

Sustainable Development: A North-South Issue?

Sviluppo sostenibile: una questione Nord-Sud?

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Riassunto: La problematica dello sviluppo sostenibile è stata spesso riferita in modo specifico ai paesi meno sviluppi, ponendo l'attenzione principalmente alla loro dinamica demografica. Quando tale tematica è stata considerata nell'ottica delle relazioni Nord-Sud, l'interesse è stato focalizzato sui flussi migratori. Nella relazione viene sottolineato come oggi ci sia una maggiore consapevolezza sull'importanza del tema dello sviluppo sostenibile anche per i paesi più sviluppati, che si trovano a dover affrontare impegnative sfide ambientali e sociali. Si è inoltre compreso come le relazioni Nord-Sud vadano analizzate a più ampio spettro, e non limitatamente alle migrazioni internazionali, poiché lo sviluppo sostenibile deve essere visto come un modello di riferimento (per la produzione, il consumo, ecc.) per entrambe le aree del Pianeta.

Keywords: Sustainable development, North-South relations.

1. Introduction

Sustainable development was often considered to be an issue concerning more specifically developing countries and the main focus was on population growth. When sustainable development was viewed from the angle of North-South relations, the main focus was on migration flows.

Now there is a general awareness that developed countries are also concerned by sustainable development. Namely environmental and social problems are the challenges these countries have to face. At the same time, we understand that the relations between North and South have to be analysed from a broader point of view than just international migration. This means for example that jobs are being created in the South and this impacts on the global economy.

Finally, sustainable development has to be seen as a model of production, consumption, etc. for both South and North.

2. Inequality and relationships between North and South

2.1 The hypothesis of demo-economic determinants of international migration

A number of studies have developed the idea that the dynamics of international migration are related to a combination of demographic and economic differentials. In these studies, developed countries are characterised by low fertility, population ageing and high per capita income whereas developing countries have high fertility, a young

age structure of the population and a large proportion of the inhabitants living under the poverty line. It is presumed that international flows act as a regulator by which demographic differences are reduced, as if they were subjected in a way to a principle of communicating vessels.

History explains migration as well as economics or demography. The proximity between countries is less a spatial proximity than a cultural one. People migrated from India to Great-Britain for linguistic reasons but also because of the historical heritage. It is the same for migrants from Maghreb and French-speaking Africa coming for work in France. There was also, after the second World War in France, a migration policy based on a recruitment of workers in Maghreb. Moreover, the political dimension of migration was evident when frontiers were closed in 1974 in France (Véron, 1988). Migrants who could no longer come to work in France went to Italy and Spain and countries which were traditionally emigration countries then became countries of immigration. Moreover migration cannot regulate the age structure of a population (Blanchet, 1988).

The idea that the less developed a country or a region is, the more the people will migrate, doesn't resist to the analysis of facts. In Kerala, a southern state of India, there were important migratory flows towards Gulf Countries (Zachariah, Mathew, Rajan, 2003). But this state was far from being the poorest in the country. It is also the place where demographic transition began in India and the highest levels of female literacy are now observed in this state. Punjab is another state characterised by intense migration and is one of the most developed states in India.

Migration is generally perceived as a North/South issue. However, the most important part of African migration occurs inside the limits of Africa itself. Poverty but also wars are an important migration factor. The refugee problem is a very complex one. The map of international flows cannot just be explained by what is often considered as the demographic potential of migrations.

Sustainable development may also be considered as a North/South issue through the use of natural resources, located in the South, and the production of manufactured goods in the North.

2.2 Natural resources, wealth and work

The "migration" of goods is another aspect of North/South relations. Since the price of raw materials is low, countries may be poor even if they are rich in natural resources. The main reason is that they are unable to determine a price and therefore suffer from an unfair competition. Deforestation, for example, may be largely related to population growth but it may also be a consequence of a large demand for wood in the rich countries of the North. For instance, in Brazil population pressure is the main reason for deforestation but in Borneo it is the demand for wood in the North which is among the most important factors.

The level of wages in developing countries is another main issue. There is, in the words of the economist Arthur Lewis, an "unlimited labour supply" in countries which experienced rapid population growth in the past. South-East Asian Countries, Bangladesh, China, etc. are welcoming activities relocated in the South because the labour force is very cheap in these countries. Since the level of education may be high - it is for instance the case in some parts of India - even sophisticated activities of northern companies may be located in the South.

The differences in wages are not the only reason for the relocation of activities from developed to developing countries. Differences in labour laws, regarding working hours, professional risks, etc. are also additional reasons of this “migration” of work. There is here a connection between economic, social and ecological issues as demonstrated, in extreme situations, such as the Bhopal catastrophe.

A paradox has to be noted: although labour is “unlimited”, child labour is quite common in some southern countries. Parents have no choice because of poverty: child labour may be therefore a condition for the survival of the family but, at the same time, it is a way for countries to produce at very low costs.

