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**Market and environment**  
(Review of the ecological economics)

**Ph.D. THESIS ABSTRACT**

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## Introduction – the antecedents of the research

The formation of ecological economics as an independent branch of science was an important work by two American university professors. Robert Costanza teaching ecology at the University of Vermont and the economist Herman Daly from the University of Maryland – in other ecologists' and economists' company – were founded *International Society of Ecological Economics* in 1988, furthermore in 1989 at Elsevier Group it was set in motion by them *Ecological Economics* journal. At that time Daly had been smoothing the road of the formation of the new school for two decades. The Daly's article titled „*On Economics as Life Science*” published in 1968 can be considered for the first manifestation of the ecological economic thinking.

The ecological economics theories may have found a full rejection, incomprehension at the time of their appearance, then shortly, seeing increasingly more obvious evidences as the environmental pollution and the perpetual destruction of the natural resources, they got to acceptance as ideas with explanatory strength. Today the environmental economics coursebooks begin with ecological economics foundation. Single ecopolitical or ecophilosophical principles being rooted in items turned into the parts of the political canon, the concept of the sustainable development may have an unsurpassed political career for example. The systematic overview of ecological economics theories would not be useless because of the mainstream economists till now rather looked at an exotic curiosity onto the ecological economics school. In the domestic literature it was the turn of an any kind of reflection, a criticism in the concern of the ecological economics apart from Pete Péter's book review.

The overview of the ecological economics and his criticism give an opportunity for us to consider the fundamental question: suitable altogether the market economy society onto the protection of the natural environment. Whether the human society protects the conditions of his biological existence (already if they are in danger), necessary is the limitation or change the market economy? Another important question is that the modern economy institution and his legal and social systems are the reason or not for the environmental pollution and the sometimes excessive exploitation of natural resources.

The examination of these questions already actual because while articles, essays and books appeared in great numbers on the criticism of the private property, the competition, the market economy, and the free trade to be proven in the protection of the natural environment, much fewer writings were born till then – in connection with the environmental concerns – to protect the market, the private property, and the society being based on these.

The domestic context lends his other relevance to the examination of the ecological economics. The ecological school affected the Hungarian environmental economics thinking in an exceptionally fertile manner. The international ecological economics school did not become institutionalized yet, when in summer of 1985, on Szarvas, dedicated one day for the environment protection in the college movement's summer

camp, the participants may have been received already a demanding summary from the substantive theses of the ecological economics from László Zsolnai. Several distinguished works appeared later in Hungarian, which represented the outlook of the ecological school, towards the domestic audience. The ecological thinking is today's very popular one. One of the illustrious examples of this that Zsolt Boda received the so called Kolnai Prize of the Hungarian Society of Political Sciences in the first time in 2005 for his book “*Globális ököpolitika*” [Global Ecopolitics].

*Table 1: Some typical distinctnesses of the environmental economics and the ecological economics*

	<b>environmental economics</b>	<b>ecological economics</b>
as a discipline	part of the mainstream economics paradigm - extension the methods and items of the economics onto the environment-economy interactions	ignoring the traditional economics paradigm - intention of the union of the ecology and the economics
methods	methodology individualism, analytic approach (marginal analysis, balance models)	methodology pluralism, holistic view, transdisciplinary, horizontal approach
view the role of natural resources	the protection of the resources is necessary to the correction of the individuals' well-being and the growth of the economy	the resources in themselves valuable, other races have a right just like that to the survival, than for the man
assessment	it is based on the preferences of persons, anthropocentric, instrumental	tries to evaluate the intrinsic value of the individuals and the elements of the ecosystem
scarcity	Ricardian relative scarcity	Malthusian absolute scarcity
the maintenance of the natural capital	weak sustainability: the natural and the human capital generally can be substituted	strong sustainability: the substance of the natural capital may not decrease
biogeochemical restrains on economy	plays a marginal role	plays a central examination and theoretical role
technological development	innovational optimism: the technical development furthers the solution of the environmental problems	technological scepticism: the new technologies cause new environmental problems
prosperity, well-being and equality	political philosophy neutrality, does not take a stand on the question of the income equality	commitment beside the egalitarian views, to the resources truth equal obtaining fundamental question beside the size and the efficiency

