

Farewell Capitalist System Welcome to Sustainability

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Abstract

This paper searches arguments to assert the existence of enormous difficulties in achieving sustainable development in today's Society. Mainly because it has placed itself in a situation of extreme risk by encrypting all their capabilities of survival in a rational, scientific and technological aspects; and by favoring the system based on the market and profit's gaining. This deductive searching begins with the sustainable development concept, continues with the idea of 'Risk Society' ends trying to reveal the delusion we live under the neoliberal capitalist system.

Keywords: Development, Sustainability, Society

Introduction

In magical practice, magician is the director not just the actor. Belief in success is indispensable; failure is never attributable to him, nor his art, but to the scheme of the antagonistic magician or to the presence of sinners in the auditorium. His art itself, the multiplicity and the contrast of the wishes and the wills, expose him to the dangers of competition of other individuals who has, like him, equal or bigger powers, who are able to exert suggestion on individuals and groups and to exploit their knowledge to take advantage (Castiglioni, 1987: 72).

An initial study about development sustainable concept inevitably claims a sort of definition. In this sense Pulido (2003: 203-4 quoted *verbatim*) proposes various contributions to realize this task. Thus, this author says: "The most widespread definition of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (1987): 'Sustainable development' is the growth addressing the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to satisfy their own needs.

The ability to serve future generations includes implicitly the three pillars (Figure 1) which nowadays is the intellectual building of sustainable development on: economic pillar (efficient use of resources), the social pillar (cohesion and shared social progress) and environmental pillar (responsible use of natural resources).

Nevertheless pinning the scientific frontiers of sustainable development is not only complex but also submitted to multiple interpretations tasks. The initial difficulty is its multidisciplinary character with recognized contributions from such disparate fields such as: Economics, Ecology, Ethics, Political Science, Anthropology, History, Psychology, Philosophy or Physics.

But sustainable development not only requires multidisciplinary input. Its understanding requires an interdisciplinary approach in order to analyze the interaction among its component elements and these complicate an offer of a generalized approach.

This intellectual challenge has received multiple, sometimes distorted, responses. From a balanced approach in the relationship between plants, animals, people and their environment, some radical ecologists have derived a biocentric system (as opposed to anthropocentric) in the relationship between humans and nature. From need to assess the economic consequence of intergenerational equity or environmental protection, some radical economists have inferred rules making them the top choice of governing efficiency and cost minimizing".

The recovery of this lengthy quotation is justified because it integrates various ideas and concepts around the central issue of this paper. It clearly establishes challenge and responsibility of scientific knowledge involved in the constitution of the Risk Society.

This translates itself into a weak demarcation of disciplinary fields embedded in the study of sustainable development. Also exposes the ambiguity in its definition, perhaps this is due to its close correlation with an ethical standard hard to achieve in today's society.

At this point it is pertinent to highlight the asymmetric nature of sustainable development in the world. If a ranking of 1 to 10 it is supposed to determine the intensity of a certain dimension of the problem involved in sustainability. The air quality, for example -which is a reality. As point of comparison on air quality can be establishing a scale of 1 to 500 (1 is completely clean and 500 fully dirty). Beijing has records located in the 500; conversely in United States a register of 100 is unacceptable (Govindarajan and Trimble, 2012: 17).

Since previous ideas to evoke a set of facts defining the capitalist system is also inevitably. The list is given here:

(1) disintegration of the Feudal System, (2) discovery of ownerless land, (3) the emergence of trade, (4) release of the workforce of the roots of the earth and simultaneously ability to be hired in any establishment, (5) the emergence of the State guarantor of private property and perhaps the most important, (6) asymmetric use of over-exploitation nature.

The latter recount addresses to the substantive idea of the Capitalist System based on the destruction of nature to simultaneously ensure the survival of human species. Some will say it is processing or ownership but here actually the idea of nature devastation is held as a systematic development mechanism. Thus to speak of sequential steps designed to sustain a balance between man and nature (sustainable development) should be from the destruction of the Capitalist Economic System (based on an exhaustive search for profits). The intention of expressing this eventuality is not that one of catastrophizing or those tending to mention utopian economic systems.

