

Summary

Environmental Devastation and Social Destruction
Oleg Suša, Richard Šťáhel

The twentieth century was a breakthrough for the development of mankind in many ways. It was not only a century of unprecedented development and destruction, the rapid growth of human population and its life standards, but also a century of massive range of murders and exploitation. It was also a century of spontaneous urbanization and depopulation of countryside. These processes were followed with growing range of the devastation of environment which at the second half of last century got to the point where it started to threaten the conditions for life of individuals and societies so obviously, that it could not be ignored anymore as an irrelevant externality. At the end of the twentieth century were – because of the globalization – these processes fastened and the consequences multiplied in social and natural environment spheres on the global level. Not only the unsustainability but also the reciprocal conditionality and interconnection of the processes of social and natural devastation became evident. In the twenty first century, we can observe not only the continuation but also the deepening of these developments as well as the ongoing effort of their theoretical reflection. The aim of this book is to identify main aspects of these processes and to outline options for reflection of phenomena of socio-ecological devastation and destruction.

The first part of this book written by Oleg Suša deals with the critical reflection of socio-political conflicts of global civilization which lead to socio-environmental devastation and disruption. Socio-political conflicts

concerning the survival on this planet started to be visible during the global debate about the limits to growth and in the protest movements. The problem of ecological crisis revealed the new socio-political dimension of conflicts between private and public interests, between interests, goals and values. The main aim of this chapter is to develop a critical theory of modern society in the direction of deeper critique of the domination structures and their social and ecological consequences. The author refers to the inspirations of classical motives relevant to ecological crisis and political ecology, philosophy and social theory. Then, he refers to contemporary directions of political ecology: co-optation and global regime of crisis. In case of co-optation, political ecology confronts practices of modern institutions and their domination and power relations. Ecological political culture develops in the context of discursive formation and contestation. Environmental justice and risk distribution relate to problems of growing social inequality and poverty. Political ecology today is challenged by global capitalism and by evident conjunction between environmental changes, social, economic and political (governance) crises.

The second part of book written by Richard Stahel aims to show the reciprocal conditionality of social, economic, political and environmental crisis tendencies of the global industrial civilization which reciprocal intensification reveals existential threat not only to the current level of the development of the civilization but also to humanity as biological species. The author assumes that it is the ways in which individual societies deal with the imbalance between the increasing population and its consumption and the limits of resources of a particular place, which, in the long term, determines the sustainability and stability of the economic-political system in a specific ecosystem. All of the life

strategies have environmental as well as social and political consequences, which in turn influence the environment. The author defends a thesis according to which the environmental responsibility must be understood as a political and legal category more than a moral and ethical one, and which works with the proposition that philosophy adequate to current threats must be social political philosophy and also environmental philosophy. A new perspective which opened up for philosophical reflection by the global environmental crisis shows the need to redefine humanism, enlarge its purpose with environmental assumptions of realization of human rights along with the environmental responsibility.