

# Resumé / Summary

The book *Economy in Context* is a collective monograph of fourteen authors who presented the results of their research and their opinions in seven chapters focused on various aspects of economic development and its social and environmental context. The publishing of this book is a follow-up process from the conference *Our Common Present: Context of Economic Growth*, which was organised in April 2014 at the University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, Czech Republic.<sup>1</sup> After the conference, the presenters, as well as other relevant scholars from the Czech Republic, were asked to contribute with a chapter for this publication. The call was relatively broad but with a clear goal: to address the problem of economic growth and to focus on the relationship between the economy, society and environment. The chapters selected for this book are diverse in various aspects. Both case studies and theoretical considerations are included. Authors of the chapters have different academic background, be it economics, sociology, culturology, philosophy, geography and environmental studies. More specifically, about economics, the authors (and their chapters) represent different fields of economics, including neoclassical economics, environmental economics and ecological economics. The problems presented in the book express themselves at many levels: individual, regional, national, EU and global. The order of the chapters tries to follow the links between them. The book starts with two Czech case studies of eutrophication and the labour market, and follows with a case study of Green Economy principles application in the EU. Subsequently, there is a more theoretical chapter focused on degrowth, followed by two chapters dealing with the problem of fair trade. The first focuses on fair trade and its relation to the agricultural cooperatives, the latter is a case study of the perception of fair trade by the students from South Bohemia. The last chapter is philosophical text discussing the new paradigm of economy and ethics. Short description of the chapter will give more insight to the readers.

*Water Eutrophication in the Orlík Catchment: Economically Effective Situation or Problem to Be Solved?* is the chapter authored by Ondřej Vojáček (Czech Technical University in Prague) and Jan Macháč (University of Economics in Prague). It presents the case study of the Orlík Reservoir in the Czech Repub-

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<sup>1</sup> *Our Common Present* is title of the annual interdisciplinary conference organised in the Czech Republic since 2011, see <http://www.ecoology.org/english>.

lic, which is an interesting and demonstrative example of the catchment that faces high phosphorus contamination and therefore strong cyanobacteria occurrence, especially during the summer seasons. The chapter presents the sources of contamination and lists possible mitigation measures. Then it focuses on the systematic cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analysis and discusses the relevance of the methodology and also the significant methodological issues and possible difficulties when doing similar analyses. Considering the type, size and the location of the reservoir, the focus in the cost-benefit analysis was paid to the recreational benefits for residents and tourists. The chapter raises fundamental question about whether the water quality in Orlík catchment should be improved in the situation of exceeding cost over potential benefits and discusses the issue in the context of the EU Water Framework Directive and the principle of proportionality.

Ivana Faltová Leitmanová and Renata Klufová (University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice) focus on the selected aspects of labour in the text titled *Labour and its Research in the Wider Context and Detailed Focus on the Analysis of the Regional Labour Market*. This chapter aims to indicate a holistic approach to work and employment research. The roles of an individual within the context of work and employment influencing him/her are further projected into relationships among individuals as well as among individuals and subsystems, partial systems and the phenomena of social life. The first part of the chapter focuses on some of these phenomena, e.g. unemployment, exclusion, human and social capital, promotion of employment (public services, start-ups, loans, etc.) and commuting. The subsequent part mainly deals with economic phenomena along with the context of work and employment through the analysis of selected labour market characteristics of České Budějovice district municipalities. Partial conclusions and findings reflect to a degree the chosen causality between systems and subsystems of social and economic life, confirming the necessity to perceive broader context when seeking answers to questions concerning work and employment.

Eva Cudlínová, Jan Vávra and Miloslav Lapka (University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice) are authors of the chapter *Application of the Principles of Green Economy in the European Union*. The chapter briefly presents the concepts of Green Economy, Green Growth and Green New Deal, which gained importance during the recent financial crisis and economic recession. The “green” concepts were presented as an environmentally friendly and inclusive way how to kickstart the economy again. The main focus of the chapter is to study the application of the “green” principles in the EU member states. This is done through the analysis of selected national indicators (unemployment, GDP, carbon footprint, etc.) before and after the crisis. The results show that some of the “green” principles were applied, but that it is not able to talk about the complex application of the Green Economy. Some

of the problems with the methodology and limitations of the study are also discussed in the chapter.

