Frustration and deprivation in ecology and in people's life

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Abstract. The article analyses the significance of human frustration and deprivation caused by life conditions or ecological frustration/deprivation. Ecological frustration means deprivation of access to some objects of the environment, more precisely, human environment. Ecological deprivation means formation of a psychological view of an individual (social group) on unfair deprivation of benefits due to it, those connected with the use of environmental resources. The article presents a classification of types of ecological frustration and deprivation. The structure of any frustration and deprivation is based on subjects and objects thereof, and its characteristics are intensity, localisation and spread. The subject of frustration (deprivation) is a person or a group of persons - bearers of the given psychological phenomenon (individual, group or mass mentality); the object thereof is an element of the environment which, in case of its inaccessibility, causes frustration or deprivation. The intensity of these phenomena is measured as an indicator of integral manifestation of their subjects' response. The localisation of both frustration and deprivation is determined by the composition of the affected societal groups, and their spread - by the proportion of these people in such group or in the society as a whole. Frustration and deprivation of life conditions represent critical factors in shaping environmental attitudes. For most people, poor environment is not a result of analysis of a set of physico-chemical and biological indicators. It is a perception of environmental reality formed under the influence of various frustration and deprivation feelings. Monitoring the processes of formation and spread of such phenomena in the society and analysing the results thereof can prevent numerous socio-ecological conflicts. Frustration and deprivation of life conditions that are prevalent in the society should be taken into account when developing environmental education and training programmes. Keywords: imputed frustration, novation-related frustration, restrained deprivation, ecological worldview, socio-ecological conflict.

1 Introduction

Nowadays, the increasing number people show interest in environmental problems. This trend is denoted by several closely related terms: formation of ecological worldview, development of ecological mentality in the society, emergence of mass ecological

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consciousness in the society. Despite the broad interpretation of the given subject, as contained in the works of various authors, the vast majority of views are characterised by similar cognitive approach in terms of methodology. It is assumed that ecological worldview (consciousness, mentality) is a result of man's cognition of his role in shaping the environment, understanding the consequences of activities applied to it. Ideally, environmental conservation paradigm should be formed in popular mentality on this basis, subordinating all other interests of the individual.

This view of the problem is quite far from the existing reality. It is fully supported by a relatively small number of exalted individuals who generally do not play a significant role in public life. For most people nowadays, it is their well-being that remains the basic criterion for assessing the ongoing processes and phenomena. The population would support destruction of the natural ecosystem if this allows solving some problem vital for particular people. For instance, man-made islands and artificial plots of land in the coastal zone of the sea are currently erected in many countries [1]. The death of aquatic flora and fauna that accompanies this activity does not, as a rule, arouse protests of the general public. Just a few decades ago, inter-basin water transfer was perceived as a large-scale environmental disturbance. Nowadays, in the conditions of abnormal droughts caused by the global climate change, such projects are implemented in many countries without any opposition of the general public [2].

In reality, a person's environment (habitat) represents, first and foremost, the conditions in which a human exists and to which he/she is adapted not only biologically, but also psychologically. A sudden change of the landscape a person normally sees from the window of his home can have more negative impact on his health than the polluted urban air he has been accustomed to, inhaled by him since childhood.

The inadequate understanding of the core factors forming man's perception of his habitat and their replacement by a discourse on the development of a new ecological outlook, is one of the common reasons of failures in public and corporate environmental policies. An example of this is the construction of ghost towns in China in the early twentieth century. They had good social and ecological conditions, created by the designers. However, the residents of overpopulated areas of the country did not show any desire to change their habitual environment [3, 4]. The unpopulated residential areas began to degrade, turning into depressed spaces. Some of the built-up areas have already been demolished by the Chinese government. This is not an isolated case. Currently the realisation of Moscow housing renovation programme faces active resistance for much the same reasons.

At the same time, due to the technological progress and social development, human environment is constantly changing. People take positively innovations that increase their level of comfort if they are psychologically prepared for them. But deprivation or restriction of their ability to use the environmental resources to which they are used is of greater importance for them. Such phenomena, causing disruption of people's daily life, can be called ecological frustration and deprivation [5]. The aim of the article is to analyse their main types and causes.