Also no proposals such as that made by politicians and financials experts in January 2009 in Paris under the title "New World, New Capitalism" where Angela Merkel German Chancellor proposed a set of international economic rules for a Global Financial Architecture. Rules like these should be analyzed and regulated. In other words it is considered necessary a Deal for World Economics (Orth, 2009: 11). Simply, politicians and governors should take off the masks and place them in their proper perspective to inherit a suitable world to future generations.

To achieve the elucidation of the issues involved in the Risk Society and its sustainable palliative, the work has been divided into two sections: 1. 'Risk Society' in search of a definition and 2. Discovering the Capitalism deception. Additionally an emphasis about the orientation of this document to all people interested in the subject is made.

1. The Risk Society: In Search of a Definition

Contemporary Society could be labeled as 'Risk Society' because it breathes in an atmosphere characterized by fear, terror and horror globalized, whose genesis is associated with the destructive capacity of scientific and technological artifacts and the consequent impairment of ecosystems. With the use of these devices could have been crossed a natural prohibition line favoring impure or polluting phenomena. This impurity is not only manifested in the environment but in the spirit of people. According to Stalling (1994) citing Mary Douglas, in technological disasters, the presence of evil is suggested.

Probably this phenomenon is neither free nor isolated, maybe it is another effect of the global economic system. According Beck (1986: 25) social production of wealth goes systematically accompanied by social production of risks. This shows a change in the logic of the priorities of industrial society [split] classes going from distribution of wealth to allocation of risks.

Since this vision made by Beck civilizing risks globalization also affects sooner or later who produce them or benefit from themselves. They contain a superior feedback effect to the image of the class. In another words, the spread of risk downplays the differences and the social boundaries consequently there is an equalizing effect among those affected. For Beck, the Risks Societies are not the class societies, its dangerous situations cannot be thought as class conflict. In short 'poverty is hierarchic, smog is democratic' (*ibid.* 42).

Observing Beck's claims it appears to be a partial view of the facts, some linearity and rigidity in his speech, Cerezo and Lujan (2000: 24) assert the impossibility of supplanting the distribution of wealth by the issue of risk sharing. They continue, although the dangers a geographic location a social class or even the present generation are not limited to.

It occurs with a paradoxical simultaneity a surprising fact: The risks are globalized, but the distribution of wealth and knowledge is increasingly unequal (Dasgupta, 1995). For this fundamental reason is necessary to analyze the risk society in light of inequality mainly through its effects on Latin America (Guimarães, nd).

In this analytical vein, UNESCO (1999) has recognized a decade ago (in a very short document 24 pages, entitled 'Science for the Twenty-First Century: A New Vision and Framework for Action' it includes the 'Program for Science: General Framework for Action'), the benefits from Science and Technology. In this regard the document states:

"Although the means to achieve the objectives [international peace and common welfare] have improved considerably been over the half Century thanks to advances in Science and Technology, have also made progress those that can jeopardize or compromise them" (UNESCO, 1999: 3).

This fragment is a touch of UNESCO declarations also oriented to the recognition of indicators of unequal distribution of the benefits of Science and Technology in consequence to structural imbalance between countries, regions and the social groups have been generated.

Now the distinctive element between poor and rich countries (whether individuals or nations) is not only the lack of access to goods and services but to information and knowledge. Apparently the inequalities generated by the asymmetrical distribution of knowledge now cause humanity division into two groups: (1) Illustrated and rich; and (2) poor and ignorant.

As a result of the above, the knowledge seems to have become a new source of social promotion. The situation is worse in societies where inadequate educational policies are applied such as Latin American Nations here the distribution of knowledge it is transformed into a device generating concomitantly, social exclusion and increasingly difficulties to eradicate the inequalities.

Latin America has a disadvantageous position in the Risk Society. Furthermore, the risk is imperceptibly. The challenge for those countries located in these latitudes is to break with the dynamics of the global crisis represented by geo-spatial redistribution of industries and goods produced by them. They also must expose the risk and become aware of it, to meet this ambitious tautological goal, the touchstone is knowledge.

But the Latin Achilles heel lies precisely in the access to scientific knowledge. This will unravel 'the Gordian Knot' to be in position to get the control of technological change and risk regulation. In words of Ileana Gutierrez, this happens: Because before the invisibility of the risks is the knowing what makes recognize them and bring them into existence. However, knowledge can also deny or process them (minimize or dramatize them). The perception and awareness of risk requires knowledge (Gutierrez, nd: 6).

