

**Contemplative Science & Management
International Transdisciplinary Conference
May 19-21, 2017 Budapest**

Deep Ecology, Quality of life, and Sufficiency

Knut J. Ims,
knut.ims@nhh.no

**The Norwegian School of Economics
Bergen, Norway**

Problem statement:

**Deep Ecology is not a finished ready-made theory.
Every person has a responsibility to work out his own
ecosophy, a reasoned process of ecocultural harmony.**

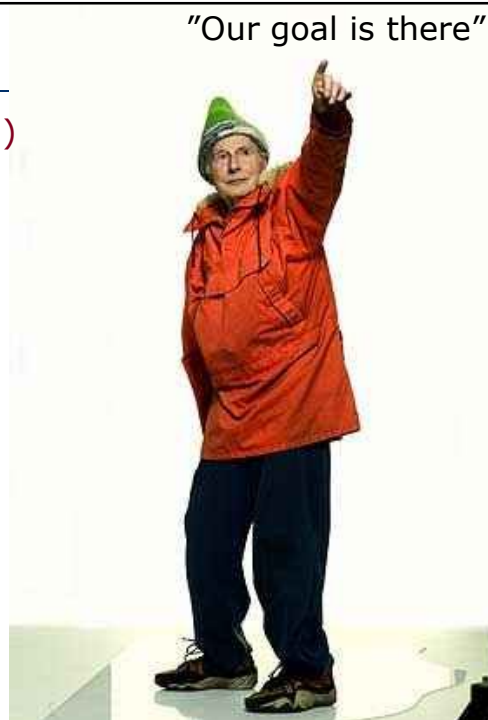
**Could GNH (Gross National Happiness) research,
Buddhist concepts, traditions, and practices inspire to
fill out Deep Ecology?**

- Arne Næss offered us an **outline** of a philosophy of life, and invited everyone to work out his own total view, that is his or her personal ecosophy.
- The “front is very long” and each person may contribute on his own premises.

Arne Næss (1912-2009)

Deep ecology:

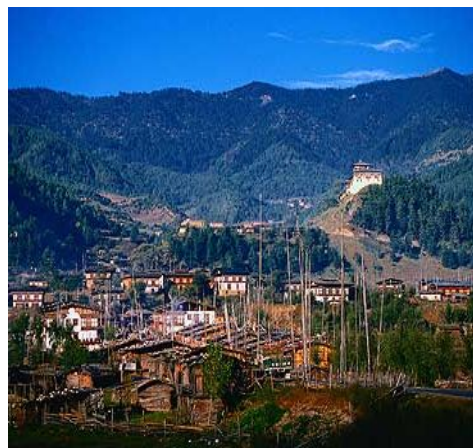
Dig to the root of the problems and pose fundamental questions about your values, lifestyle, and worldview, and **act** in accordance with the beliefs.



Gross National Happiness = GNH - a "holistic, balanced, collective, sustainable and equitable" measure of happiness (Ura et al 2012 p 7).

GNH is based upon nine domains:

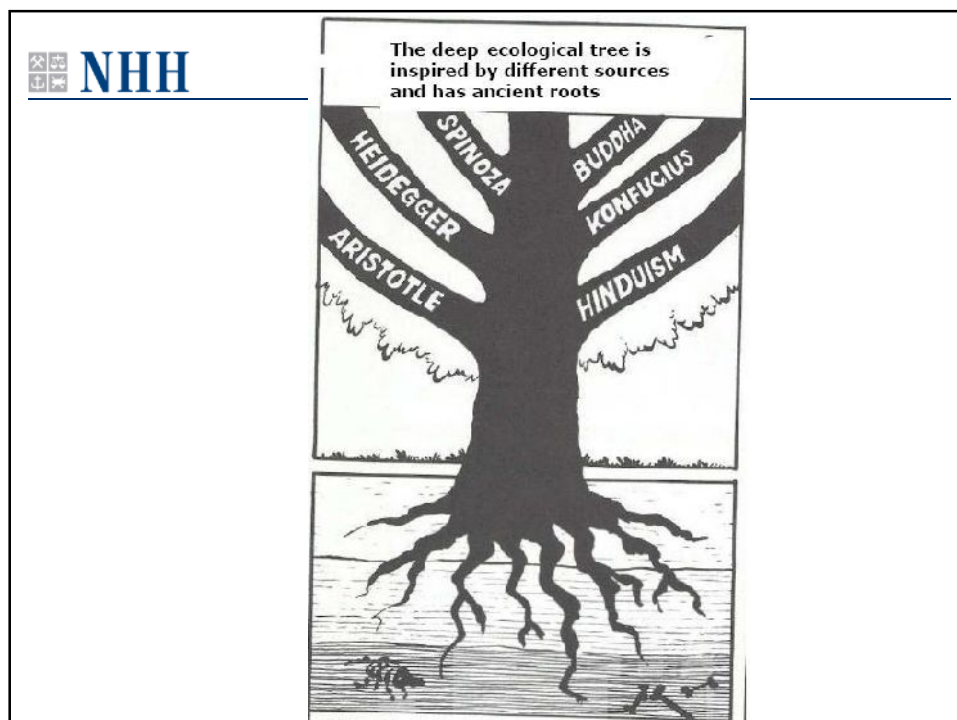
1. Education,
2. Living standards,
3. Good health,
4. Environmental diversity and resilience,
5. Good governance,
6. Time use,
7. Community vitality,
8. Cultural diversity and resilience,
9. Psychological well-being.



