

It is another matter, however, if Southern agricultural products are given access to northern markets. An increase in agricultural exports would not necessarily profit the marginalized majority. An increase in exports often leads to increased competition for the use of scarce land. As it is more profitable, farming for export wins out over farming for domestic use or even farming for subsistence. All too often, a familiar paradox occurs: Although the total agricultural production increases, the assurance of food provision within the country becomes less certain. In this case, more fairness on the world market leads to less fairness for the poor. Again, the principle of equity between nations is at odds with the principle of equity within nations. Moreover, it is doubtful whether it would serve sustainability in both the South and North if European or Japanese agriculture had to face competition on the world market unprotected. In the South, this step would encourage resource-intensive monocultures and lead away from farming agro-ecological systems for domestic consumption. In Europe and Japan, on the other hand, the availability of cheaper imported products could lead to bankruptcy across large parts of the agricultural community and disassociate the population from their ecological basis, making them dependent on foodstuff from abroad. In an environmentally insensitive trade system, therefore, the demand for greater equity inevitably leads to a decline in sustainability.

In light of these considerations, it is possible to come to some conclusions: In whichever field, be it climate, biodiversity or trade, if the North fails to negotiate environmental agreements which the South sees as fair, sustainability stands no chance. In short: *there will be no ecology without equity*. However, if the South continues to demand ever greater shares in the robber economy, sustainability also stands no chance. Equity is not compatible with environment conservation unless it is part of environmentally-friendly development. *There can also be no equity without ecology*.

Annotation

- 1 This text was written in 2002 and is based on the Heinrich Böll Foundation World Summit Paper No. 8, "Rio and the North/ South Divide".

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Johannesburg and beyond: A political ecology perspective

In the last decade, ecology proved to be the battle of the XXIst century and the obstacles and enemies of a "good" ecological policy (sustainable development) to be particularly aggressive and powerful. In this paper I shall not go into details about the difficulties the French Green Party encountered when trying to change its country's public policies as I dedicated another book to this topic (Lipietz 2003). I rather like to concentrate on the changes that occurred on the level of international political ecology; I refer to them as "general crises" and "global crises".

1. Hegemony of the WTO and the USA

Unfortunately, the most important change is the blow against and even the retreat of humanity's commitment towards assuming responsibility for our ecological destiny, which characterised the Marrakech 1994 founding conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The consequences of this agreement have developed much faster than the few International Environment Agreements (IEA), whose foundations were laid in 1992 in Rio. The creation of the WTO and especially of its Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) has formed a worldwide trade organisation, in the sense that rules of free trade are imposed which are not based on principles which should prevail in the field of trade, to protect the world against general or global ecological crises: "Do not do to others as you would not like to be done to yourself", "Do not do to others as they would not like to be done to". Moreover, the WTO should soon have been flanked by its equivalent in the field of investment, the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI). However, this time civil society's protest could stop the blow that was to be administered against it.

This dictatorship of the market as institutionalised by the WTO has progressively grown with the dominant economic power – the United States of America – refusing all political transnational constraints and any attempt to regulate an economically – and increasingly ecologically – "globalised" but politically fragmented world of sovereign states. Indeed, the only reform that has the capability to such a situation is the development of a global or at least multilateral social and environmental legislation. While the WTO is an organisation on this level, its essential content is to prohibit all others! As to the USA, it has progressively lifted the principle of its

own sovereignty to a level of absolutism without rules, reminiscent of Alcibiade's Athens, governing the world with "shock and awe". It is no coincidence that the most "sovereign" power in terms of diplomacy and military is at the same time the most "irresponsible" in view of the global and generalised ecological crises caused by free trade. Georges Bush Sr.'s declaration at the conference of Rio – "our way of life is not negotiable" – was the beginning of a devilish thread leading from the first Gulf war to the refusal to ratify the Kyoto agreements and (more politically motivated) the International Criminal Court, leading after 9/11 2001 to the rejection of the Geneva conventions on the laws of war and finally, in March 2003, to ignoring the Security Council and the Charta of the United Nations and to the new Gulf war ... always to guarantee the supplies for this "non-negotiable way of life". In *Berlin, Bagdad, Rio* (Lipietz 1992), I followed the first steps along this route. Ten years later, the United States, "condottieri" of the other large economic powers (Japan, Europe, Russia), had turned itself into the "ruler of the planet", while organising its looting for its own profit.

In the meantime, these others great powers had come under pressure from the increasingly revolting public and gradually accepted the idea that a renewed multilateralism was the only chance for humanity given the raging market forces and the unique hyper-power gone mad ... and the more and more tangible ecological constraints.

2. Johannesburg – a stopping point?

The Johannesburg summit on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Rio conference marked the first blow against the undivided hegemony of the WTO and the USA. It was a difficult summit, discouraging because of many of its aspects. In reality, however, it marks a battle won against an ultraliberal offensive which could have led to much worse. In some way, a "battle of the Marne of sustainable development" was fought, which means we had some years of trench warfare before the counterattack!

And it was to be expected. Right after Rio I raged against my green friends, the Green party, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth etc. They said: "This was no mountain but only a molehill..." No, it was not a molehill, it was Rio. And it was necessary to defend Rio. When we spend our time saying that what we obtained is slightly better than nothing, we are not very well armed to defend ourselves against those claiming it was already too much.

While sustainable development is in the interest of all, this interest is only statistic. Some can expect to live better on a planet that becomes less worth living on when seen from a global point of view. It is enough to remain in the increasingly narrow niche of the rich. Sustainable development is both an ethical and a political choice.

Johannesburg was the reconfirmation of this choice. There is no more to it but this is already very much.

