

Holistic Thinking: the Need for a Global Campaign*

Holism—this six-letters' word offers a meaning which contributes hugely to our understanding and management of our global ecological systems, yet, ironically, fails to attain sufficient general recognition or popular use to be included in many lexicographies. In much the same way, environmental management in the real world has only recently awakened us sufficiently to realize the merits of holistic thinking and its ecological ramifications. Holism as a concept can be considered to provide the grand meaning of the planetary system's theory, which strongly supports such structure in all our natural as well as human-engineered 'ecosystems'. In theory at least, the human perception and understanding of holism seems justified; but the practical demonstration of that understanding, as exemplified in numerous decisions, does not attest to any deep comprehension of the ecological realities involved. The global environment today in its predicament emphasizes harshly the lack of human understanding of Nature's holistic code.

The predominant feature of holism is its cosmic presence, interlacing the ecological systems at every spatial level. From mammoth to microbe, from global to local, the dynamics of the life-processes are steered by the synergistic power of holism, which, despite its potential meaning, appears to have been far less used as a term for a concept than *environment*. Though frequency of usage is by no means a true indication of understanding of meaning and implications, the term *environment* has certainly become more popular. Although used extensively by legislators, governments, private and corporate worlds, and the media, besides academics and scientists, a semantic inventory of its usage would reveal a variety of meanings and also possibly a hiatus in the required knowledge.

Notwithstanding the vast array of institutional frameworks, aimed at a judicious management of the environment, we need to initiate action based upon an introspection of our past efforts. One such important area of action is a *global campaign on a holistic frame of thinking*. At a time when issues such as sustainable development and global survival not only highlight the closing years of this century but herald the next with even more serious scenarios, there

is the imperative need to marshal our collective thinking towards addressing such a campaign.

A campaign for holistic thinking should, at the very outset, lay stress on the grand design of our ecological systems. Consequently it needs to underline the epistemological foundations of our understanding (or lack thereof) of that design. This is essential as science and scholarship in general are undergoing a deepening epistemological crisis, which is rendering up (or down!) fundamental questions to a fuzzy understanding. Attempts to resolve this crisis requires fresh and vigorous efforts at redesigning our methodology. Part of this campaign should be the initiation of such efforts, starting with clear definition of fundamental terms.

We therefore need to articulate a campaign for holistic thinking which we feel should be executed in two phases. Phase one needs to highlight the existing philosophical problems, while identifying the ambiguity in our definition and understanding of holistically inspired environmental decision-making. Phase two would involve a spatial analysis of holistic thinking as it prevails within the regional, continental, and global, systems. Based upon the outcome of these two phases, we could draw up a 'state of the art' analysis of holistic thinking, and offer recommendations on how effective environmental education could influence planning, policy, and legislation.

In today's information-age, a global campaign can best benefit through the newspaper, film, and television, media. Convening of conferences at the regional, continental, and global, levels, and giving interviews and teleconferences, could heighten our grounds for a common perspective on holistic thinking. That perspective would of necessity be transdisciplinary, and should be global or at least transcontinental in scope, as it has to attempt to control and regulate the transformation of our planet's environment.

Holism has the power to sustain both the natural and human-modified life-worlds in dynamic equilibrium within perceivable thresholds, but only due realization and respect for such a power would ensure intelligent decision-making, and reinforcement of the truth that trend is not destiny.

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* A comment on item 7 at the foot of the notepaper of the Foundation for Environmental Conservation, which reads 'World Campaign for Holistic Thinking and Concomitant Action Towards Global Survival.'

A Conservation Strategy for Canada's Yukon Territory

As a step towards the development of a Yukon Conservation Strategy, a discussion paper entitled 'Building a Conservation Strategy' was released in November 1988. The paper was prepared as a cooperative venture by the Territory's Department of Renewable Resources and a public working group representing a wide range of Yukon resource and conservation interests.

This project was initiated in response to the World Conservation Strategy.* It represents a regional commitment to the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, and Canada's National Task Force on Environment and Economy which endorsed the development of regional conservation strategies across the country. Regional initiatives, including the 1984 Task Force on Northern Conservation and an economic planning process

known as Yukon 2000, have played an important role in identifying the values which Yukoners attach to their natural world, and their desires for environmentally sound economic development. The Yukon Economic Strategy, which resulted from Yukon 2000, endorses sustainable renewable resource development and stable economic growth from the non-renewable sector, and provides a specific mandate for a conservation strategy that will function as a resource management component of the economic strategy.

Public Review of Discussion Paper

The public discussion paper outlines the principles that guide the development of the conservation strategy and contains twelve main objectives which describe environmentally and economically compatible goals—including sustainable development of the renewable resource sector,

* See also the note by Dr David A. Munro on page 278.—Ed.

stable economic growth from non-renewable resources, preservation and conservation of Yukon's wilderness, and greater understanding of aboriginal knowledge and resource management practices. Several suggested actions that could be implemented to achieve these objectives are outlined.

