

A New Perspective on Sustainability*

György Kocziszky

József Benedek – Gábor Nevelős:

Átfogó ökológia. Párbeszéd hit és tudomány között a Laudato si' enciklika jegyében. (Comprehensive ecology. A dialogue between faith and science in the spirit of the encyclical Laudato si'.)

JTMR Faludi Ferenc Jezsuita Akadémia – Jezsuita Kiadó, Budapest, 2022, p. 409
ISBN: 978-963-422-055-2

Concepts favoured by societies and economic policies tend to change from era to era. Clearly, one of the most prominent topics in today's public discourse is sustainability, and the literature discussing this topic in narrower or broader interpretations is continuously expanding by leaps and bounds. In addition to the wealth of books and academic articles, professionals and celebrities also give voice to their well-prepared pros and cons. But there are good reasons for this intense interest.

The geopolitical, social and economic crisis caused by the financial crisis of 2008, the pandemic that emerged in 2019 and the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war have triggered legitimate worries and fears in anyone with common sense. Therefore, it is reasonable to question the future we face. What do representatives of science and historical Christian churches recommend for the protection of creation? What position does the encyclical *Laudato si' of Pope Francis* take in the matter, and how can it contribute to the sustainability of human life?

In a situation full of fear and dangers to human life, the natural world and the built environment, it feels good to read the conference proceedings of "Comprehensive ecology" published by the *Faludi Ferenc Jesuit Academy*, which bears the same name as the lecture series and discusses the problems of squandering the created world and possible options to find a way out.

Besides its rich content and multi-directional perspective on sustainability, the message of the study volume is clear: *science dedicated to good helps faith avoid being fanatical and superstitious; and faith helps science see the bigger perspective*

* The papers in this issue contain the views of the authors which are not necessarily the same as the official views of the Magyar Nemzeti Bank.

György Kocziszky is a Member of the Monetary Council of the Magyar Nemzeti Bank and a Professor at the University of Miskolc. Email: kocziszky@mnbb.hu

and not just the details. We are responsible for taking care of created world, and for this, an ecological rebirth is needed so that we can get to know and rediscover the values of nature and created world. This holistic view is supported by the group of authors, who are theologians, geographers, urbanists, biologists, philosophers and economists.

The 16 studies in the proceedings are divided into 8 individual chapters (Partnership: a dialogue between science and faith; Green economy; Sustainable lifestyle; Ecological crisis; Poverty; Sustainable communities; Environmental change; and Social justice) and send a clear message that the issue is much more complex, and the crisis is not merely ecological.

The two studies framing the first chapter, written by *József Benedek* and *Gábor Nevelős*, present the hypothesis that the classical, i.e. social, economic and environmental, dimensions of sustainable development should be complemented with a spiritual dimension as well. The hypothesis is based on two sources of wisdom, a dialogue between science and faith, based on the comprehensive ecological views of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato si'*. According to the authors, ecological rebirth reinforces sustainability efforts, and incorporating sustainable perspectives into the functioning of society promotes ecological conversion.

The two authors of the second chapter (on green economy), *Sarolta Laura Baritz* and *György Kocziszky* write about the misdirection of economics and the need for a new paradigm, i.e. maximising the common good, instead of maximising profit as a sole objective. Contrary to the opinion of many, globalisation does not guarantee the common good due to the geopolitical and economic centres it creates, and in their target system, sustainability efforts do not or merely virtually appear.

The studies on the third topic by *Klára Csiszár* and *János Zlinszky* provide a detailed discussion of unnecessary overconsumption and the depletion of resources. The authors deliver a clear and well defined message, i.e. our current lifestyle is not sustainable, and it destroys life.

The authors of the studies in the fourth chapter dealing with the ecological crisis, *Zolt Hetesi* and *Tibor Görföl*, examine the issues of biosphere destruction, soil depletion, climate change and interdependency. The authors clearly consider it necessary to face ourselves and rethink our values.

According to the fifth chapter, by *Gergely Rosta* and *Miklós Vecsei*, on the relationship between poverty and the environment, global warming is caused by the wealthier part of the world, and it should be a basic goal to harmonise income disparities and eradicate poverty. For this question, the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta brings some worthy examples to follow.

The sixth chapter by *Géza Salamin* and *Csaba Török* focuses on the problems of sustainable communities and cities, and the model of the sustainable city. The topic is particularly relevant as 55.3 per cent of the world's population lives in cities, where we can observe multiple problems of ecology, demography and migration, the inequality of income and wealth, and disorientation due to a distorted liberal perception.

As the seventh chapter by *Balázs Nagy* and *Ferenc Patsch* puts it, the presence of humans causes slow healing wounds to nature. Balázs Nagy summarises the environmental changes of certain geographical regions supported by rich illustrations. The other author of the chapter, Ferenc Patsch, examines the possibility of a paradigm shift through Martin Heidegger's guidelines and critique of technique. The authors urge the implementation of changes in the way of thinking, attitude and technology.

The eighth chapter by *János Székely* and *Márton Péti* is centred on social justice vis-à-vis a false view of life hindering social justice. The reasoning is supported by the fact that 84 per cent of goods are consumed by the wealthiest 20 per cent of the world's population, whereas the poor consume only 1.4 per cent of goods. As Márton Péti summarises his findings, a very significant message of comprehensive ecology is that our most important focus should be the fair treatment of people and society when emphasising the careful management of the Earth's resources.

The main merit of this appealing book of studies is that it shows the way to a beneficial and progressive dialogue between the practitioners of science and religion about the future of humanity.

The book encourages readers to re-read certain chapters and give them further consideration. Its holistic approach helps us realise that a paradigm shift is needed for a sustainable life. The studies provide not only intellectual, but also spiritual growth to their readers. This well-edited book with its aesthetic design and sophisticated graphics is heartily recommended to people who consider themselves thinkers.