

GEOGRAPHY OF GLOBAL POVERTY

ENVIRONMENT, POLITICS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

"The words "Environment" and "Politics" together encapsulate the contemporary causes of the persisting poverty in Africa"

Yes, I agree. But at the beginning of the 21 century that is not go so far in the analyse of poverty. For me seems obvious to find in the deteriorated environment, and in the fragile and new democracies and civil societies in Africa, the main issues that require all our attention if we want to provide African Continent an affordable future for its people and its habitats.

The point now is how can we really put them together in the aim of preserve the nature and, how can we use the natural resource base for the economic growth, in conditions of equality and fair distribution.

Economic growth only can happen in accordance with the environment. Without the environment there are no possibilities of improvement, and is in there and in the people where you can find the richness every region.

It must be a main objective for the world population reserve the rapid degradation of ecosystems, assuring their capacity to provide the ecosystems goods and services on which human well-being and fight against poverty depend, being able to manage ecosystems and reduce our own impacts, so that they remained healthy and productive in the face of increasing human demands.

ENVIRONMENT

SOME IMPORTANT GENERAL DEFINITIONS:

STOCK RESOURCES, RESOURCES AND RESOURCES AVAILABILITY

Stock resources are the sum total of materials to be found in the environment – anything and everything with mass, inert o biological, plus all forms of energy, kinetic, physical and chemical.

Resources have purpose and value, and are defined in cultural, economic and ecological terms. They may be classified as renewable or non-renewable. Some renewable, may also be described as flow resources, a term used to emphasise that these occur as part of a cycle or closed system of movement. Great example for is water, a renewable resource which availability is in dependence of the hydrological cycle.

There is a paradox concerned to some resources that have a very long cycle in time that made considered them as a non-renewable resources, for example fossil fuels and minerals. The process of genetic evolution also classified plants and wildlife species into non-renewable resources. If they extinct, they are lost forever.

Looking at the future, there are resources that have achieved the status of reserves, for future development, in the context of the present techniques of discovery, current economy and technical conditions.

For a geographical view over the topic, the analyse of the resources availability is fundamental. The concept of resources requires discussion of how substances become available for use, the advantage of one location of occurrence as opposed to another, and how the use itself came to be regarded as important.

Most of the raw materials of value to this society do not originate locally. For study the environment possibilities together the poverty, is important to realise that under certain circumstances, the import and export of certain raw materials, is a great disadvantage of the home country. Referring on that, the term strategic resource has emerged in recent years

A resource is anything that people in society value and can use. But, how?, when?, where?, whom?...

As a political, economical, and also cultural and social issue, the environment as the support of everything. We live in there and because of its possibilities.

The problem that appears within the regard to poverty along the world, is the form this resources are being used and the few hands who are moving them in one or other way. The most part of the times, causing problems of overexploitation and not a just distribution.

AFRICA...

Make generalisations about Africa's environment is injudicious because of the enormous variation. The consensus arrives in the fact that much of Africa's physical environment is deteriorating (World Bank, "The Population, Agriculture and Environment Nexus", pag.7)

Changes in Colonial times had dramatic shifts in land use, but other changes occurring as well, as pressures to produce – from state imperatives and the increasing demanding population – intensified the ecological degradation: eroding soil, deteriorating range-lands, dwindling forests, and diminishing water resources

Poor people from different regions in Africa was asked about a ranking

of the most important problems in their lives, and the one in the first place was water scarcity, followed of the quality of firewood source, the poor health and the low far productivity.

The participatory rural appraisal is a significant step forward in understanding relationships between poor people and their environments (BINNS, Tony; People and environment in Africa)

GENERAL VIEW OVER THE RESOURCES AND POLICIES

All of the resources under discussion, their use and development are connected with societal values and technological progress.

For people who live under poverty that is even more important, because basic resources such as food, water, firework and biomass, are needed for the daily survival. With their precarious conditions, other options, like alternative energies or the importation of food and water are no possible or take too long and need a lot of changes coming with them. Value-added resources, processed food, pulp paper, manufactured commodities and nuclear energy are the prerogatives of the rich.

The European Community produced a surplus of food. And in the poorest countries the lands and the human resources work on growing the cash crops for export first than for their own consumption. That carries big problems like the danger of the monoculture in dependence of the whimsical demand of the richest countries market.

Western Europe was a willing consumer of tropical produce from discovered colonies in Africa, Asia and America. And the exports become fundamental for the Old Continent, who arise markets saturation in an increasingly society with a very strong and active demand.

Those richest countries start contemplate environment like an important issue in development, but they are still much more interested in unemployment, national security and rising public expenditure, in the wrong idea that environment preservation and sustainable development is something that only can be afford in prosperous times.

At the same time, in the poorest countries environmental management is given low priority, and it becomes more evident when confronted with corporate imperialism.

PROBLEMS OF CONTROL AND OWNERSHIP

The poorest countries in Africa have been unable to capture a major share of the high value, refining or processing stage of raw materials production. It is estimated that the cut received by the developing

countries is around 25% of final consumer price.

WATER

Water is one of the first problems in the African Continent. As a resource, water has a lot of particularities and for the most part of their uses there are no substitute.

