



GROUNDING WITH THE CONSERVATION COMMUNITY

Biodiversity and Sustainable Development

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AFRICA BIODIVERSITY COLLABORATIVE GROUP

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This presentation builds on the study which copies are provided for this gathering. I want to focus on the various reactions within the African Diaspora since its publication almost a year ago particularly on the relationship between biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.

The tremendous economic development enjoyed by the world's population over the last two centuries has been accompanied by an increase in overall global risks. Risks for humans first, because much of the world's population remained outside this dynamic of development, risks to the planet as its development has been largely at the expense of the biosphere. The origin of these risks is to be looked at in part in the myopia of some communities of practices; in their activities such as the political, business, non-governmental organizations or scientists. This myopia that is linked, on the one hand, to a very compartmentalized social division of labor and, secondly, to the basic principle of an analytical method which separates the elements of the totality in search for knowledge.

This dual approach has also led to a world in which individuals know a lot about their area of expertise and often with accuracy, but little about the related parameters. It was also the basis for public policy over the last fifty years of African independence with the aim to make optimal decisions from a rational approach. This rationalist approach has been very successful because it allowed to decontextualize information processing and justify an "Expert" and "objective" approach to social questions, to propose a management system based on management and control ("command and control") of a limited number of accurate parameters. Thus, policies conservation policies focused on the creation of "natural sanctuaries" and social policies on the fight against poverty.

It is in the optic of reintegration of these different questions and to be able to better cope with global risks that the African Diaspora sees the interconnection between biodiversity conservation and sustainable development since the first International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in its report on the *Global Strategy Conservation* published in 1980 made explicit reference to sustainable development. This report set the objective of "contributing to achieving sustainable development, based on the conservation of living resources." It stressed that sustainable development requires foremost the conservation of ecosystems that support this development.

The current definition of sustainable development is much more vague: " Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs " (Brundtland, 1987). The concept has received a lot of interest from the early 90s and the Rio Conferences, to the point that it is now difficult to talk about development without adding the adjective "sustainable". This success is partly due to the definition of the Brundtland Report, which allows a wide variety of interpretations, especially the adjective "sustainable". In fact, like many other concept, the "soft" nature of this definition is its strength but also its weakness.

Edwyn Zaccai, in his book on Sustainable Development (2002, p.332), speaks of a "motor illusion" since " the concept is seen as an engine for questioning and putting in relation and not as a catalog of answers. " The craze sustainable development enjoys also its origin in the general awareness of the public of global risks affecting the planet if we want to believe the polls. This is why politicians are beginning to integrate it in their speeches including the heads of states. However, the risks continue to increase and social responses to deal with them appear much thin faces to the potential consequences. For the African Diaspora, there seems to be no real links between beliefs, words and actions.

In some quarters of the African Diaspora, there are several ways to explain this lack of response. First, the absence of previous precedent at implicating them in a meaningful way rather than the traditional token representation makes it difficult to imagine the consequences of continental changes. These changes are all the more very difficult to imagine as proposed in approaches developed in Europe and North America. They appear unrealistic to the African public even though scientifically sounds.

This unrealistic dimension is justified by a pitch on the uncertainty of current knowledge. Furthermore, the people who are causing Global changes mainly Westerners - are those that are also the most protected from risks (Weber, 2002). The risk aversion that earlier generations had disappeared and practice of caution with it. Finally, it is difficult to link the micro and macro dynamics, which thereby allows evading the problem of changes in behavior or to minimize the impact. This difficulty is all the more greater because the consequences of global changes appear to be only of a "collective" nature. The links between individual practices and effects on renewable natural resources, and impact on individual well-being prove complicated to understand. This is why corporations, international organizations, heads of state, but also citizens, in addition to being myopic, seem to show a certain schizophrenia when comparing their opinions and behavior. For example, the World Bank and Development agencies finance on the one hand policies for nature conservation in developing countries through the World Environmental Fund while simultaneously inciting the development of export crops unsuited to tropical ecosystems in order gather foreign currency into the country and repay the debt. This type of inconsistency exists at all levels of decision. It leads to general passivity towards conservation, and when crises occur, the adoption of inefficient reactive behaviors (We just saw it in the general indifference about the massacre of about 250 elephants in the Republic of Central Africa).

So it seems that the crucial question today is not whether our future is sustainable but how to make it sustainable (Yorque et al., 2002). What is missing, in fact, is not African knowledge on the risks we face on the continent but an integrated Aid Agency/African Diaspora networks, NGO, contextual framework and decision making mechanisms that would allow interactions between these stakeholders human and their impact on development of renewable natural resources and the potential impact on the well-being. These mechanisms should also be articulated with decentralized decisions making to facilitate trade-offs between different individual choices and possible class but also to emphasize the responsibilities that these choices entail. They must also incorporate uncertainty to reflect controversies with for example the "worst" and "best" scenarios. Under these conditions, it will be possible to shift from a reactive to a pro-active logical decision making.

For many years, the African Diaspora has been calling for the implementation of tools that help anticipate future developments in order to adopt pro-active measures. These tools should allow to better describe, understand and manage the interactions between the social, ecological and economic .To meet this demand, Aid agencies and NGOs should undertake in the development of indicators that aim to address these interactions.

