



Forum: Environmental & Cultural

Issue: Promoting support for social ecological initiatives on global and local levels

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Introduction

For millennia, mankind has had a very limited impact on the environment, but in the second half of the twentieth century, due to a sharp increase of the anthropological impact and severe environmental consequences, the problem of environmental protection, finding a balance between ensuring the economic and social needs of society and maintaining the environment is becoming more and more urgent. In modern world natural and cultural heritages (or cultural/natural resources) are suffering from destruction, therefore any ecological initiatives, especially social ecological initiatives have to be considered. Governments and society have to promote support for these initiatives not only on local but on global level as well. The example of such initiatives is a model of sustainable society made by Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES). The institute envisions sustainable societies with low-carbon emissions, orientation on conservation of resources in order to ensure a safe, inclusive and equitable future, realizing sustainable cities and societies requires taking actions first at the local level then at the global. These kinds of actions have to be supported and considered not just by the society but also by the most governments. Despite decades of calls for change, a clear understanding of the mechanisms and patterns under which global transformations can actually happen is still lacking. The growing concern about this has led to an increased focus on the role of innovation.

The system of national environmental legislation is usually based on:

- Constitutional regulation of environmental relations, which enshrines the most important principles and forms of use of natural resources
- Environmental and legal regulation
- International legal regulation with help of legislative norms of the member states of the United Nations

Governments trying to solve problem only by creating new laws without supporting social initiatives even on local level therefore they have to be promoted.

Definition of key words

Social ecological initiative – a suggestion which was offered by the society (or members of the society) implying solution of the ecological issue or solution which will prevent the appearance of the problem itself on local or global levels.

On local level – actions happening in specific sphere (or specific situation with concrete conditions) such as city, company, special terrain etc.)

On global level – in a worldwide sphere which includes a union of up to two countries or union of country's organizations. Something which is happening not only on the country's level but on the level of international organizations.

Cultural heritage – the legacy of physical artifacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that is inherited from past generations.

Natural heritage – the total of elements of biodiversity which include flora and fauna, ecosystems and geological structures. It includes nature parks and reserves, zoos, aquaria, and botanical gardens.

Ecology – a branch of biology that studies the interactions among organisms and their biophysical environment.

Industrialization – process when economy is transforming from primarily agricultural to one based on the manufacturing of goods. Manual labor is replaced by mechanized mass production and craftsmen are replaced by assembly lines.

Background information

There are ample examples out there to demonstrate the tremendous capacity that humans have to find innovative solutions to improve our lives.

Now there is an amount of global organizations which started as nonprofits and only after reaching significant results were noticed by the society and countries all around the world (such as UNESCO and IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources)). Human ecology began in the 1920s, through the study of changes in vegetation succession in the city of Chicago. This marked the first recognition that humans, who colonize all of the Earth's continents, were a major ecological factor.

Ecology became a part of the World's politics as early as 1971, UNESCO launched a research program called *Man and Biosphere*.

The necessity of appearance of organizations which protect the ecology occurred in the epoch of global industrialization (XIX – XX centuries) and especially after the Second World War. The crucial impact on the appearance of today's global environmental problems had the Second World War. In that period world needed social ecological initiatives therefore since then lots of organizations were established. At the same time, the society has to promote support of socio-ecological initiatives.

Local level

For example, in 2015 a top-list of 100 ecological initiatives (green initiatives) was created in the United Kingdom. The list includes those projects that put a lot of effort into the green energy that consists of 5 categories: Green Bloggers, Green Schools, Green Projects, Green Bites, and Green Community Initiatives. Let us look at some of these initiatives from different categories.

1. Chatham Green Project

The Chatham Green Project is both conservation and education initiative focused on sustainable use of land. The projects aims to explore the most effective ways of utilising land for the needs of farming and nature in the 21st century. Some of the key features of the Chatham Green Project include planting of more than 12, 000 trees, restoration of a wildflowers meadow and education program aimed to educate over 2,000 schools each year.

2. Grain Store

London restaurant Grain Store has been named Sustainable Restaurant of the Year 2013. Grain Store emphasizes being "veg-centric" instead of vegetarian. However, it gives vegetables equal billing with meat and fish and the Sustainable Restaurant Association has found all the food to be "impeccably sourced". Where possible, the meat is served organic or free range and it adheres to a strict sustainability policy when it comes to fish. The restaurant has also implemented a state of the art technology, that monitors and controls the performance and energy consumption of its kitchen equipment and half of the profits from sales of filtered water go to local charities.

