive environmental damage.

Ideologically there are two conceptions that stand against each other economism on the one hand and ecocentrism on the other. Very broadly the former ideology implies that technological development together with the help of market incentives or sanctions would solve all current and future environmental problems. According to the latter, political intervention is necessary if biodiversity and ecological balance are to be maintained and natural resources are used in such a manner that future generations' interests are not jeopardised. However, following the collapse of Soviet Communism, 'liberal productivism' has become prominent all over the world including Eastern Europe and the less developed world. The liberal productivist model assumes successive dismantling of public intervention, even those aimed at redressing market failures. As a tool for neo-liberal policy, urban planning and public service provision fail to stop social polarisation, economic instability and ecological waste. Moreover, there is a danger in the current liberal productivist policy, namely, isolating or separating cities from their surrounding world that provides many of the vital resources that cities need in their development. Various estimates show that for cities the ecosystem area required for supplying resources and energy and for depositing wastes, the so-called 'ecological footprint' is many times larger than the area defined by their political boundaries.

As a result of the global competition between cities and orientation towards liberal productivism, economic and social differences within cities have increased considerably. At a national level in the rich industrial world, the frequent allusion to two-thirds of the society implies that the society has at least one third of the population that is living an insecure and impoverished life. In global terms, it is a question of one-fifth society where one fifth of the world population lives a secure and rich life while four fifths of the population hardly get by on temporary and underpaid jobs. To put it more exactly, 20% of the world's well-off population has at its disposal 86% of the total income. This means that a majority of the population in the less developed world survives on extremely meagre resources. Another side of the uneven distribution of world income is the steady increase in the consumption of rich industrial countries a consumption that in environmental terms involves between 10 to 15 times as much of energy and material use.

Another aspect of the current urbanisation is the growth of megacities, especially in the less developed world. Urbanisation there does not follow the intrinsic development premises of their respective economies but are dictated by global pressures. As a result, cities in the less developed world undergo urbanisation in one generation what took cities like London, Chicago and Paris several generations. As a result, over 600 million people in cities live either in unhealthy surroundings or without any proper shelter. Small resources are available for infrastructure investments. Cities in the rich industrial world spend fifty times as much in such investments than in the less developed world. Moreover, a considerable portion of the infrastructure is used to serve foreign investments. Cities in the less developed world lack resources to undertake sustainable development planning. Three crucial factors make this even more difficult:

- external debt that puts a heavy drain of resources on the national economy,
- structural adjustment requirements imposed on less developed countries by transnationa companies as well as global institutions of economic governance e.g. IMF, OECD, and WTO.
- export of hazardous industrial wastes to less developed countries e.g. the 1989 Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes has often been circumvented by bilateral agreements between rich industrial countries and less developed countries. Similarly, the 1998 Buenos Aires Conference on Climate Change sanctioned the former countries' right not to decrease carbon dioxide emissions, provided this is matched by decreasing amounts of emissions in the less developed countries.

There is an increasingly strong public opinion in the rich industrial world about writing off the least developed countries' external debts and for improving the terms of trade for less developed countries. However, there is every reason to be sceptical about the final outcome. Many of the less developed countries can be characterised as 'post-colonial economies' where the former colonial powers or multinational companies still exercise extensive economic control. In the 1950s and 1960s the global institutions of economic governance together with the industrial countries launched the 'aid and development' policy. This policy failed. More recently a new policy under the maxim 'trade and not aid' was launched but even this has not been successful.

Another reason for justifying the use of the concept 'city as eco addict' has to do with political reluctance by national governments to implement international agreements in the environmental area. There are some 170 such international agreements the majority of these came into being after 1972. Their implementation, however, is far from satisfactory. For example, rich industrial countries have tried to circumvent agreements in the field of waste trade. In the case of the global climate, the introduction of 'emission rights' sanctions these countries not to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Many of these nations feel that the international agreements are not legally binding and there is a lack of effective international means to ensure the implementation of these agreements.