The discussion paper is now undergoing a process of intensive public and government review, including briefing sessions with interest groups, federal and territorial government departments, and municipalities outside the capital city of Whitehorse; public seminars and workshops on particular subject-areas; and written responses to the discussion paper. Additional promotion in the form of posters, lapel pins, and a large and colourful mobile display, all specifically developed for the conservation strategy, have helped to advertise and encourage public awareness of the strategy and its fundamental principles.

Following the public review, a draft conservation strategy, incorporating comments and input from all sectors, will be prepared. The final Yukon Conservation Strategy, which will provide a broad framework for natural resource management that combines environmental protection and sustainable resource development, is scheduled for completion in due course.

Implementation of Strategy

When once the Strategy is in place, the ongoing implementation will include demonstration projects that provide concrete examples of the integration of conservation and development activities. Several projects already under way in the Yukon reflect the importance of this relationship. As one example, the Yukon's largest mining company is currently working with the Department of Renewable Resources to reroute the seasonal migration path of a herd of rare Fannin sheep around an ore deposit that is to be mined, and thus avoid potential loss of the sheep population. The project also provides an opportunity to develop

a wildlife-viewing area where local residents and tourists can observe the sheep.

The implementation of the Yukon Conservation Strategy will also be assisted by other developments linked to the Territory's constitutional advancement, such as the transfer of additional resource responsibilities to the Yukon Government, and a land-claims settlement for the Yukon's aboriginal people. The Territorial Government is pursuing the transfer to its control of natural resource responsibilities currently in federal hands, such as forestry, land, and water; these transfers will facilitate the integrated management of the Yukon's resources. The framework agreement for the land-claims settlement, reached in 1988, contains provisions for the establishment of a process to review and assess the effects of development on the environment, economy, and society, and to provide for measures to mitigate the negative impacts of development activities. Another requirement of the settlement will be the creation of community-based renewable resource councils with aboriginal and non-native membership, to give local residents a voice in fish and wildlife management.

Throughout its implementation, the Yukon Conservation Strategy will function as a plan to guide efforts to strengthen and reinforce economic activities that are compatible with the environment, to protect the environment on which these activities depend, and to maintain the range of life-style options that Yukoners now enjoy—including the traditional pursuit of subsistence harvesting of renewable resources. The Conservation Strategy will also provide a means of evaluating the effectiveness of demonstration projects and other implementation tools in the achievement of sustainable, environmentally sound economic development in this northern Canadian Territory.

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National Institute for Urban Wildlife

Founded in 1973, the National Institute for Urban Wildlife is a private, non-profit scientific and educational organization. It is dedicated to research, planning, management, and conservation education, programmes and activities for the benefit of wildlife and people in urban, suburban, and urbanizing areas. So far as we are aware, it is the only organization of its kind in the United States or elsewhere with a primary focus on fish, other wildlife, and related resources, in the metropolitan environment. Funded through private contributions, grants and contracts, and individual and corporate memberships, it strives to fill some of the glaring gaps in information and methodologies which are needed for the management and enjoyment of wildlife and wildlife habitats in urban areas.

The Institute accomplishes its mission by: (1) conducting research on the relationships between Mankind and wildlife under urban and urbanizing conditions; (2) discovering and disseminating practical procedures for maintaining and enhancing wildlife populations, and controlling certain wildlife species in urban areas; (3) building an appreciation for, and an understanding of, wildlife and wildlife needs; (4) establishing a positive conservation ethic through education programmes directed at the community and neighbourhood levels; and (5) illustrating how all segments of our population have a vested interest in wildlife and the environment which we share mutually.

Most of the work of the Institute results in some form of publication—scientific, technical, semi-technical, or popular—for various audiences. Examples include Leedy *et al.* (1978), Leedy (1979), Leedy *et al.* (1981), Adams & Dove (1984), Leedy & Adams (1984), Adams & Leedy (1987), and Adams & Dove (1989). A quarterly newsletter, *Urban Wildlife News*, is also published, along with an accompanying supplement, *Urban Wildlife Manager's Notebook*.

Recently, an Urban Wildlife Sanctuary Program was initiated. The purpose of this programme is to establish and certify a network of urban wildlife sanctuaries on public and privately-owned lands across the nation, in order to: (1) enhance urban wildlife habitat, (2) promote an understanding of, and appreciation for, urban wildlife and its habitat needs, and (3) recognize private and public landowners who dedicate their properties to wildlife. The programme is broad and applies to properties of individuals, neighbourhood associations, community organizations, cities and towns, corporations, and developers.

Since 1975, the Institute has organized annual informal open exchange meetings in conjunction with the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference. The meetings are designed to provide an opportunity for those who are interested in urban wildlife to get together and discuss programmes, policies, and research and management activities.