*The Concept of Sustainable Degrowth and the Degrowth Movement in Europe* is the chapter authored by Eva Fraňková and Nadia Johanisová (Masaryk University in Brno). The authors discuss the concept of sustainable degrowth, which has gained increasing prominence in the last decade within both the eco-social movement and in the academic debate and can be seen as an attempt to resurrect a radical environmental ethos. Sustainable degrowth can be defined as a democratic, equitable and environmentally beneficial process of gradually decreasing the volume of production and consumption, which contributes to human well-being. Degrowth argumentation springs from a wide spectrum of intellectual sources including environmental ethics, ecological economics and critical approaches in development theory. Both the activist and the academic wings of the degrowth movement have developed since 2000 predominantly in France, Italy and Spain, and also to a lesser degree in many other countries. The degrowth concept differs from voluntary simplicity or downshifting by its call for systemic social change and can be interpreted as an intermediate stage leading to a steady-state economy. Key arguments of the degrowth movement include a criticism of mainstream economic fundamentalism and of the de-politicization of public space. However, the viability of alternatives to the current system based on the economic growth logic remains an open question.

Michal Vacenovský (Czech University of Life Sciences Prague) presents the chapter *Cooperatives in Developing Countries and Their Role in Fair Trade*. Cooperatives have played an integral role in the history of fair trade. From the beginnings of the movement in the production and marketing of handicrafts, small producers were often organized into cooperatives. And as fair trade extended into more food items and product certification was introduced, it became a requirement that small producers be organized into cooperatives or similar forms of organization. The participation of cooperatives in fair trade should not be surprising, especially when one considers the common goals and values of these two often intertwined movements. This article examines the role of cooperatives and the compatibility of cooperativism with the fair trade movement. It asks the following questions: Can the formation of independent, voluntary and democratically governed agrarian organizations stimulate rural economic development and alleviate poverty? Can access to alternative trade networks, such as Fairtrade and other certification systems, play a formative role in this process? Can agrarian marketing cooperatives increase farmer welfare? This question ties to the debate on whether interventions such as Fairtrade certification can improve farmer welfare indirectly, through bolstering agrarian marketing cooperatives, as well as directly, through paying higher prices.

The following chapter *Fair Trade Perception and Economic Education* was authored by Viktor Vojtko, Jan Šalamoun and Anna Draxlerová (University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice). It summarizes the main arguments for and against fair trade using two sources – existing literature as well as a survey of Czech students of a selected high school in South Bohemia and students of the Faculty of Economics, University of South Bohemia. The authors argue that the fair trade topic can be used in economic education as transversal which would allow the development of critical thinking skills in various subjects like economics, trade, marketing or sustainable development. The chapter can also be specifically inspiring for Fairtrade schools in the Czech Republic because it provides several examples of fair trade implementation in different subjects.

Josef Šmajš (Masaryk University in Brno) contributed with the chapter *Economy and Ethics*. In the philosophical chapter, Josef Šmajš deals with three problems: 1. the problem of the current predatory economy; 2. the crisis of morals and ethics; 3. the problem of today's teaching of business ethics. He evaluates these problems through his conception of evolutionary ontology. The problem of the current crisis of morals and ethics is enriched with the question of new subjects of ethics and law. Special attention is paid to the subjectivity of nature. The author points to the fact that acceptance of the highest Earth's subjectivity does not need to suppose that there exists a consciousness of nature. Similarly, as the people speak for the accepted artificial subjectivity (business, political), the people must also speak for the subjectivity of nature. Author's *Constitution for the Earth* is published as an appendix to this chapter.

The editors believe that this book will raise many interesting questions, possibly also some answers, and that it would be helpful to the readers for thinking about the different aspects of social and economic development and about the links between the economy, society and nature. As the book tries to show, the topics are highly interconnected, though often implicitly, and any single academic discipline is hardly able to describe the problems, let alone about suggesting solutions. However, when merged together, the separate problems, disciplines and the case book chapters give a more complete picture which could serve as a good starting point for the readers' own thinking about economic and social development, responsibility to the environment and sustainability in general.