2 Human perception of the environment

In order to understand the core of the problem under discussion, it is necessary to answer the question: what exactly is the meaning given by the society and its individual representatives to the concept of "environment". The existing reality shows that the perception (or rather, stereotype of mind) of this issue, formed in individual and popular mentality, is fundamentally different from the definitions given in the scholarly literature and legislative acts.

Modern man perceives the concept of "environment" in a twofold way. Firstly, this seems to be an abstract concept like "the galaxy" or "the universe" that undoubtedly exists "somewhere out there" and is of paramount importance. But this has nothing to do with the real humans' life. Secondly, it is a product of man's conceptualisation of own interests which he normally satisfied (or could satisfy) at the expense of resources of his environment. These interests are quite numerous and diverse. In the first place, it is the fear of health deterioration as a result of environmental pollution. But it is not the only concern. A wide range of other factors may also be important: from the quality of food (products' "environmental friendliness") to visual attractiveness of the landscape in a person's residence area. The attempts to address these issues are often framed not as the desire to improve the environment but as the efforts to uphold the vital interests of an individual, a social group or general public. These interests are usually realised in isolation from other factors shaping the state of the environment. For instance, the majority of people in some area where the quality of water drawn from the apartment faucets has deteriorated dramatically as a result of pollution of the drinking water source may be indifferent to the problem of preserving rare bird nesting sites on the banks of the same water body.

In accordance with the first view of the "environment", people generally approve the efforts to preserve it, just as they approve of space exploration. Obviously, this position does not imply any involvement in these activities.

In the second case, on the contrary, a person (social group, community) has good reasons to protect the environment by active fighting for their interests. Thus, people's awareness of the problems of environmental protection – not in general, but of the role of its specific aspects for their life – is an indispensable attribute of "environmental activism" of the public. It should be noted in this connection that real success of environmental education and training in the developed countries was achieved only when the general public realised the need to preserve a favourable environment for their health. The caring attitude to natural objects on the part of the population in these countries is a result of formation of consistent psychological attitude in popular mentality voiced as "conservation of nature is the key to preservation of my health". This basic attitude can be masked by a set of secondary considerations. An example is a view according to which the presence of natural objects in human environment is an indispensable attribute of its comfort. But the core substance of such ecological worldview remains the same. In case there appears some popularised information about a certain preserved wildlife site declared as a potential source of infectious disease, this wildlife area will be transformed, i.e. cease to exist as a natural environment object.

Thus, the formation of fundamentals of ecological worldview in human consciousness is egoistic and anthropocentric in nature, when it comes to real life. A similar conclusion can be drawn regarding the place of ecological worldview in popular mentality. The priority factor in both cases is socially increasing ecological fear [6, 7] or eco-anxiety [8, 9, 10] based on a dread of harmful impact of any changes in the environment on human health, including those of uncomprehended nature. There is an obvious contradiction between the existing reality and the **concept of ecocentrism** which is overriding in the modern scientific world; this concept implies the formation of a worldview based on analysis of phenomena and processes in terms of preservation of natural environment. But the **anthropocentric perception of environmental problems** should not be viewed as ignoring the environmental protection issues. The solution of these problems requires a syncretic approach that allows for mutual acceptance of the rational foundations of both concepts. This will result in harmonious ecological worldview. The formation of this worldview should be based not on abstract ideas about the environment, but on the study of real human-environment relationship and optimisation thereof.

The greater man's awareness of his own environmental interests, the more painfully he perceives their violation or related dissatisfaction. For instance, an urban commoner living in the USSR in mid-20th century, just like an urban dweller of Western Europe at the beginning of the same century, was never outraged by untreated atmospheric emission of numerous industrial plants near his home. Today, even a single fact of that kind would cause widespread indignation of the population at large. Stated differently, the enhanced ecological outlook in the society increases social tension over its members' use of environmental resources, their quality and availability. This problem is becoming more acute at the present stage due to the simultaneous development of two multidirectional tendencies: increased environmental needs of the population and reduction of resources available to people owing to the urbanisation and uncontrolled environmental technogenesis.

