

THE ALTERNATIVE THEORIES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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A few investigations insist on the social problems raised by the sustainable development. It is true that this development has taken place in a context of economic crisis that corresponds also to a crisis of the theories of development. Breaking with the economic dominant vision, which turns the development into the historical logic of the modern societies, these analyses wonder on the specificity of the non-development that certain regions of the planet know and on the possibilities of an alternative development to the chosen by the western countries. If some of them want to support the aim of the development, trying to decline it in another form, others call on to rejecting it and to restoring other perspectives of the social progress. Across the sustainable development, the interrogation on the notion of need is again in the agenda for the imperious need to take in consideration the environmental problematic and the distribution of the wealth worldwide.

THE ECO-DEVELOPMENT

The eco-development prefigures and competes with the expression of the sustainable development. The notion of eco-development has been proposed by Strong in 1972 to reactivate the dialog between the North and the South, after the conference of Stockholm. Sachs, who has occupied a few important charges in the international organs for thirty years, has turned into the principal theoretical of this notion. In *The Discovery of the third world*, Sachs (1971) is conscious of the European-centrism who hides behind the theories elaborated by the economists of the development. Nevertheless, he rejects any abandon of this aim, speaking even about the normative dimension of the eco-development. He prefers qualifying the eco-development of «philosophy of the development» and tries to go to the actors who elaborate concrete projects and intervene in the field.

To reduce inequalities

According to Sachs, the economic, including if it is strong and is accompanied by a modernization of the production structures, does not drive to the development. It ends

generally in an increase of social inequalities, which are responsible for an important part of the environmental deterioration. A waste takes place when the wealth of some ones drives to the consumption of superfluous products and when the misery of others provokes an overexploitation of the scanty available resources. The «bad-development» is, therefore, a general problem. What supposes starting a global program of reforms in the way of taking the economic decisions, with recommendations differentiated according to the countries, since the responsibilities of the North in the modification of the international relations are specially important. It insists on the necessity of institutional and political changes to allow these evolutions that must take place in a period of three or four generations. Inspired by the conceptions of Kalecki, Sachs does not question the growth but the unequal aims that it provokes. Therefore, his orientation put the economic surplus and the available time, besides work, to the service of social progress and rational management of the natural environments. If the growth is more equal, the population will agree with more pleasure to do restrictions in the satisfaction of their material needs as well as in their demography.

To environmental level, Sachs rejects the hypothesis of an unlimited material and energetic endowment. Nevertheless, the thermodynamic limits assigned to the economic activity by Georgescu-Roegan are valid in a temporary distant horizon. The arrival to the stationary condition, which it will have to resign some day, it is not for immediately. A disagreement exists between the supporters of the eco-development and the defenders of the ecological economy who centre more their attention on the assigned priorities than on the basic problem. Sachs observes that the extensive growth is condemned and his interpretation of the development leaves place to the possibility of a material growth been founded on a more rational use of the energy and matter, which demonstrates that the limits are not given once forever. It allows to Sachs to define the eco-development as a «development of the populations by themselves, using the best natural resources, adapting to an environment that it transforms without destroying it.

The autonomy of decisions and the types of development

If the sustainable development appears as a general question in all the countries, it must be declined differently according to the places and the circumstances. The cultural diversity is recognized immediately: all the social groups have the right to continue their aims in the frame of their specific culture and of their relation to the nature. Being opposed to the mimetic strategies of the development, the doctrine of eco-development belongs to the theories of endogenous development. The autonomy of decisions must prevail over the individual and collective levels, insisting the fact that autonomy does not mean autarchy. It is important that every community defines for itself a social global project that appears as his own way of development.