## Objectives

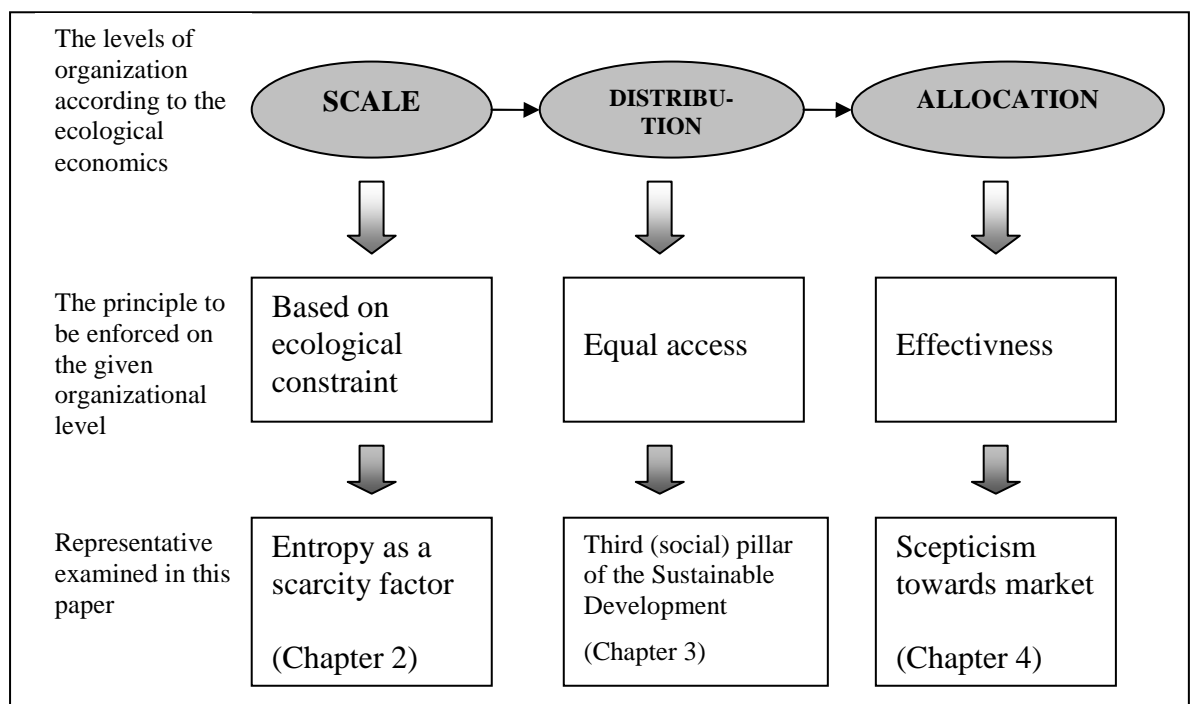
The procession of my examination is the following. First I summarize the principles of the ecological economics in the dissertation, I present it, in what the ecological economy differs from the environment economy (the Table 1 gives a summary to this here), concerned where and as what the ecological school criticizes the market economy (the Chapter One of the treatise is about this).

I emphasize three essential items among the establishments of the ecological economics. These three items will be a representatives of three analysis levels according to the logic of the ecological economics, which are:

(a1) The definition of the optimal size of the economy is the task in the first step. The ecological, scientific factors play the significant role in the question of the scale.

(a2) In the second step, within the frame of optimal scale of the economy, we have to make a decision about fair distribution of resources, goods and income. The equal access will be the fundamental requirement both within a country and between countries distribution.

(a3) In the third step it is necessary to accomplish an efficient allocation method between the optimal scale established already and the frameworks of an equal distribution. The allocation can be made by the market or an other allocative system.



*Figure 1: The levels of organization of the economy according to the ecological economics and its representatives in this paper*

The next items to be examined will represent the levels of the economy organization model of the ecological economics in my paper:

(b1) The principle concerning the scarcity of the entropy represents the ecological, scientific constraint.

(b2) The principle of the sustainable development (especially it's third pillar concerning social justice or fairness) represents the issue of a distribution.