3. Aberdeen Forward

Aberdeen Forward is a charity that was established in 1999. The company had the priority to fund and support the minimization of waste in the local community as well as develop recycling projects for this cause. In 2009 Aberdeen Forward opened the Sustainable Communities Centre, providing both community and business resources and at the same time helping the charity to become self-sustainable.

4. Recycle with clarity

Recycle with Clarity is an initiative to increase the household recycling rates of Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment. Clarity, launched in 2011, is a group of associated businesses, specializing in environmental compliance and recycling. It has been setting up household electrical waste recycling points across the UK, designed with the public in mind. Clarity website enables to find help and advice on recycling or re-using electrical items, as well as other useful information on packaging symbols, battery recycling, and much more.

5. Barnes Primary School

Recipient of the Eco Schools Green Flag, Barnes Primary School is a leader in its community through the many ways in which the school works towards achieving a healthier and cleaner environment. Through different programs, the school is educating their students on how to work together to take care of their community, therefore assure the building of a long term greener environment.

These are just few examples of how social ecological initiatives may be realized on local level and in different spheres: education, recycling, restaurant business etc.

Global level

It should be noted, first of all, that attention of the world to the ecological problems is reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Among 17 goals described in the Agenda, goals #7, #12, #14, #15 relate to the problems connected with environment:

- Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

This Goal specifies not only the necessity to provide people with electricity to meet their basic needs but to achieve clean and sustainable growth in electricity rate with the use of renewable energy.

- Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Worldwide material consumption has expanded rapidly, as has material footprint per capita, seriously jeopardizing the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 12 and the Goals more broadly. Urgent action is needed to ensure that current material needs do not lead to the overextraction of resources or to the degradation of environmental resources, and should include policies that improve resource efficiency, reduce waste and mainstream sustainability practices across all sectors of the economy. Social initiatives may be especially effective in helping to achieve this goal, as they set a living example for local people.

- Goal 13: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

The expansion of protected areas for marine biodiversity and existing policies and treaties that encourage responsible use of ocean resources are still insufficient to combat the adverse effects of overfishing, growing ocean acidification due to climate change and worsening coastal eutrophication. As billions of people depend on oceans for their livelihood and food source and on the transboundary nature of oceans, increased efforts and interventions are needed to conserve and sustainably use ocean resources at all levels.

- Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

Social initiatives on local level may be especially effective in spreading awareness about the necessity to protect the environment and those steps that anyone can take in order to save ecosystems.

Except Sustainable Development Goals, other efforts are taken on global levels in order to save the environment. For example, in its 2008 High-level Segment held in New York from 30 June to 3 July 2008, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) organized a series of panels and roundtable discussions on the theme of its second Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) on "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to sustainable development". The Council also convened its first Biennial Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) which aimed to position ECOSOC as the principal venue for global dialogue and policy review on the effectiveness and coherence of international development cooperation, particularly in support of the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The candid and broad-based discussions at the DCF underscored the potential of the Forum as an inclusive and global venue for multi-stakeholders on key issues in development cooperation. Its success lay in the active and substantive participation of all stakeholders: Member States, the private sector, civil society and international organizations.

Major countries and organizations involved

Organizations

- **UNESCO** (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) – the organization is based in Paris, France on the November the 4th, 1946. UNESCO involves 193 member states and 11 associate members. Its declared purpose is to contribute to promoting international collaboration in education, sciences and culture (to secure the world's cultural and natural heritage)
- **ECOLISE** – is a European wide network of community-led sustainability initiatives (legally founded in 2014). Most members of the ECOLISE are national and international representative organizations of community-led sustainability initiatives, most of which are connected to the ecovillage, permanent agriculture and Transition movements.
- **IUCN** (International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) – is a membership Union composed of both government and civil society organizations. IUCN was established on 5 October 1948 in Fontainebleau. It brings together the world's most influential organizations and top experts in a combined effort to conserve nature.

- **IGES** (Institute for Global Environmental Strategies) – was established in march 1998 under an initiative of the Japanese government.
- **UNEP** (United Nations Environment Program) – coordinates the organization's environmental activities and assists developing countries in implementing environmentally sound policies and practices. It was established in Stockholm in June 1972.

Possible solutions

- 1) Governments should pay attention to ecological initiative which is coming from the society of their country
- 2) Governments should finance projects and organizations which offer useful ecological solutions of global and local issues
- 3) Countries should unite in order to support initiatives of the society on the global level

Useful links

<https://en.unesco.org/>

<https://iges.or.jp/en>

<https://www.ecolise.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Status-Report-on-Community-led-Action-on-Sustainability-Climate-Change-in-Europe-2019.pdf>

<https://www.iucn.org/>

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24797GSDR_report_2019.pdf

<https://wildernessfoundation.org.uk/>

https://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/pdfs/fina_08-45773.pdf