3. From Economic to Sustainable Development

3.1 The three dimensions of development

Many authors have criticised the purely economic vision of development. René Passet (1979) and Nathan Keyfitz (1989), for example, have focused on the contradictions between economic and ecological approach of development. For instance, in economics what is referred as “production” is often considered by ecologists as destruction. The conception of time is also different: in one case time is linear and contracted and in the other there is more emphasis on the long term and time may be cyclical.

In the former times “underdeveloped countries” were opposed to “developed countries”. The term “developing” is now preferred to “underdeveloped” to qualify southern countries. But the distinction is still made on the basis of the level of GNP per capita. UNDP, among others, has criticised this index. The importance of the social dimension of development was emphasised and the use of the HDI (Human development index) was introduced (PNUD, 1993; Véron, 1996). The report of the Brundtland Commission (Commission mondiale sur l’environnement et le développement, 1987) stressed the importance of the social dimension of development but also its ecological dimension.

If now all countries agree on the necessity to consider simultaneously the three dimensions of development – at the Cairo Conference, in 1994, chapter III (“Interrelationships between population, sustained economic growth and sustainable development”) was adopted almost without any discussion (United Nations, 1994) – some countries still consider that there is a hierarchy between these three dimensions: China, for instance, in *prepcorn* meetings, in New York, stated that economic progress was a priority because of the high level of poverty. At that time the Chinese representative stated that in the future environmental protection would become a main issue. Development is multidimensional, but it is also paradoxical.

3.2 Development as a paradox

At the level of India, the child sex ratio rose slightly, from 106 in 1991 to 108 in 2001 (Nanda, Véron). But the north-west, particularly Haryana and Punjab, experienced a sharp increase in the sex ratio of the population from 0 to 6 years old (table 1). Though the upward trend in child sex ratio has been observed in these two states since 1961, the

year from which data are available on post independent India, the discrimination seems to have relatively intensified since the 1980s.

Table 1: *Inter-state variations in child (0-6 years) sex ratio in India (1961-2001)*

States/UTs	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
Andhra Pradesh	100	101	101	103	104
Arunachal Pradesh	...	--	--	102	104
Assam	--	--	--	103	104
Bihar	101	104	102	105	107
Chhatisgarh	...	...	...	102	103
Goa	--	--	--	104	107
Gujarat	105	106	106	108	114
Haryana	110	111	111	114	122
Himachal Pradesh	...	--	--	105	111
Jammu & Kashmir	---	--	--	--	107
Jharkhand	...	...	...	102	104
Karnataka	101	102	103	104	105
Kerala	103	102	103	104	104
Madhya Pradesh	102	102	102	106	108
Maharashtra	102	103	105	106	109
Manipur	...	--	--	103	104
Meghalaya	...	--	--	101	103
Mizoram	...	--	--	103	103
Nagaland	...	--	--	101	103
Orissa	97	86	101	103	105
Punjab	111	111	110	114	126
Rajasthan	105	107	105	109	110
Sikkim	--	--	--	104	101
Tamil Nadu	102	103	103	104	106
Tripura	...	--	---	103	103
Uttar Pradesh	106	108	107	108	109
Uttaranchal	...	...	...	105	110
West Bengal	99	99	102	103	104
A. & N. Islands	---	--	--	103	104
Chandigarh	...	--	--	111	118
Daman and Diu	...	...	...	104	108
Delhi	108	110	108	109	116
D. & N. Haveli	--	--	--	99	103
Lakshadweep	--	--	--	106	103
Pondicherry	--	--	--	104	104
INDIA	102	104	104	106	108

Notes: '...' indicates that the States were part of other States, and '--' indicates the Census was not conducted in Assam in 1981, and in Jammu and Kashmir in 1991.

Sources: 1. Final Population Totals, India, Census of India 1991, Paper 2 of 1991.

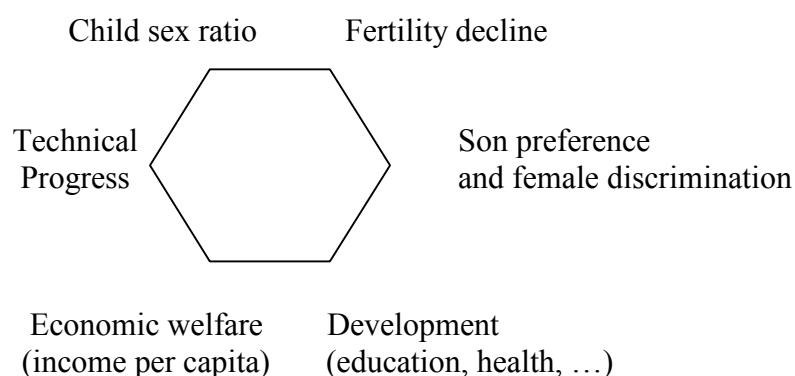
2. Provisional Population Totals, India, Census of India 2001, Paper 1 of 2001.