(b3) Market mechanisms related criticisms or scepticism by ecological economics represent the allocative problems.

The ecological economics criticizes the so called neo-classical economics, because this school the three fundamental issues of the economy – scale, allocation, – does not treat it for equal weight. These three fundamental questions deserve identical attention according to the ecological economists, while the neo-classical theory concentrates on the allocation, yet takes into consideration the distribution less, but neglects the question of the scale totally. The ecological economics in the course of the allocation the efficiency, in the course of the distribution the equality, in the look of the scale the long-term maintenance of the natural capital (strong sustainability) designates as a normative value.

In the treatise so I examine those fundamental items, where the ecological tendency sheds light on the problems of the traditional economics the most sharply, and I emphasize the entropy scarcity (in the Chapter 2 of the treatise), the equal distribution (anyway than the social pillar of the Sustainable Development) (in the Chapter 3) and the market scepticism (in the Chapter 4). I examine it in all three cases, the ecological economists verified their theses throughough, and it is possible to bring something up in the protection of the classic theories.

## **Methodology**

The critical analysis of the ecological economics demands application of more discipline while the ecological economics has a multi- or a transdisciplinary character strongly. Because of this I made use in my presenting arguments the single items of the economics, the physics, and the political philosophy.

The selected examination method was significantly the meta-analysis. In the Chapter 3 and 4 of the treatise it was complemented or replaced by statistical methods (correlation analysis, multiple variable linear regression) too. I referred to my earlier research results in a number case in the Chapter 4 of the treatise. In these researches I used cost-benefit analysis, but the results got into this paper only because of extent reasons, it is possible to track the detailed analysis leading to the results in the sources.

## The theses of the dissertation

In the dissertation I've examined the essential ideas of ecological economics, a new transdisciplinary field of academic research regarding interactions between economy and environment. Methodology of ecological economics is based on three fundamental questions: first the physical constraint (represented by entropy here) of economy, second the equal distribution of resources or goods, and third the efficient allocation of resources.

The theses are the following:

**(T1.0) Entropy is not a relevant physical constraint on economy. Changes in entropy caused by economic activities is not relevant to optimize the size of the economy.**

The method leading to the thesis was the overview and summary of the literature dealing with this topic (meta-analysis).

I regard it as a scientific interest that while the physicists registered the appearance of an economic theory what ascribes emphasized significance and a sense to the entropy, and a number of deep criticisms it was published, till then the environmental economists and the representatives of the ecological economics did not comment on these criticisms, and onto the entropy constraint many scientist refer to a valid theory in our days too.

I established that the ecological economics is out when he presents the entropy as a scanty factor. The reality is, that the enormous capacity of the increase of the entropy stands for our provision because of the Universe is an exceptionally ordered state even today, and entropy surplus originating from the economic activities we export into the space. The human society produces incomparably less entropy moreover than his lifeless environment or other species.

I had it put on for an additional examination that if the economic activities have a natural constraint, then it is in a local level, and it is worthy to establish and to enforce on a concrete case relevantly. The aggregated value of any scientific indicators may be misleading for the regulation of the aggregated, optimal scale of the economy.

The relevant own publication to this thesis:

BARTUS Gábor: *Van-e a gazdasági tevékenységeknek termodinamikai korlátja?* [Do the economy have a thermodynamic constraint?] *Közgazdasági Szemle*, Vol. 55, p. 1010-1022 (2008)

**(T2.0) The social aspect of the concept of sustainable development or the idea of equal distribution of natural resources is untenable, and the so called distribution problem is not solvable.**

At the time of the examination the principle of the sustainable development and his so-called social pillar, or rather the second element of the economy organization model of the ecological economics: the distribution equality, the road passed through four sub-theses:



**(T2.1) Sustainability indicators (e.g. Ecological Footprint, Environmental Performance Index) are unreliable, some indices are in negative correlation, therefore their practical usage is problematic.**

It was the basic concept of the examination of the second thesis that the different data concerning equal access or inequality will be compared with indicators characterize the quality of the sustainability, the natural environment. To this I needed a suitable ecological, sustainability indicator. After the overview of the literature concerning the indicators, and the examination of the correlation of the indicators I was obliged to register that there is not any environmental or sustainability indicator which can be used without all scruples currently. Those two hypotenuses environmental index (the Environmental Performance Index and the Ecological Footprint), which are calculated onto most of the world's countries from year to year, contradicts each other. In the interest of the additional examination I have established the EPI-ECO indicator which is a partial set of the Environmental Performance Index. In connection with EPI-ECO indicator I had less methodological reservation, and I used this in the additional analyses.