Therefore, it is a question of answering to the following questions: what goods and services must be produced? By who? How? The elements of response are offered by the analysis of the production structure, the revenues and the consumption, as well as by the study of the arrangement of time and space, conducts and values. Definitively, it is a question of a way to be in the world that differs from a site to another and that it is not present immediately to the eyes of the foreign observers. What implies the need to apprehend it correctly, of

calling on to the whole range of social sciences and, specially, to history and anthropology. It is a question of reactivating the studies on development in an interdisciplinary perspective, considering the relations between economy and sociology or the links between economy and ecology.

The attention to the local development

The circumstantial character of the question of development drives to the eco-development applied locally and regionally. It tries to reveal the specific resources of one «eco-region» with a view to the satisfaction of the fundamental needs of the population. The interest to the eco-development, which is present from the beginning in the rural societies, is reinforced in the urban zones from the 1980's. The regional and local development is conceived as one of the possible routes to overcome the economic and environmental crisis. This reflection about the endogenous development in other territorial scales tries to articulate the fight against the unemployment, the protection of the environment and the summit of the forms of social economy. The eco-development must be translated by a plurality of paths and a model of diversity in a mixed economy.

But, the prudence is necessary and the local development cannot be the panacea. The State appears often as a counterweight to the pressure of local interests and certain environmental questions must be approached in other organization levels. Sachs has remembered constantly the role that the UNO had to recover in the restoration of a new economic international order. With the past of the time, the expectations of a collective management of the common heritage of humanity for a world authority have not weakened, as well as the idea of establishing a world forum to speak about the strategies of development. In this difficult dialectics between the local and global levels, an interrogation takes place on the pertinent spaces of development and on the possibilities to articulate them in an institutional way carried out by the supporters of the eco-development.

The choice of the appropriate technologies

Though the problems of development are, first of all, of an institutional and political order, the question of the technical decisions is central in the thought of eco-development. The technology could not be analyzed only with the concepts of capital and work, and his level of abstraction. In the eco-development optics, it is considered like a multidimensional phenomenon that require to take in consideration the type of energy and of resources used to assure his functioning, his results, his complexity, the qualification of the workforce that it needs and his environmental impact. Therefore, it insists on the notion of technologies adapted to the cultural, institutional and ecological context, underlining that are not only intermediate technologies. Breaking with the strategy of mimetic transfer of the technologies of the North towards the South, the appropriate technologies must come from specific investigations that answer to the needs of the countries of the third world and of a selection of the available technologies worldwide. This selectivity must finish with the coexistence of several types of technologies in the bosom of every national economy. The ecological prudence is one of the elements witch be considered in the choice of production technologies.

The participative planning

The eco-development cannot be reduced to technical choices. It wants to be an essential instrument for the futurology and the exploration of the development options. The State action is traditionally the economic translation of development, knowing that the planning is one of his privileged instruments. The planner of the eco-development must be conversed about the will to optimize his decisions. The optimization is unattainable bearing the multiplicity of the elements in mind to bearing the lack of information relative to a certain number of dimensions of the problems. Therefore, it suits to give him again a political sense to the comprehension of the decision-making processes, the strategies of the actors and the relations of power with which the planner must compose.

The planning is conceived as a place of debate, negotiation and commitment, so that the planner is an entertainer and a negotiator. It appears more as a figure provided with certain qualities than as a system and a few procedures of planning. It exists a multiplicity of dimensions and variables that planner must apprehend and on which it must be able to affect: the distribution of incomes, the structure of consumption, the used technologies, the modalities of utilization of natural resources, the occupation of soil or the exterior trade. To orientate his intervention, this planner must have a series of ecological and social indicators that realize the multidimensionality of the reality. Beyond this withdrawal of information, all the disciplines are summoned to establish the social rationality. It is necessary for a participative planning to allow a just balance between market, State and civil society. This one only receives sense if it accompanies of an effort of education in favour of the populations: if it hopes from them that they could decide about the best conditions and that they could have multiple dimensions, it is indispensable to realize important efforts of formation. Is recognized the need to built a more wide democracy extended to the technical areas.