In case of uncontrolled escalation of tension in the society connected with this problem, the situation develops into a socio-ecological conflict. Extreme aggravation of contradictions takes place, expressed in the struggle of general public or certain social groups, caused by the violation of their interests (material, recreational, aesthetic, religious) that are normally satisfied on the basis of environmental properties.

The above considerations can be summarised as follows: the society with well-developed ecological worldview needs permanent monitoring of factors that may cause socio-ecological conflicts. These phenomena can be prevented in advance by identifying the underlying causes

Modern sociologists and psychologists believe that such conflicts are caused by so-called psychological frustration and deprivation. In the context of the problem under investigation, it can be concluded that socio-ecological conflicts are caused by ecological frustration and deprivation or, more precisely, frustration and deprivation in people's life conditions.

3 Frustration of life conditions

Frustration (from Latin frustratio – deception, unjustified expectations, disappointment) is a psychological state of strain, anxiety, despair arising when a person realises that he/she has been deprived of something important for his/her life. For example, this term in medicine may refer to a feeling that arises when one realises the loss of a limb after it is amputated. In psychology, this concept refers to a broader range of phenomena, when a person is deprived of the possibility of using something in his/her environment, a thing that is available to other members of the society. Frustration connected with aggravation of life conditions or ecological frustration means deprivation of access to some objects of the environment (more precisely, the human habitat) [5]. This often becomes a cause of aggressive behaviour.

Frustration can be specific of groups or even communities. In these cases, frustration of individuals forms a resultant attitude of public at large. The intensity of frustration and the nature of reaction to it depends on significance of some "unattainable goal", the "possibility of achieving it in other circumstances" and on emotional background of the event. For instance, acute frustration is sensed by a person who has been fishing in a pond for many years and is suddenly deprived of this opportunity. It can happen in a case when the pond becomes a part of somebody else's fenced private property. If another similar water body nearby is accessible, then the intensity of the frustration will not be so great. Otherwise, it may cause the angler's aggressive behaviour. A group of such frustrated people, by joining efforts, may resort to unlawful actions – break down the fence blocking the way to the water body, show aggression towards the estate owners who deprived them of access to the pond. That is, a heated socio-ecological conflict will burst out. It can expand significantly and transform into a social conflict if its participants become a subject of certain information/psychological influence. Thus, the combination of these factors can provoke people to take part in unlawful actions that they would not otherwise have committed.

There exist several different forms and types of ecological frustration. In the first place, they are divided into true and semblant ecological frustration. **Semblant ecological frustration** is not based on depriving a person of the ability to meet his/her needs; it means embedding psychological assurance of this deprivation – that does not correspond to the reality – in one's consciousness. For instance, semblant ecological frustration can result from disinformation about unsuitability of water in the water supply system – this fabricated story is covertly presented by the mass media in order to advertise bottled water to the public.

Frustration types are also divided into those **realistically surmountable**, even if this requires enormous effort, and fundamentally insurmountable [11, 12]. The above-mentioned example of alienated body of water undoubtedly pertains to surmountable ecological frustration. However, the ways to overcome it may be different. The outcome can be peaceful if the authorities identify the cause of mass frustration in the course of timely monitoring of socio-ecological conflicts. This would result in concrete actions to cope with the problem. For instance, this could be allocating a section of the shoreline for publicly accessible recreational fishing.