Many countries facing new conditions as population grow, cities expand, and sources of clean, are experienced important problems with water in order of not be able to manage water in efficient, equitable and environmentally accordance.

Corrupted and wrong policies are the main causes of the inefficient use and waste of resource base. The problem becomes bigger in the countries, which are affected by maybe the most terrible natural disaster: drought.

Policies for improving human access to clean and reliable water supplies and reversing watershed degradation must put their attention on the most profitable way of make the water accessible to all population necessities and all economic uses without break the natural balance.

DROUGHT:

Drought is considerate a natural disaster. People have nothing to do for getting the rain from the sky except waiting for it. If we don't make reference here to the climate change as the reason for severe drought in some places in the world, seems obvious to think that human action has nothing to do with that great problem, cause of uncountable numbers of deaths all along Human History.

But, as it is shown in the previous section about the resource of water, is obvious that most part of the problems caused by drought should, if no disappear, at least, become lighter with a planed and good management. That management must be competence, in my opinion, of an international commission who take care about the specific problems of each region, affected or not by drought, in relation with their economic and social perspectives and possibilities.

FOOD

As S. George says:

Hunger is not an unavoidable phenomenon like death and taxes... Unfortunately for the millions of people who go hungry, the problem is not a technical one... wherever they live, rich people eat first, they eat a disproportionate amount of the food there is and poor ones rarely

rise in revolt against this most basic of oppression unless told to "eat cake". Hunger is not a scourge but a scandal

In J.Fernie and Pitkethly book is said:

The basic problem of food production concerns how secure conditions can be created so that investment in the technologies of increasing yields and improving availability can take place. Food problems are institutional: organized effort is necessary to promote economic growth so that a proper diet may be afforded by all and investment secured in food production and marketing.

In the 1960's and 1970's the resource problem of the persisting growth of population and the relation with natural resources were introduced by environmentalist and neo-Malthusians. Then, resources issues, world population and world food, started appear together in several internationals and national conferences with the aim of solving the current problems of environmental degradation, over population and food insecurity.

WILDLIFE

Development based on wildlife resources (biological diversity) generating food and income for rural communities, involving both non-consumptive and consumptive uses for the biological resources involved.

Where efficient wildlife department manage wild population effectively, biological diversity can be maintained and at the same time a harvest benefit of the country and its people. (F. FALLOUX & L.M.TALBOT; Crisis and opportunity: environment and development in Africa.)

CONCLUSION

In the necessary analysis of environment and poverty for the correct formulation of sustainable development policies, we can immediately find the double slope of the issue. If we focus the study in "environmental poverty", then, we have to show the way the world is changing in important physical aspects, most of them irreversible, and how different habitats around the earth are being involved in a degradation process which is condemning them to loose the global equilibrium.

In the other hand, we can find in the issue of related poverty and the environment, how to show how people is getting poor and poor because of

the disappearance of natural resources, which involves one of the most important richness for economic development all over the world. That is even more obvious in developing and under-developed countries.

So, the double slope is "the environmental poverty" and "the poor people because of the environmental poverty"

The integration of environmental and developmental objectives has been called in several times and from many different voices, like institutions, organisations and mass media. But in fact, that integration did not take place. Issue of population growth and concentration, desertification, pollution and resource exploitation, continued to be responsibility of specialised departments, while macroeconomic policies focused on the maximisation of economic growth. Environmental impacts were addressed to some extent by environmental agencies without much influence, however, on the process of socio-economic decision making in central governments.(BARTELMUS, P.: Environment, Growth and Development)

But how can they go separated? The hoped economic growth won't last so long without the necessities.

Other question is if environmental and development objectives can look at the future separated from the ethic and moral considerations that should make us think about what is the reason for the human appropriation of Nature.

We have in the past been concerned about the impacts of economic growth upon the environment. And now we must, we are forced to, concern all society with the ecological stress, upon our economic perspectives. Now, the aim of accelerating ecological interdependence among nations is as much important as it was the economic interdependence between nations (WCED 1987: 5)

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1) Development <-----> Enviromental preservation

2) Development + Enviromental preservation h "Enviromental planning"
(enviromental consideration in social and & economical development projects)

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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OBJECTIVES OF SUISTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In the concept of sustainable development is include:

- * Reviving growth
- * Changing the quality of growth
- * Meeting essential needs for jobs, food, energy, water and sanitation
- * Conserving and enchancing the resource base
- * Reorientation technology and managing risk
- * Merging environment and economics in decision-making

Source: WCED (1987: 49)

BARTELMUS, P.: Environment, Growth and Development

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PUBLIC INTEREST ON ENVIRONMENT

Actually, is believed that in a free market system, if people, at least in the richest countries, feel interested in the conservation of the environment, they will pay for it.

In fact, the most common process for that, as it is shown in the book of Frenie and Pitkethly; Resources; environment & policy, pag152, appends like:

PRE-PROBLEM
STAGE

POST-PROBLEM ALARMED DISCOVERY
STAGE AND

EUPHORIC ENTHUSIASM

GRADUAL DECLINE REALIZING THE COST

OF OF
PUBLIC INTEREST SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS

(esto tiene flechas en circulo, pero no salen??)