Deep Ecology and its inspirational sources

- Arne Næss formulated and structured deep ecology, but the roots of deep ecology is ancient:

Some of the inspirational sources of deep ecology are indicated by "the deep ecological tree" with branches consisting of ideas from Hinduism, Confucius, and Buddha, and Aristotle, Heidegger and Spinoza



Deep ecology – central ideas

- Assumes a relational, total field perspective that fits into a holistic, non-reductionist, non-anthropocentric worldview.
- Focuses on *the roots of the problems*, while Shallow ecology is concerned with the symptoms
- The personal knowledge of the environment in most rich countries is at an all time low. Most of us are ecologically autistic. We need to *change the basic ideological structure, which ultimately means to change how we as humans regard ourselves*. Deep ecology *redefines the very notion of self as a subject – and opens up for an eco-Self*.
- **Self-Realization for all beings** is the top norm.
- Man is inseparable from nature: “If we harm nature, we harm ourself”.
- Deep ecology is both a philosophical view and a campaigning platform. It is “a process of reflection leading to action”.

Deep Ecological Platform

- 1): The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman Life on Earth have value in themselves – independent of the usefulness for human purposes.
- 2) Richness and diversity of life forms are values in themselves.
- 3) Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity **except to satisfy vital human needs**.



Deep Ecological Platform

4) We need a substantial decrease of human population.

5) The present interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and had to stop.

6) Policies, which affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures, must be changed.

7) *The ideological change is mainly that of **appreciating life quality** (dwelling in situations of **inherent value**) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living..*



Deep Ecological Platform

8) Those that support these points have an obligation to directly or indirectly implement the necessary changes, in a non-violating way



Quality of Life

7) *The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (**dwelling in situations of inherent value**) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living..*



“Increasingly Higher Standard of Living”

GDP (Gross Domestic Product) is the central measure for progress.

- A one-dimensional measure of the sum of (official) market transactions
- favors hard and distant technologies
- support irresponsible and unsolidaric resource consumption
- not related to meaningfulness, or Self-realization”
- Support a tragic search for Happiness that destroys Nature, and decreases Life Quality partly due to ‘miswanting’, satisfaction, and ‘affluenza,’ and cultural beliefs that more is better.



What is Quality of Life?

$$W = \frac{G^2}{P_m + P_b}$$

”

W = Well-being
 G = Glow (passion, fervour)
 P_m = Mental pains
 P_b = Bodily pains.

Live a rich life with simple means



Quality of Life

- Self-realization for all beings (the oneness of life) Næss 1989 pp 141- 142).
 - implies a capacity for self –determination, and ecological policies that favor **decentralization**.
- means **self-reliance**. International trade has had an positive effects on material standard of living. However, “Lifestyle and entertainment import has ledto uniformity, passivity, more consumption, less creativity” (1989 p 143).
- Maximize **self-activity**: create, rather than consume. Do, not being done to.
- “Self-realization is not against cultural communication, but **favors intrinsic values, material and spiritual**”.
-

Quality of Life

- Local communities and togetherness are key terms. Nobody wishes to be absorbed into a **society that is "big but not great"**.
- **Differences in income and wealth should be small**. Those at 'bottom' and those at the top should be "sufficiently near in ways of life that they can go together and work together". (Næss, 1989 p 144).
- Deep Ecology can learn from GNH's measurement of "Community vitality"

From a technological to ecospherical mentality.