The most common example of fundamentally insurmountable ecological frustration is urbanisation. Say, an area of natural environment, where people used to rest or even engage in economic activities taking advantage of the natural resources, has been replaced by urban development. But here we should remember that ecological frustration is largely of psychological rather than physical nature. Properly planned information/psychological impact on the frustrated population, combined with due measures to replace the lost facilities formerly meeting the people's needs, can solve the problem. In this case, the efforts should be directed towards overcoming the insurmountable ecological frustration, i.e., creating a due psychological attitude in the public mentality towards the need to give up the claims to previously available environmental resources, and solving these problems by other means, at least partially. It could be, for example, dissemination of positive information about the infrastructure that was absent before: this infrastructure, by promoting urbanisation of the region, is supposed to provide a higher standard of living. Organisation of resorts is an important undertaking - creation of well-developed places of mass recreation with preservation of natural environment components and, even more desirable, conserving the areas not subjected to significant change in the landscape (forest plots, urban river terraces, gully areas).

Ecological frustration can also be divided into imputed, concomitant and novation-related (Fig. 1), in line with the main types and forms of environmental technogenesis.

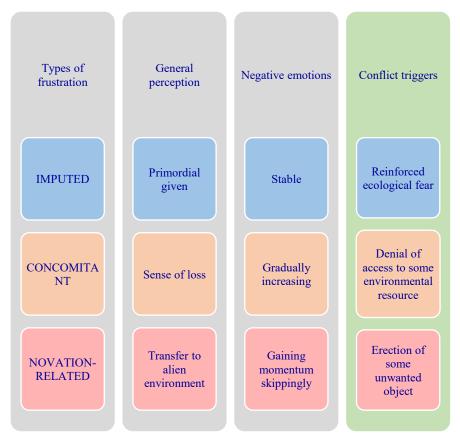


Fig. 1. Perception of ecological frustration.

4 Imputed ecological frustration

Is formed historically, as a result of long-term technogenesis, and is perceived by consciousness as a given, even if undesirable. For example, a person is aware that he/she was born and grew up in an environmentally disadvantaged industrial region. His/her dissatisfaction with environmental conditions can be regarded as certain ecological deprivation (to be discussed later). The boundary between these psychological phenomena is conditional and is determined by subjective perception of the environment and a person's social activity. Some people, being aware of the environmental disadvantage, accept this circumstance and do not seek to change it. Such imputed frustration is widespread, for instance, among the residents of central parts of large cities. As a rule, imputed frustration is insurmountable. But this insurmountability is relative. It can be overcome, at least in part, by better control of industrial pollution, landscaping of urbanised areas and other measures taken to make these regions environmentally friendly. On the contrary, unconditional recognition of insurmountability within the framework of imputed ecological frustration can lead to social tension manifested in discontent with the relevant administrative dereliction. In the event of sharp deterioration of conditions (e.g., accidental release of toxic substances) or disseminated information among the population (even if false) about the rapid growth of dangerous diseases, imputed ecological frustration may escalate into acute socio-ecological conflict.

4.1 Concomitant ecological frustration

Tends to develop gradually (often – over a large part of a person's life). For the most part, it is a product of uncontrolled or insufficiently controlled technogenesis following which some previously used human environmental resources become unavailable. It may be represented by gradual poisoning of a commercial-fishing water body owing to discharge of industrial wastewater. Another possible reason of concomitant ecological frustration is galloping processes. They can include some consequences of emergencies (catastrophes), including those of natural character (e.g. a landslide destroying a piece of nature cherished by people). These varieties of concomitant ecological frustration have a common feature – the processes generating them are in no cases a result of someone's deliberate action.

Stated differently, concomitant ecological frustration in one's attitudes is engendered by some processes or phenomena, but not by activities directly aimed at infringing humans' ecological interests. The surmountability of such frustration is based on preventive identification of factors capable to violate people's environmental interests and on the development of measures aimed at its mitigation or even elimination. In the first place, this involves establishment of control over the process of environmental technogenesis, as well as reclamation, reforestation, erosion-preventive measures and other steps aimed at reducing the damage caused to natural resources. In the absence of action on the part of authorities towards preventing undesirable processes and phenomena, the resulting frustration usually leads to increased social discontent. Like in the previous case, some trigger is necessary in order to cause a socio-ecological conflict.