The environmental distribution

A tradition in economy of development tries to demonstrate that the development and the absence of development are both faces of the same dynamics of the capitalism, that prosper establishing an interdependence relation between a center and a periphery. The structuralist and marxist theories propose a few theories of the underdevelopment. The economies of the South are open, linked to the international markets, to the evolution of world prices, to the decisions of multinationals, which does that the economic surplus produced is caught by the North economies. These theories do not take in consideration the environmental problematic. This is precisely what Joan Martinez-Alier and his group (2002) try to do with the concept of «ecologically unequal exchange» that wide the perspective opened previously.

The exploitation of the South by the North supposes the inequality of wages granted to the workers of the diverse economic spaces. It is allowed that a few equal quantities of work should not be paid to the same price by the actors who take part in the international exchanges. The ecologically unequal exchange describes the fact that certain products are exported by poor countries with prices that do not cover the wage and environmental costs induced by their productions. We can mention the activities of extraction of oil, mineral,

transformation of forests in pastures or production of coffee. If Cabeza-Gutés and Martínez-Alier do not reject the international trade as such and prove to be partial to a few more equitable commercial and more respectful exchanges of the environment, some members of the ecological economy call to breaking with the international division of work and to looking, in a pragmatic way, for a major autonomy and even a self-sufficiency of local administration.

The redistributive challenges of environmental questions

Martínez-Alier insists on the problem of ecological distribution. In this way, it places the question of poverty in the center of the challenge of the sustainability. Based on the examples of social movements in the third world countries, he wants to demonstrate that, on one hand, the poverty cannot be considered only a threat for the environment and, on the other hand, that the protection of the environment is not only a luxury reserved to the rich ones. In other terms, he insists on the «ecology of the poor» that fights for a better recognition of his rights, enclosed in the environmental area. This perspective must be taken in consideration since numerous environmental policies provokes conflicts in the North-South relations, it is across the restoration of a permission of negotiable CO₂ emission in case of the prevention forehead the climate change, and it is a route an international trade of genes in the frame of the fight against the erosion of the biodiversity.

The conclusions of the policies of regulation

It is still too early to value the effects of the international policies on climate change and biodiversity. These depend on the rules approved about regulation, on initial concession of rights and quotas, and on conditions of his transferability. Guarding in mind that the systems of regulation provided with different rules produce economic and social varied effects, it is interesting to consider the area of fishing that, for more than twenty years, has restored systems of individual transferable quotas to try to regulate the extractions in fishing area.

TOWARDS THE DECREASE?

Toughening even more the debate concerning the notion of sustainable development, some economists propose to support the opposite position with regard to the aim of growth and to restore decrease. These offers have woken a great interest up and have generated alive controversy, even between the supporters of the decrease. Some of them have called on to reject the idea of development, accused of being the mask behind which advances the westernization of the world and the «mercantilisation» of social relations. This position supported by Latouche (1994) whose work rejects the development and reconstructs this notion that has a normative content. The sustainable development appears him as a «pretext concept» that development allows to make last. Latouche and the defenders of the post-development propose to replace this aim with that of «lasting decrease».

But, other authors like Harribey criticize the development carried out by the liberal policies and use the notion of sustainable development to defend an alternative model of

development. Before restoring a deceleration of growth, the relations of capitalist production must be changed and the inequalities of wealth must be fought, bearing in mind that a period of recovery must be conditioned in order that the populations who need it could see increase his standard of living. In both cases, it is a question of reinventing the imaginary of social change.

The decrease

The term of decrease is associated with the Georgescu-Roegan's work (1993). His principal merit has been to think about the thermodynamic of the western development. It puts the emphasis in the technical fundamental innovations that have allowed to humanity to use new sources of energy. From this point of view, the human history had only known a few decisive moments: the domestication of fire, the utilization of fossil energies and the succession of coal and oil. The problem of these technologies is that they end up by exhausting the fuel through that they make them live, which he leads to a tragic conception of history of the humanity who is marked by the fights that the individuals face to the States to possess the energetic and material resources. Studying the first machines to steam, in the beginning of the 19th century, the revolution of the productive capacity that they induce modifies the relation of human being to nature.