In these states of north-west India, fertility declined. The economic status of these states is, compared to others states, high. Technical progress (ultrasound techniques) was introduced to improve the health of mothers and children. But the techniques have been diverted in order to know the sex of the foetus. So, in spite of development, abortion is practiced to avoid birth of a female child.

In the background of persisting son preference, falling fertility may be considered in the framework of an ongoing changing context, that we can characterize by interactions between economic welfare (increase of the per capita income), development (in terms of

education, health, etc.), technical progress (availability of reproductive technology) and some reluctance for daughters (figure 1).

Figure 1: *A new context : dynamics of gender imbalance*



Given the socio-cultural characteristics of Haryana and Punjab, interaction between fertility behaviour and son preference need to be analysed through two distinct hypotheses, while considering fertility transition:

Hypothesis 1 – Fertility decline is largely independent of social development (for instance, it is largely induced by family planning programmes); in a context of unchanging son preferences, it reinforces gender bias.

Hypothesis 2 – Economic and social development induces simultaneous change in both fertility behavior and preference for son(s); in this case female foeticide may also exist, but temporarily, depending on the relative speed of decline in fertility and decline in son preference.

In this case development doesn't reduce son preference. Punjab and Haryana are largely seen as "model" States for their rapid pace of economic growth (they experienced the "Green Revolution" in the late 1960s and early 1970s) but female discrimination is still particularly intense in these states. .

4. Converging models between North and South

4.1 Generalisation of the demographic transition

Some decades or years ago developed and developing countries were still opposed in terms of the stage of demographic transition they had achieved. The situation is different now. All the countries have at least initiated and, in some cases, almost finished their transition. Of course, there are still specificities between North and South (hypothesis of a second demographic transition: see for example Van de Kaa, 1987). The tempo of demographic transition is, for example, not the same: countries which are nowadays developed took much time for fertility to decline from about 6 children per woman to 2 children while, in some developing countries as China, fertility decline was very rapid (Chesnais, 1986).

The migratory potential of the South will reduce in the mid/long run but the demographic momentum is still dominating the age structure. Fertility has reduced but people attaining the age of activity are still numerous and will remain so in the coming years.

Apart from the fact that their demographic situation is converging, North and South are facing the same challenges in terms of sustainable development.

4.2 Towards common development problems

Developed and developing countries still experience specific trends but they are also facing common problems such as ageing, environmental degradation, urbanisation (Barnier, Tucoulet, 1999), etc. Homelessness is a problem for both developed and developing countries.

Kinsella Kevin and Velkoff Victoria A. (2001) have given a global picture of ageing and focused on the differences and similarities between North and South. The demographics of ageing reveals substantial differences in the speed of ageing, the relative weight of family and social solidarity, etc. For instance, the proportion of elderly people is low in Asia or Africa compared with the situation in Europe or North America but there will be a very increase, in the next thirty years, of the elderly in the South.

Africa and Asia are less urbanised than the rest of the world : the rate of urbanisation is less than 40 percent in Africa and Asia but exceeds 70 percent in developed countries as well as in Latin America (it exceeds 80 % in Northern America). But Africa and Asia experienced very rapid population growth and among the most populated urban agglomerations many belong to the South.

It is no longer possible to divide the world in two parts concerned by very specific issues. The former Third World has broken up. And simultaneously Humanity needs to refer to a common model, which could be a reference for everyone.

5. A model common to North and South?

5.1 The fragmentation of the South

The “South” is becoming increasingly heterogeneous. The increasing diversity within developing countries results in there no longer being only one South. This diversity may be considered in purely demographic terms (stage of demographic transition for example) but also in economic terms. Some countries, particularly in Africa, are making no progress at all because of civil wars or economic and political crises. On the contrary some Asian countries are experiencing very rapid economic growth.

In big countries such as China or India, demographic and economic inequalities may be very acute. In India for example the levels of fertility, of contraceptive use, of literacy, of urbanisation, etc. vary considerably from one state to another. In India there is even a divide between North and South, the South being more developed than the North.

Although the South is becoming heterogeneous, North and South are, in a way, becoming more homogeneous.

5.2 A common model of development

The slogans “One Earth” or “Our Common Future” popularised some years ago mean that what happens in one country concerns also the rest of the world. The catastrophe of Chernobyl reminded everyone that there are no borders when it comes to air pollution. Countries may be in competition for water resources as in the case of the Middle East (Palestine and Israel) or East Asia (China and Vietnam). The construction of a dam in one country may be damageable to other countries. Countries are linked in many ways and the world is interdependent.

Globalisation, urbanisation, the development of transport and media induce a convergence in behaviours. People living in the big cities of the South tend to adopt the same patterns of consumption than people in the megalopolis of the North.

But the fundamental problem of sustainable development is finally to invent a new life style and new modes of consumption, less unequal in economic terms and more respectful of the environment than the present northern model. This model has to be shared by all humans. Such a deep economic inequality between North and South cannot persist, but sustainable development cannot be achieved through a global increase in production and consumption.

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