4.2 Novation-related ecological frustration

As a rule, is a consequence of purposeful technogenesis. It is manifested in the form of negative changes in the mind of a person who has been transferred to a fundamentally new environment. For instance, such frustration is characteristic of mature people upon relocation from the countryside to the city. Similar phenomena take place in the minds of a great number of people in a region subjected to rapid urbanisation. Novation-related ecological frustration is usually insurmountable because of the high political and economic significance of the events giving rise to it. At the initial period of its formation, novation-related ecological frustration often provokes socio-ecological conflicts. At this point, the individual is acutely aware of loss of his/her connection with the previous environment. The most common ways of preventing such conflicts are represented by the already discussed methods like obliteration of essentially insurmountable frustration. They are based on the formation of a new attitude in people's minds - about the benefits yielded by the planned change in the conditions of their life. This is often the way practiced by organisers of public hearings on ecologically problem-plagued projects that are bound to fundamentally change the nature of human interaction with the environment. Upon some time, novation-related ecological frustration in a number of cases gets transformed into imputed ecological frustration, with changed perception of the disputable event as a predetermined fact of life.

4.3 Life conditions deprivation

The term **deprivation** (Late Latin deprivatio – loss, deprivation) refers to the feeling of dissatisfaction experienced by a person or a group relative to the conditions of their life, based on the discrepancy between expectations and capabilities/opportunities. Unlike frustration, deprivation does not mean the realisation of being deprived of something, but is the realisation of the fact that one is not getting what he/she is entitled to. **Ecological deprivation** can be defined as psychological conviction of an individual (social group, community) of

being unfairly deprived of the benefits due to him/her/them, connected with the use of environmental resources (material, recreational, spiritual, etc.) [5, 13]. Like frustration, it can be veritable or semblant (based on false information). There exist several types of deprivation (Fig. 2).

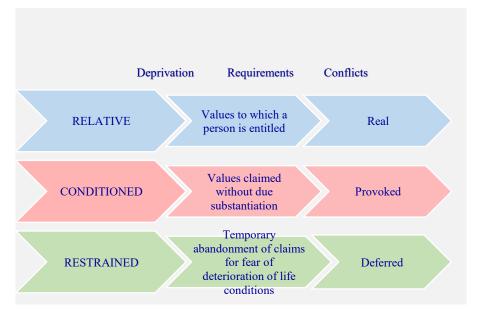


Fig. 2. Nature of requirements specific of different types of deprivation.

4.4 Relative ecological deprivation

Perceived as the discrepancy between in posse and realistically available environmental conditions in which an individual exists, is most common [14]. Different environmental needs may be subject of deprivation in different circumstances. It can be represented by an acute nature deficit for a mega-city dweller. As to a rural resident, it may be represented by a limited possibility of using some natural resources caused by specific technogenesis of the territory, for example, unsuitability of water for watering livestock as a result of its pollution by industrial effluents. It should be noted that socio-ecological conflicts generated by relative deprivation are often constructive in nature. If the demands reflecting the nature of relative deprivation are just, then the protests aimed at their fulfilment (if they are not accompanied by illegal actions) should be regarded as a positive phenomenon of social life. They compel the authorities to address environmental issues that are of importance to the public.

Another type is **Conditioned deprivation** [15], including **conditioned ecological deprivation.** It represents the formation of unjustified claims to certain benefits in individual's or in mass consciousness or engagement in associated actions. As a rule, it sprouts in social groups with demands that have greatly increased in comparison with the possibility of their satisfaction and that are therefore unrealistic in the existing conditions. For instance, it may involve demands for immediate closure of an industrial facility if its safety for public health is questioned by the public without any evidence whatsoever. As a matter of fact, socio-ecological conflicts caused by conditioned ecological deprivation are often destructive in nature. The fundamental inability to meet such demands only increases social tension without leading to any positive outcome. For this reason, conditioned ecological deprivation is used as a destabilisation tool by external forces pursuing political rather than ecological goals. The activities of "green" parties in many countries are a case in

point. The most efficient way of eliminating such socio-ecological conflicts is not settling for destructive concessions, but clarifying the actual goals of their organisers through the mass media and the Internet.