**(T2.2) Inequalities in income or wealth between countries or within a country (among persons in a given society) do not have any effects on the ecological or the sustainability performance.**

I proved the thesis with a multiple variable lineal regression analysis leaning on the data of 122 countries. I examined the effect of the income inequality and the GDP per capita data simultaneously onto the sustainability. The Table 2 summarizes the result of the examination.

*Table 2: The partial effect of the GDP per capita and Gini Index onto the indicators of the sustainability. Multiple variable lineal regression estimates (own calculation)*

<b>Explanatory variables</b>	<b>EPI</b>	<b>EF</b>	<b>EPI-ECO</b>
GDP/capita		0.130** (17.803)	0.052 (0.763)
GDP/capita 10-logarithm	18.220** (14.577)		
Gini Index	0.038 (0.500)	0.029 (0.384)	0.127 (1.341)
Gini Index's square		-0.000 (-0.377)	
Constant	57.456** (16.017)	0.535 (0.330)	65.218** (15.082)
Sample	122	122	122
R square	0.671	0.782	0.0152
F statistics	121.2	141.0	0.916

Comment: The estimates indicate with how much the unit increase of his given explanatory changing value would change the expected value of the dependent variable, if we would keep the value of all the other explanatory variables on constant one. In the parenthesis character numbers are t statistics. \*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.05

The theoretical thesis that the countries with bigger GDP use up their natural environment in a bigger measure because of their more intensive economic activity and their higher consumption, only the Ecological Footprint indicator supports, EPI signals a contrary trend with this. We do not have evidence for it beyond this, that in the richer countries have higher (or lower) EPI-ECO indicator values (the parameter estimate not significant).

On the other hand the statement that the societies with a bigger income inequality cannot be sustained (in an environmental or ecological sense), we may not support with any of the sustainability indicators. Gini Index changing parameter estimate in one of the lineal regression models significant, so we do not have evidence for it, that there would be a context between an inequality and sustainability. The regression analyses is indicated that those two countries do not differ in terms of the sustainability, in which ones are different the inequality, but identical the level of the economic development.

We can summarize these findings that there is not an environmental or ecological macroindicator, which would be able to confirm both statements simultaneously. I showed the results of the even comparisons in the Table 3.

*Table 3: The correlation of inside the country and between the countries inequalities with three sustainability macroindicators - the summary of the results*

THE CHARACTER OF A CORRELATION	Environmental (sustainability) performance		
	Ecological Footprint	EPI	EPI-ECO
Gini Index (inside a country inequality)	No	No	No
GDP/capita (inequality between countries)	Negative*	Positive	No

*\* In a mathematical sense the correlation positive, but we take into consideration, that the bigger value of the ecological footprint signals lower ecological sustainability (in the case of EPI and EPI-ECO the bigger value signals better environmental sustainability)*

These empirical results support my theoretical scruples with the equal distribution presented likewise in the treatise with proper strength. The different environmental performance of different societies, or the ecological state taking shape as a result of the economic activities we may not explain with inequalities neither within a country nor between the countries.

**(T2.3) Optimal distribution of non-renewable resources between different generations is hardly solvable because of intergenerational technological asymmetry and the unpredictability of other factors.**

One of the essential elements of arguing for the thesis, that there is not any practical device in our hand onto the arrangement of the non-renewable resources, despite it that we know of course theoretically: these resources are a finite substance and will be exhausted sometimes in the near or far future with a big probability. For the future generations will be available a decreasing amount of stocks of natural resources. But their scientific knowledge, their technological standard, and their accumulated economic capital will be bigger at the today's generations' conversely. The relation between the generations are so – from this viewpoint at least – inevitably asymmetric and unequal.