A thought of the limits is a question itself to object to this immoderation. Georgescu-Roegan is one of the only economists in having recognized the relevancy of the first report of the Club of Rome. He praises the decrease, still being conscious of the basic need to improve the material conditions of the poor populations. It has not stopped remembering that, whenever a car takes place, there are in use quantities of low entropy that might be used to make cars and useful spades for the peasants of the third world. Waiting of hypothetical technologies able of taking the relief of that fossil energies use, it reveals the measures destined to reduce the waste and to minimize the future repentances, allowing that the energetic and material endowments should be possible with time. For it, it calls on to resorting to technical innovations as well as to a straddle of the resources for quantitative instruments that allow starts a strategy of general conservation planned worldwide. Nevertheless, Georgescu-Roegen insists on the need to act on the demand of the products in order to the offer.

The sociableness

For certain aspects, these proposals are alike the critique of the growth elaborated by Illich (1973). Illich's central thesis is that the «religion of growth» legitimizes a technical project that aspires that the industrial manufacture of the existence replaces the invention of the life with individuals. There exist two manners to produce values of use: an autonomous way, for which the individuals answer for themselves to their needs and a heteronomous way that produces goods put to the disposition of persons by the intermediary of a market or of a non-merchant institution. But, due to his efficiency, the heteronomous way has certain trend to be imposed to the autonomous way up to turning into a «racial monopoly», that is to say into a situation where the industrial production destroys any possibility of resorting the other

means to satisfy their needs. From this threshold, a counter productivity is observed, to the effect that the institutions end up by producing the opposite of what they should produce. Nevertheless, deprived of his autonomy, coffee with a dash of milk of the others and of the world, the individual does not have other possibilities that of going to the industry, which reduces even more his autonomy and reinforces the obligation to consume services produced industrially. The search of well-being drives to a loss of control increasingly big of his existence on the part of the individuals. Before this evolution, Illich calls on the individuals to take again the control of their lives and built a sociable society, where the persons control the instruments of their environment.

A norm of what is sufficient

This search of autonomy of the individuals drives to consider equally in a critical way the historical and psycho-sociological bows that join the productivism, the consumerism and the organization of work. Gorz (1988) remembers that the first manufacturers have had difficulties to achieve on the part of the workers a constant, regular and complete work, in spite of promising them higher salaries. Before, these workers were working the time that it was necessary to attend to their needs. This limitation of the needs was allowing a self-limitation of the effort of each one and the work of all. Based on the possibilities offered by the technology, it has dispossessed the workers of the instruments of production, of the product of their work and of the work itself, in order that the production could become emancipated from the sufficiency.

The invention of the factory has allowed the modification of the relation to the nature and the empowerment of the capitalist on the productive process. It has diminished the salary of workers in order that they work more than the necessary and, little by little, a disjunction has been restored between the labor time and the private time. The loss of sense has established itself, provided that the work is lived by the majority of these individuals as the way of gaining a salary. In parallel, one has been present at the creation of an increasing number of needs to satisfy, since the individuals buy certain products for lack of time to be able to realize these tasks themselves. The merchant consumption has increased equally with the game of a phenomenon of existential compensation.

The exit of this dynamics forces to accept a few resignations. The current challenge according to Gorz is to restore politically a norm of what is sufficient relatively to the contemporary living conditions. This reduction of the merchant consumption, this decrease of the economy happens for a different distribution from the improvements of productivity and a reduction of the time work, conceived as a long-term politics, always and when a sufficient revenue is guaranteed independently of the duration of work and that produces a redistribution of work to himself so that the whole world could work less and better. This liberated time must allow the autonomy of the individuals, the auto-production, the constitution of networks, of solidarities, of cooperation and of investments in the political area.