- To work out a **total view** based upon eco philosophy, i.e utilization of concepts from the science of ecology (complexity, diversity and symbiosis), to clarify the place of humans in nature
- **Ecosophy** is the reasoning process that leads to viewing the world in the perspective of the deep ecology platform.
- A change in mentality is necessary, but not sufficient. **Practical action** is also needed,



Appreciating Life Quality while the Enlightenment debased Unreflective Experiences

- Enlightenment as dedevelopment
- 'Nature deficit' in critical theory.
- Civilization is the denial of everything natural, spontaneous or novel experiences. (Vetlesen 2015)

Naess (1989)

How do we experience the world?

- How are objects interconnected? The importance of spontaneous experiences and intuition which is formed through gestalt thinking.

Scientific methods destroys gestalts

- Examples from Sherpa people (mythic culture)

Is Deep Ecology an Ecotopia?

Practical examples: Buddhist economic models based upon Sufficiency, and simplicity

- Gross National Happiness (GNH) and Spirituality in Bhutan
- Thai Sufficiency Economy model (Essen 2011)
- Santi Asoke Buddhist Reform Movement
- Quaker simplicity

The notion of sufficiency in GNH

- On ideology: "a key pillar of the new paradigm is sufficiency". In opposition to "many policies both public and corporate (that) seek to maximize wealth and profit, regardless of its opportunity costs on other domains of well-being....." (Alkire 2015 p 74).
- In the GNH index that measure the domain of Living standards (material wellbeing) "ensures the fulfilment of basic material needs for comfortable living".
- In time use: A balance between work and leisure - to be able to perform our peak!
- Institutionalize paternity leave for fathers (Sweden and in Norway)!
- This has increased children's wellbeing, and even a drop in male mortality (see Alkire p 89).

The notion of sufficiency and Living Standard in GNH

- Sufficiency means that GNH Index does not use the poverty line, because sufficiency threshold refers to higher conditions for wellbeing than poverty lines (Ura et al p 169).
- "...an absolute sufficiency threshold was chosen, since the GNH values encourages people to achieve happiness through their accomplishments, and discourages a relative approach in which one is satisfied only if one has relatively more income...than one's peers. (Ura et al 2012 a p 169).
- Living standards concerns i) meaningful and decent work and livelihoods, ii) housing that sufficiently shields from the elements. iii) some form of currency – money, assets or other tradeables. All those aspects have an intrinsic value (Alkire 2015 p 72)

Mindfulness in the GNH measures psychological wellbeing

- 1) **Spirituality** is meditation or mindfulness practices (via mindfulness techniques), and the considerations of the consequences of one's actions.
- "can encompass belief in spiritual values like compassion, peace, and a sense of purpose and connectedness' and include 'Acts of compassion, altruism and selflessness..." (Ura et al 2012a p 131).
- 2) emotional balance, the outcome of emotional intelligence, and cultivation of positive emotions such as generosity, empathy, and compassion
- 3) evaluative satisfaction with respect to different domains of GNH

Spirituality is 'intrinsic to development'

- For the purpose of GNH, spirituality is 'intrinsic to development'
-no meaningful development can occur without "inner spiritual growth along with a peaceful environment that allow spiritual nourishment.
- If material growth undermines the spiritual framework of society and its values of compassion and integrity, then development has not occurred". (Ura et al 2012a p 132).

Deep Ecology - a step further?

- Deep Ecology is an outline that needs to be concretized. There is knowledge and wisdom in GNH, Buddhist traditions, and Quaker simplicity that may enrich and develop Deep Ecology.
- The enlightenment and scientific thinking challenge our abilities to experience ourselves as part of nature.

- 1) GNH's concepts of sufficiency, mindfulness and spirituality contributes to an elaboration of Deep Ecology
- 2) The economic models in Thailand, and Quaker groups are interesting empirical examples

GNH is a milestone on the road towards understanding and concretizing Deep Ecological.

GNH is implemented in practice, represents a role model for the global community of scholars, and is directly benefitting the people of Bhutan.

Thank you for your attention.