The equal access to the natural resources proves to be an illusion because of the biogeochemical variety and inhomogeneity of the Earth. On the other hand the equal access would be a reality only when the different development level of the countries based on different performance in the past could be levelled by a radical equalisation process.

**(T2.4) The normative requirement for reducing inequalities makes the criterion of sustainability acceptable only for the proponents of egalitarian (e.g. Rawlsian) political philosophies. There are some logical arguments against the egalitarian concept of the social pillar of sustainable development.**

Validation of the principle of the justice between the generations currently does not appear solvable, because the principles measuring the distributive justice are unusable in the relation between the generations. The meritocratic and equality principles are unsuitable because these methods are valid for persons and not for groups, the utilitarianism results an extreme solution (the extreme rising in value of the consumption or – contradicts just – the extreme present asceticism in the interest of the accumulation), the Rawlsian differential principle would be due with a consequence which cannot be accepted though (with unambiguous preferring the present generation opposite the later ones). Coherent and operational theory of justice regarding the natural resources' access is missing now from the ecological economics. The researches until now led to the exploration of the problem and defining some guiding principles. Spash [2004] established two criteria for example, (1) the recognition of the necessity of the compensations between the generations, and (2) taking the real and inviolable rights of the coming generations seriously. These criteria are too general that any kind of practical solution even can be defensible, even can be rejected.

I identified a problem of the concept of the sustainable development that the normative requirements concerning the content of the social pillar, the term made acceptable among only the philosophies based strongly and faithful on equality principle, and these normative requirements do not take note of the argumentations revealing the problems of the redistribution.

The publications being attached to the second thesis group:

BARTUS Gábor: *A fenntartható fejlődés rejtélyes fogalmáról.* [About the mysterious concept of the sustainable development] *Kommentár*, 1(6):55-63. (2006)

BARTUS Gábor: *Lehetséges-e konzervatív környezetpolitika?* [There is a such thing as a conservative environmental politics?] *Közjó és Kapitalizmus Intézet Műhelytanulmány No. 2.* (2008) ([http://kozjoeskapitalizmus.hu/files/MT02.Bartus\\_Vane\\_konzervativ\\_kornyezetpolitika.pdf](http://kozjoeskapitalizmus.hu/files/MT02.Bartus_Vane_konzervativ_kornyezetpolitika.pdf))

**(T3.0) Environmental problems are treatable in the frameworks of market economy and modern democratic governance. There is no need to change the paradigm of economics.**

The justification of the thesis is founded on two proofs complementing each other. On the one hand, in that case, if we would be incapable from the market failures like the elimination of the welfare losses stemming from externalities like the environment pollution, then worthy to compare the magnitude of these losses with the measure of (in my treatise shortly introduced) benefits, which ones spring

from the efficiency of the market coordination, and they would get lost if we would substitute it for an other coordination mechanism. I pointed out examples from the waste management, what kind of internalization by the government with low efficiency exist, and that the Pigouvian internalisation may have most significant transaction costs.

On the other hand I showed cases when the state is not weakening the spontaneous (market) coordination, and using the Coaseian concept the government tries to help maximising of the welfare gain. I called the attention for the opportunities of the other practical application of the Coase theorem, considered by the ecological economists an intellectual game, with demonstration of his international environmental role taking shape in the interpretation of conflicts and his solution.

I used the Hungarian-Slovak debate related to the planned project of the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros system of locks as an example. I emphasized that the contract curve can be considered as a given one despite the relative undefined environmental targets, and the parties were not able to manage to get after all under a decade onto an agreement. The reason of this is – apart from a number of other factors –, that the international court's judgement did not clear it up unambiguously and beyond any doubt, that a riparian state has a fundamental right to an original natural status of the river, or to an economic usage of that river with a reasonable manner.

The result of the analysis was the delineation of a logic chain of the choice between the environmental policy instruments, which one primarily based on the measure of transaction costs, and on this basis offers internalizing method for the state intervention.