The first section establishes the reinforcing effects of the process leading to contemplate the possibility of reversing the damage done to society and ecosystems. In the second section the causes of this integration process of the Risk Society and consequently the impossibility of consolidating a feasible proposal for sustainable development will be reviewed.

2. Discovering the Capitalist Deception

As has been observed the Capitalist System evolution has been characterized by its impressive adaptability and thus its survival in the long term (based primarily on science and technology). Having the context of this correlation between adaptation and survival, the State, Society and Business have been established place at the fore by the Capitalist System. The relationship between them has longstanding history based on the *quid pro quo* game. In the words of the expert of the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) Roberto P. Guimaraes: "Indeed, proposals to sustainability call into question a style of internationalized development, which has been determined by the homogenizing trend world economy, based on the adaptation of the technological and institutional model of transnational corporations, whose most outstanding expressions are constituted by the modernization of agriculture, urbanization, extensive ownership of the stock of natural resources and use of non-renewable energy sources. To characterize however the proposed sustainable development as an alternative response to the crisis of the current style it should be start on the comprehension of an adequate understanding of the social process that has detonated the crisis; and possible solutions through sustainable development should be sought in the social system itself, and not on the basis of some technological wizardry (the technological fix so dear to developers).

At the end of day, it is nothing more than the environmental consequences of the way humans use the earth's resources are indeed predetermined by the pattern of relationship between human beings themselves (Guimaraes, nd: 32).

As you can glimpse in the latest idea of Guimaraes and in the case of sustainable development there is a re-visit of this exchange game. The Firms barter among members of the society a set of mechanisms tending to recover (almost tautologically) the environment deteriorated by them. In change Society and the State respectively undertake to buy the articles produced by "friendly" environment factories with organizational policies designed to ensure fair treatment to the public related to them (from shareholders to the consumer through their own employees). The State, through its various institutions facilitates the realization of the activities of reversing nature damage. With the enactment of laws, codes, procedures, regulations even government tending to regulate and prevent the deterioration of the quality of life of society.

So far all these social actions seem to have arisen naturally but it is not and here is where you can begin to see the deception. To that end we must ask: What have slaughtered every other actor? Companies have transferred part of their resources but not of their profits. The rate of return is still maintained. In this sense they have invested in order to achieve greater local and global competitive capacity. They have even convinced the state and its institutions to promote things as absurd as the "Who pollutes more, pays more".

Why the label of absurdity? Response refers to the bonds of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere legally. What are? For example, the Law has authorized a company 50 tons of CO₂. If it to improve their processes and reduce their emissions to 40 tons. The difference between the allowable fee and improvement (10 tons) is susceptible of sale or transfer to another company (figure 2).

This way, so, other company with 100 tons of emissions can purchase 10 tons of the first company obtaining a larger share of emissions. It can thus emit 110 tons per environment (it is pertinent to ask where is the decline?). But on paper, the first firm will continue to throw to air 40 tons apparently. And cynicism does not stop here. The 10 tons resulting from improvements in the production process may have other destination by being subject to negotiation in the Stock Market. Thus, the original company makes profits through financial speculation of their "certificates or issuing bonds".

Countries around the world have created financial highlights of the previous situation. It means other mirages. Here the state and its institutions participate. A first requirement for access to this new form of "legal pollution" to the nations, in voice of the certification company TUV SUD it is required, primarily, to fulfill the "Kyoto Protocol" (unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/kpspan.pdf). This document established as well as emission reductions of greenhouse gases in each country and emissions trading, other mechanisms such as Joint Implementation (JI) and the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). In any case, these mechanisms are supplementary, as each country has to reduce its emissions. [In addition] every country should first [ratify] Kyoto Protocol to use these mechanisms assuming all issues of this International Treaty.

The emissions trading is a purchase-sale of emissions greenhouse gases between countries having target set according to Kyoto Protocol; between industrialized or- Annex I countries of the Kyoto Protocol. Thus, those who reduces their emissions more than what they are committed to, may sell surplus emissions certificates to countries that have not fulfilled its commitment.