A crucial aspect of this situation is the attitude of the US government. On the eve of the Rio Earth Summit, the then Bush Administration categorically stated that the American lifestyle is not negotiable. At the Rio Earth Summit a binding agreement about biodiversity was proposed but the US government refused to sign the agreement with the excuse that the American biotech industries would be severely hit. Americans at large are suspicious about government intervention and they feel that a New World order, giving priority to ecological issues, would mean a large international control and the US government seems to be in agreement with the public opinion. As long as the US is negatively disposed towards international efforts to improve global environment, there is little possibility to implement policies that would further global as well as local efforts for sustainable development.

Thus there has never been a strong worldwide commitment to ecocentric ideology even though there has been a lot of rhetoric about sustainable development in connection with for example, the 1992 Rio Earth Summit and the subsequent Habitat I and II conferences. This becomes evident from the resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly at its nineteenth special session in June 1997 assessing the progress made since the Earth Summit. The resolution expresses a strong concern "that overall trends with respect to sustainable development are worse today than they were in 1992". Having stated this fact, the nineteenth special session failed to produce a political agreement and much of the enthusiasm from the Rio Summit seems to have gone.

Is the situation as black as night? Is the epithet 'city as eco-addict entirely justified? Since the Rio Earth Summit several international and regional endeavours like the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives or the Charter of European Cities and Towns towards Sustainability has been initiated. At the end of 1996 some 1800 local authorities in 64 different countries were involved in Local Agenda 21 activities. However 90% of these were in rich industrial countries. In an appendix to this review

article an assessment of national premises and local Agenda 21 activities in 9 countries is presented in order to show the status the status of efforts in sustainable development. In Europe quite a number of cities have introduced a broad set of actions in order to improve public transportation, recycling system and energy production and distribution. An extensive wealth of research is becoming available about alternative sustainable cities e.g. compact cities, fair share cities, eco-cities, etc Knowledge is there and so is technology in order to reduce cities' ever increasing consumption of natural resources. What is lacking is political volition and a proper system of global governance. The existing international organisations are not adequate to develop global sustainable ethic. National states have not succeeded in bringing about such a global order. With their powerful status in global development cities should become promoters for such a global transformation.

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Appendix A: Evaluation of Local Agendas 21

So far few such evaluations have been carried out. At the initiative of the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) about a dozen countries have launched nation-wide campaigns to encourage local authorities to prepare local Agenda 21. In Low et al (2000) researchers from 9 countries assess the national attitude towards Agenda 21 and its eventual implementation. The following table summarises these case studies.

Country	National Premises	Local Agenda 21 Activities
U S A	Broad environmental consciousness. Anti-government feelings spill over into anti-environmental movement feelings. International environmental agreements seen as a threat to the American way of life.	Less than 1% of the population conscious of Agenda 21. Global aspects about Agenda neglected. Agenda 21 regarded as a respectable activity to promote local growth and liveability of urban areas.
United Kingdom	Strong neo-liberal orientation in state ideology. Large-scale infrastructure investments with usual rhetoric about sustainable development. Membership in the European Union has had some positive impact on UK's environmental policy.	15% of local authorities have initiated LA-21 activities. Often these are isolated and non-mandatory proposals. Better understanding of local-global relationship but social dimension not attended to.
Germany	Extensive national and local environmental interest. NGOs and the Green Party exercise strong influence. Lack of a national Agenda 21 but some national policy initiatives e.g. producer-responsibility requirement in all production activities. Costs of reunification and subsequent conflicts between economic growth, social and ecological justice.	Two to three percent of local authorities have local Agenda 21. Inter-state and inter-city competition for investments and institutional restrictions to develop sustainable policies at the city level despite the policy guidance from the Climatic Alliance of the German Cities. Lack of federal and state support for LA-21 initiatives.
Japan	Despite an elaborate post-Rio environmental legislation, economic arguments prevail over environmental ones in all major growth projects. Considerable awareness of domestic environmental deterioration and its global relationship. National environmental agency has a weak standing. Strong faith in bureaucracy and corresponding weak position of the NGOs.	Fragmented and politically weak local environmental movements. LA-21 activities only in a few local authorities. Despite Japanese cities' experience of environmental disasters, few cities with local environmental ordinances. Central fiscal control allows limited support for local initiatives.