The important item of the ecological economics that for the function and extension (including the input of resources and output of goods) of the economy has a natural constraints. The respect of these limits of production and consumption is possible between the frameworks of the market economy. In the Chapter 4 of the treatise – if only through examples – I showed that this is practicable with the help of market based solutions. I proved that the modern democratic constitutional states and the market systems applied in them did not take advantage of their opportunities at all yet in the interest of the respect of ecological constraints and environmental protection. Indeed, the considerable part of the environmental problems appear just because of lacks of market's institutional conditions, the rudiments of market, and the market limitation by the state. This provides the hope to those who believe in well-balanced political conditions of the good life, that we do not have to renounce the economic efficiency, the freedom, the safety, the order, and the alleviation of the suffering in favour of the protection of the natural environment.

The relevant publications to the thesis:

BARTUS Gábor: *A csomagolóanyagokra kivetendő termékdíj alkalmazásának egyes vonatkozásai.* [Concerns of the application of the packaging product charge] Budapest: Magyar Környezetgazdaságtani Központ. (2004)

BARTUS Gábor: Alternatives for the governmental policies of the sustainable waste management in Hungary. *Periodica Polytechnica Ser. Soc. Man. Sci.* **13**(2):181-192. (2005)

BARTUS Gábor: *A Bős-nagymarosi Vízlépcsőrendszer tervének költség-haszon elemzése (esettanulmány)* [Cost-benefit analysis of the plan of Bős-Nagymaros System of Locks – A case study] In: BARTUS G., MONOSTORI K. és SZABÓ M.: *A fejlesztéspolitikai intézkedések teljes társadalmi költségének becslése. Fejlesztéspolitika társadalmi hatásai 3.* Budapest: TÁRKI. (2005)

BARTUS Gábor: *A hulladékkezelés alapjai* (Tanári kézikönyv). [Introduction to waste management – Teacher's handbook] Budapest: Nemzeti Szakképzési Intézet. (2006)

BARTUS Gábor: *Hulladékkezelés* [Prohibited subsidies - Waste management] In: *Tiltandó támogatások – Környezetvédelmi szempontból káros támogatások a magyar gazdaságban* (Szerk: KISS K.) Budapest: L'Harmattan. 286-299. (2006)

BARTUS Gábor: Fejezetek egy kényszerházasságból. A bős-nagymarosi magyar-szlovák vita állása. [Chapters from a forced marriage. The position of the Bős Nagymaros Hungarian-Slovak debate] *Kommentár*, **2**(4):68-82. (2007)

## The utilisation opportunities of the new results of the treatise

The treatise means a novelty on several points:

- My work is the first experiment in Hungary to criticise the ecological economics from a viewpoint of “mainstream” economics.
- Using a comprehensive dataset of economic, social and environmental indicators I justified empirically, there is no a causality relationship between the measure of the inequality and the environmental performance.
- The most important novelty from the point of view of environmental politics of the treatise – based on the morals of the former analysis – is proposition, that its social pillar makes the concept of sustainable development exceptionally debatable, and a narrower content of the concept is able to help more practical results.
- The treatise analyses and interprets firstly with the help of the Coase Theorem the longlasting Hungarian-Slovak debate concerning the plan of the Bős-Nagymaros System of Locks.

The treatise calls attention to the fact that the currently used environmental, ecological or sustainability indicators lack robustness. These indicators suffer methodological problems, and don't able to give comprehensive, aggregated information about countries' environmental or ecological performance. Additional researches may help to eliminate the existing deficiencies on this space. My proposal based on this paper – which one of course only an alternative of the necessary future examinations – would spotlight refining an indicator called Ecosystem Vitality, the partial index of EPI.

The results of my treatise are suggested, that the Coase Theorem is equivalent with the Pigouvian internalization concept, and that the results of 'Law and Economics' would be worthy to integrating into the domestic education of the environmental economics. It would be useful also to give a sophisticated overview about the theoretical bases of the Coase Theorem and the opportunities of the practical application.

It may be a moral furthermore for the environmental politics that we have to revise definition and concept of sustainable development. What we would worthy to deliberate, what kind of extent and content of a social element it's possible to insert to make the sustainable development a coherent, consensus-creating principle. The other option would be using a rather focused concept for the natural environment.

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