According to Alain Desrosieres, the advantage of indicators compared to other assessment tools is that they have the particularity to "sever the signifier and the signified." They are somehow "useful fictions". Yet, faced with a polymorphic concept, complex and controversial such as sustainable development, the use of approximate indicators that offer the opportunity to argue on this question is a godsend. Indeed, the indicator respects the areas of uncertainty that measuring does not admit.

If we take the definitions of Zaccai and Desrosieres, an indicator of sustainable development can then be considered as a "useful fiction" of a "dynamic illusion." We are then in a high degree of useful abstractions. To make it less abstract, it is possible to look at the depth: the interactions.The issue of society-nature interactions in economics is to be compared with the three definitions that can be made for field of sustainable development.

Political economy questions the production, circulation and distribution of wealth in a region, a nation in the world. It considers the interactions between society and nature from the resources that produce wealth. The interactions between individuals is then limited to the criteria of distribution and circulation of resources and wealth.The marginalist economics focuses on the behavior of optimizing agents, businesses and households - and the optimal allocation of resources that are available to these. It does not take into account interactions with nature since the latter does not correspond to entities currently used to describe the world. In fact, most part of nature - and biodiversity - do not let themselves confined within the categories of "Good", "service" or "capital" despite efforts by economists to arrive at it (Dasgupta, 2001; Heal, 1998). Yet, these categories are those used by the neoclassical economy to think the interactions between man and his natural and social environment. This is why the neoclassical uses the notion of externality when it looks at the "environment." Externalities are positive or negative effects on the utility functions of agents linked to existing indirect interactions between these and which are not often taken into account by the market. There are, however, in this concept,

no reference to the human-nature interactions. Nature is here only a medium between human.

Socio-economics - in which we inscribe contemporary institutionalists, conventionalists or regulationists - focuses on the material dimensions of social interaction, on transaction costs between agents and the means of mediation that allow human to coordinate. The relationship between human and Nature is still not treated directly because the environment is simply an object from which individuals interact. It is on this basis that economists will suggest ways to address the issue of sustainable development indicators. Regarding economics, the issue of Sustainable development development indicators is one of the best indicators to address issues of wealth, which can be understood in a broad sense (Gadrey and Jany-Catrice, 2005). It is the dominant approach today. It gives rise to numerous public and scientific debates that aims at redefining the concept of wealth and overcome the limitations of the main indicator of current wealth: Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

The marginalist economics considers the question of sustainable development indicators from the "price signals" that will be integrated into the production functions businesses and preferably households to internalize the negative externalities that make development unsustainable. The debates in this area are mainly of technical nature among economists. They have as object , assumptions of behavior of limited rationality and imperfect information but also the rate of actualization. Socio-economics focuses on sustainable development indicators from the signals used by individuals to coordinate their decentralized actions. These signals can be of several kinds: prices, contracts, agreements and institutions. The debates on the indicators in this area are about the social objects that provide the best tools for coordination.

These three alternative visions of the problematic of sustainable development indicators are complementary. Indeed, indicators must allow evaluating a situation social in order to provide historical landmarks, taking of individual decisions interacting and organizing themselves collectively to make collective choices. At present, works on indicators of sustainable development are widely if not completely dominated by the question of the measure of wealth at the macroeconomic level, even when this issue is addressed by biologists or other environmental specialists.

These indicators should provide information on the degree of sustainability of development to achieve a planned policy that will help to correct the path.

The issue of indicators as a tool for coordination and consultation is now relatively under-treated in the field of society-nature interactions. Yet it is a very important property of the indicators when they involve collective resources such as the most renewable natural resources. Indeed, it is starting with capacities of indicators to provide mediation tools, that it becomes possible to identify those that will enable the convergence of preferences and diverse opinions, to build the necessary compromises to achieve collective choice. Within the African Diaspora, focus has been the function of indicators of sustainable development.

To address this issue, we suggest a focus on the biodiversity conservation and renewable natural resources it provides to humans. Indeed, there may be some controversy over the concept of biodiversity, but the notion of "diversity" and of "living" is less ambiguous than "development" and "sustainability". By starting from the conservation of biodiversity for sustainable development thinking, we also found the original definition of the concept proposed by the IUCN in 1980.

It is however important now to clarify the different perspectives that are possible to adopt in order to interest the African Diaspora in a relationship with the conservation community through the linkage between the issue of development and the conservation of biodiversity.

- Development is a separate issue that ultimately requires a focus on the pressures that it subjects biodiversity to.
- Development is a constraint of realism for conservation policies that must provide people dependent on biodiversity, alternative resources for their agreement not to use it.
- Development is a moral constraint that implies that the costs and benefits associated with conservation be equitably distributed.
- Development is the first question that obliges treating that of conservation from a sustainable usage of biodiversity.

We take the party to consider that is counter-productive and morally questionable to just focus on biodiversity conservation approach by considering the Africans as invasive and predatory species.

The objective of sustainable development is to reconcile the objectives of development and conservation objectives by seeking the synergies between these aspects.

Moreover, as a simple matter of scale, conservation should first be thought from a sustainable use of biodiversity. So we conclude by suggesting the following:

- The development of an integrated and dynamic interactions framework between the USAID, the conservation community and the African Diaspora
- Articulation of these descriptions with representations of the stakeholders concerning biodiversity and decentralized decision-making in order to allow the emergence of adaptive behavior about the uses of biodiversity.

Thank you

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