Among the issues they made negotiate include all emissions of greenhouse gases from: (1) Emission quotas allocated by Kyoto (only if they have served their purpose), (2) emissions from JI and CDM.

In 2008 this emissions trading is operational fully internationally such as the Kyoto Protocol. To do this, it came into force in October 2003 a European Union Directive that is the start of the European emissions trading scheme of greenhouse gases (EU ETS) (www.tuvmex.com.mx).

As seen the previous quote, the pollution problem of renewable sources of the planet have huge dimensions. Besides United States of America the largest polluter in the world whose contribution is significantly higher contaminant has consistently refused to ratify unilateral Kyoto treaty and any other way derived from it despite having signed the original version. The excuse given by the leaders of the United States (Bill Clinton and George Bush) for not ratifying the agreement is based on consideration of their inefficiency to solve the climate problem (see Cayuela, 2007: 14-18).

What society has exchanged? With companies, in some countries the consumer has rewarded those committed to the environment or tending to repair some extent ecological by deterioration organizational policies. The support is through the consumption of their products, and leaving on the shelves of malls goods of companies which alter somewhat the ecosystems.

By other hand sustainable relationship between State and Society has focused on the imposition (the first one over the second one) of set of rules aimed to preserve the environment. Examples are dissimilar all around the world but the closest is the Mexican case. Actions include prohibiting the free movement of motor vehicles, however the construction of cycle routes rarely used by the people, erratic laws as establishing smoke-free and then the backtrack allowing smoking areas, to organic and inorganic garbage separation although in open pits it is re-mixed, no control of gas emissions generated by trucks and public service, establish traffic flow circuits confined avenues with heavy traffic regardless the increasing emission of greenhouse gases by remaining statics the cars, consequently the lost of man hours by bottlenecks and emotional and physical health people deteriorating.

As it can be observed the actions described at least in Mexico seem to aggravate some pollutants and simultaneously the effects have transformed our society in an organization characterized by the realization of capitalist deception. How far can resist the different actors the asymmetric relationship with nature? or How the Nature bear the overexploitation in order to maintain social actors?

In regard to the latter question there are already some answers from nature as Katrina, Wilma and Stan (Rosenweig and Rattinger, 2007), the Tsunami in Indonesia, The recent earthquake in Chile, among other events. These cataclysms cannot be solved with financial measures such as bonds or certificates of emissions. Actually the will of all actors involved in sustainable development is needed. They must be aware of their partnership in the global ecosystem (Birchard, 2005). The participation worldwide till now could be characterized as insufficient and inefficient despite the existence of a large number of treaties and meetings to face and solve global climate problem.

Conclusions

On the basis of the above it can be affirmed the existence of enormous difficulties in achieving sustainable development, mainly because today's society has placed itself in extreme risk situation by pinning the success for all their survival skills on rational, scientific and technological aspects. Also favoring the market-based and on the profit making system.

The latter objective appears to have inhibited the ability and willingness of the stakeholders. They claim to care for the environment, ecosystems, but every day a huge amount of forests (Holloway, 1993) are deforested to maintain high profits. Projects labeled as environmentally friendly often become a "smokescreen" to block the view of people, groups and giving not the true information to act against organizations with polluting acting.

Another example of this type the so called green banks whose constituent policies declare financing just ecological activities and projects, but if we delve deeper the reality is different as these institutions have provided loans for buying and selling weapons.

One possible solution might be to reduce stratospheric rates obtained by some nations and their companies. Reshape appropriation of nature, leaving aside or modifying the current science and technology path. Mainly by the high energy required consumption in their production, maintenance and operation. Maybe we should look the Japanese proposal following the World War II which involves the combined use of lightweight technology with traditional tools. The modifying could allow the survival of future generations. Meanwhile the coin has been tossed between individual volitional capacity and profitability. Who will win? Or all of us will lose?

Finally Govindarajan and Trimble (2012:17) lamented "if the 5.8 billions [of the poor countries] consume and produce in ways that are environmentally unsound, the results will be catastrophic [not just] for them for the planet. The only way poor countries can sustain economic growth is through green solutions. As a result, emerging markets are likely to leapfrog to several next-generations of environmentally friendly technologies".

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Figure 1. Three Pillars of Sustainable Development



Figure 2. Emissions Bonds How do they work?