Country	National Premises	Local Agenda 21 Activities
China	population and a historically unparalleled industrial growth, China's environmental problems are of global importance. Rapid urban growth and industrialisation has resulted in substantial depletion of natural resource. New laws and tough environmental protection policies counteracted by production characterised by outdated technologies and administrative shortcomings.	authoritarian society prevents bottom-up approaches to sustainable development. Isolated examples of cities with a local Agenda 21. Lack of resources and political patronage hamper implementation of national regulations.
India	India has a long history of environmental consciousness going back to the freedom movement period. Presence of strong NGOs and other grassroots movements which keep a vigil over environmental issues. Strong legislation on environmental protection but lack of enough power to see that it is implemented. Growth of magacities leading to rapid depletion of natural resources.	Decentralisation of governance to encourage local participation in ecological sustainability has not been matched by corresponding top-down central government support to implement Agenda 21. Large number of meso- and micro-level activities in the environmental field.
Sweden	The Swedish model supporting strong coalitions between key NGOs and public agencies in order to enhance economic growth and the welfare state are now geared towards eco-modernisation. However, attempts at eco-modernisation counteracted by those safeguarding the country's international competitiveness. Increasing use of economic rather than administrative instruments for environmental protection.	All local authorities in Sweden have Agenda 21 but its implementation varies from sewerage and waste treatment to green policies regarding public purchase, business and public accounts. Key issues like energy, traffic and heavy infrastructure are often left out of LA activities.
Poland	Environmental issue was an important issue in the democratic movement and considerable sensitivity to environmental issues still prevails. However the 'shock therapy' that led to huge unemployment and social stratification has resulted in a decline in environmental interest. Discrepancy	Local Government Act has been introduced to prioritise environment protection agenda. Agenda 21 gaining recognition in small and middle-sized towns but environmental neglect of the earlier period posses formidable problems in large towns and cities.

Appendix B: Book review

This article is based on three books. Since the review article does not present the contents of the these books, following summary might be useful for readers to appreciate the contents of the books.

Consuming Cities. The Urban Environment in the Global Economy aAfter the Rio Declaration.

Eds. NMicholas Low, Brenden Gleeson, Ingemar Elander and Rolf Lindskog. Routledge, London, 2000.

An extremely valuable contribution to our understanding about environmental costs of the current pattern of urban growth. The first three chapters of the book examine economic and political factors limiting ecological sustainability of the city. The following ten chapters provide critical evaluation of how Rio Declaration and Agenda 21 have been perceived at national and urban levels in ten countries. The book should be a compulsory reading for academics as well as practitioners involved in global, national and local governance for the ecological regulation of cities.

Justice, Society and Nature. An Exploration of Political Ecology.

Nicholas Low and Brenden Gleeson. Routledge, London, 1998.
This book provides a basic reading for students in environmental politics. The authors distinguish between environmental justice (distribution of environmental quality at various spatial levels) and ecological justice (moral relationship with the non-human world). The authors explore the first concept in a wide variety of contexts and their conclusion is that massive environmental injustice is occurring by almost any criterion except perhaps the entitlement to property. The second concept is analysed with the help of several philosophical principles. Here again the authors' conclusion is rather dismal: if ecological justice is not made a moral goal before material considerations, humanity's own destiny may well be self-extinction.

Global Ethics and Environment. Ed. Nicholas Low, Routledge, London, 1999.

This major collection explores major ideas about environmental justice and global ethics. Besides a comprehensive introductory chapter by the editor and a broad review by Arne Naess about the problems related to moral relationship to humans as well as non-humans, the remaining fourteen chapters are divided into three parts. In part one of the book, two papers discuss the unjust distribution of good and bad environments both within a nation and internationally. The other two papers take up environmental issues of massively great temporal and spatial reach e.g. global warming and the question of intergenerational justice. Next come six papers that examine underlying aspects of environmental ethics including the possibility of a universal environmental ethic, care practices as fundamental premises for the existence of species and moral dualism between human and non-human interests. The final part of the book consists of four papers that discuss the adequacy or rather the inadequacy of existing institutional norms. The book is essential reference to any discussion of environmental justice and global ethics.