Deprivation is subject to change as a result of various factors. In particular, deprivation may fade out in case of abatement of demands in the society, which takes place, for instance, in the conditions of economic crises. People's common expectations in such conditions can be expressed in the formula: "let us just hope that it does not get worse". Thus, phenomenon is referred to as **restrained deprivation** [5]. One may state in the context of this problem that **restrained ecological deprivation** is a deliberate refusal of the society to comply with environmental quality requirements for fear of deterioration of the economic conditions or growth of social tension. Restrained deprivation is a specific social antipode of conditioned deprivation. It has a temporary nature. That is, the problem causing restrained deprivation remains, and public protests connected with it subside only for a certain period of time. If the demands put forward are just and reasonable, then restrained deprivation should ideally be dealt with before the renewal of protests, without waiting until they can no longer be restrained.

Conservative way of thinking should not be confused with restrained deprivation – it is not a situation when a person rejects innovations off hand for fear of ensuing changes in his/her life conditions. On the contrary, a person is aware of the opportunities offered by these changes and his/her right to take advantage of them. He/she fears only destabilisation of his/her life conditions associated with the proposed innovations: loss of employment, aggravated criminal situation, etc. Restrained deprivation is much exacerbated after sociopolitical cataclysms, when empowerment with extensive rights and freedoms is accompanied by drastic deterioration in people's quality of life. For instance, in the 1990s, Russian people got an opportunity to travel to different states and see the wildlife of these countries with their own eyes. But in reality, these were the years of poverty and rampant rage of crime for the vast majority of the population. People of the older generation, living in today's Russia, remembering that period of time with horror, are ready to give up any radical actions aimed at protecting natural sites. They apprehend that such actions can become a trigger of political destabilisation and cause recurrence of events of the late twentieth century. Moreover, this restrained deprivation can lead to aggressive attitude towards people involved in public environmental movements.

5 Structural elements and main characteristics of frustration and deprivation

The structure of any frustration and deprivation is based on these phenomena's subjects and objects; the characteristics thereof are represented by intensity, localisation and spread rate. The identification and analysis of these parameters is very important for adequate indepth understanding of the considered phenomena. The subject of frustration or deprivation is a person or a group of people – bearers of this psychological phenomenon (individual, group or popular mentality). The object of frustration (deprivation) is a material object, process or phenomenon causing frustration (deprivation) in one's mind. It should be noted that even when frustration or deprivation is based on false or partially false information (semblant frustration and deprivation), it is based on some real object or process misrepresented as actually existing.

The intensity of frustration (deprivation) is an indicator of integral manifestation of its subjects' response (from passive discontent of individuals to mass unrest).

The localisation of frustration (deprivation) is conditioned by the composition of affected social groups, and its spread – by share of such people in the affected group or in the society as a whole.

Timely identification of subjects of frustration and deprivation, those dissatisfied with their life conditions, in particular, with the state of the environment, will make it possible, along with due assessment of the character and level of spread of such phenomena, to resolve many problems promptly, without waiting for a critical moment of their escalation into conflict situations. The study of objects of the considered phenomena makes it possible to cut off any activities pursuing political or economic goals disguised as public environmental protests.

The formation of data stores on ecological frustration and deprivation within a certain space (city area, region, country) along with the construction of relevant matrices, including subjects, objects, nature and level of distribution, is likely to be of tangible benefit.

6 Conclusion

Frustration and deprivation connected with life conditions (ecological frustration and deprivation) are important factors in the formation of environmental outlook both at the level of the individual and the society as a whole. For most people, poor environment is not just a result of complex analysis of physico-chemical and biological indicators that characterise its condition. It is the perception of environmental reality based on ecological frustration and deprivation. Due monitoring of these socio-psychological processes as well as compilation of datasets and matrices of their structural elements can become an efficient tool for predicting and preventing social (socio-ecological) conflicts. Frustration and deprivation connected with dissatisfaction with life conditions, much prevalent in the society, should be taken into account when developing environmental education and training programmes, i.e. in targeted formation of constructive ecological worldview.

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