Our opponents in Johannesburg were of course the (very powerful) multinational companies and the United States. According to them, the market alone will ensure public interest by organising the convergence of private interests. Others say that a supplementary layer is needed: "universal morals", shared values, and the mutual commitment to respecting these values so that the whole does not explode. The first point of view was developed by Mandeville and Adam Smith, explaining that it is not out of philanthropy that the baker bakes bread. On the contrary, he expects to earn money through baking bread (since the people need bread) and to buy what he needs. The other point of view objects that the market does not necessarily achieve this balance because there are power conflicts at work: the market as the survival of the fittest. For example, social Catholicism rises criticism: "The freedom of the enterprise is like the fox loose in the henhouse" – an objection that has become a paroxysm because of the frequent demands for this brand of "sustainable development".

To paraphrase Adam Smith, it is not because they are for sustainable development that companies such as Générale des Eaux (Vivendi), Lyonnaise des Eaux and others will invest billions in healthy water but because of their own interests in it. All you need is a good price system for everyone in order to reach sustainable development while following one's own market interests. Others will answer that due to different reasons this cannot be the case: because of unequal forces, because future generations cannot express their interests, because the initial allocations are not ideal, etc.

Again, this is a very old idea. Immediately after Mandeville, there was a just as colourful counter attack with Marquis de Sade's book *Justine* and the *Misadventures of Virtue*. A young, charming woman in favour of collective progress unfortunately clashes with people who rape and torture her, telling her "listen, we have the right balance of power to do this to you". She answers: "But this is terrible, you are hurting me very much", to which they reply "yes, but it pleases us". In a word, by following our private interests we come to a collective result which is not extremely favourable to everyone. In my opinion, this option can only lead to disaster; nevertheless, it almost won.

At the preparatory conference for Johannesburg in Bali we could see the usual practice of things no longer agreed on being "put into brackets" because several delegations objected. This included elements which had been accepted as "universal public morals of sustainable development" at the Rio conference. Phrases such as "the defence of the environment is a common but differentiated obligation" (i.e. everyone has to defend the environment but not everyone has the same means to do so), which were agreed on in Rio, were no longer object of a consensus ten days before the closing of the Johannesburg conference! The "precautionary approach" stipulates that when a company wants to launch a new product, of which it expects miracles for itself and

society following Adam Smith's optimism, the state as the power with the monopoly of legitimate violence has to prohibit it if there is the risk of a disaster. This principle was also put into brackets. And there are numerous other examples.

Finally the brackets came down. We went back to the collective public morals of Rio. This is already wonderful because after 10 years of recoil we managed to overcome the effects of the Marrakech conference, which founded the World Trade Organisation. With the WTO, humanity seemed to reject Rio and assign itself to the holy rules of the market as the only form of regulation – resulting in extraordinary lawsuits based on the WTO norms, such as the one of the American farmer whose fields were contaminated with GMOs and who was convicted by a court for using genetically modified grains patented by Monsanto (even if it was because of the wind and therefore without his consent!). Instead of getting compensation for the pollution he had to pay... This recoil was almost chiselled into stone at Johannesburg, against the will of all the ecologists and ecological NGOs wanting to establish a hierarchy of norms: International norms for the defence of the environment such as the ones for the defence of social or human rights should win over the freedom of trade.

Who tried to destroy the spirit of Rio? First and very simply, extremely powerful interests underestimated in Stockholm and again in Rio. George Bush Sr.'s phrase in Rio – “our way of life is not negotiable” – is in some ways the translation of the sadistic phrase “I am powerful and therefore I do to you as I wish” and had become the norm for many countries. Then, in Johannesburg, the European Union (and president Chirac) seemed to take the lead in the fight for sustainable development. We already gained a lot by the preservation of phrases, i.e. by the proclamation of virtue, which is already much better than cynicism or sadism. Hypocrisy – welcoming virtue without practicing it oneself – is better than denying the necessity of ethical norms! However, the weakness of hypocrisy is that it is not convincing. Europe was not convincing. When the EU says to the group of 77 (third world countries) that such and such measure should be taken, they answer that the North would have to start by helping them.

We will only be able to decrease the “sadistic” American hegemony through an alliance between the European Union and the other peoples on earth. But this presupposes putting one's own house in order first. For we will not be able to convince others if our democratic language (“human rights”, “sustainable development”) is perceived as a festival of hypocrisy by them – although, again, hypocrisy is better than cynicism. We will only reduce American hegemony and change mentalities in the United States if Europe sets an example.

At the same time, we Europeans are bad concerning the Convention on biodiversity. We are on the bad side, on the side of North America. Why? Because regarding climate, we already use half the amount of energy per produced € as the Americans.

We have a technological lead in energy compared to the United States – but not in biodiversity: We are commercial rivals, both wanting to appropriate the world's biodiversity by destroying indigenous cultures, by invading and destroying local productions etc. And the target to stop the biodiversity loss in Europe and contribute to a significant reduction worldwide by 2010 appears to be another manifestation of hypocrisy. With its agricultural policy, and despite all “reforms”, Europe is currently destroying the capacity of farmers worldwide to feed themselves and their own people. How could Europe be believed?

Europe wants to be a pioneer in the defence of what Richard Kagan (2002) calls the “Kantian” model in a now famous article. He emphasises a model of international relations including universal morals free of religion, compared to the United States which defend a Hobbesian model: “May the best win, I am powerful so I impose my law on you”. How can Europe convince the rest of the world to be “Kantian”, to observe the general interest and to prescribe it as a universal rule for itself, when it does not practice the maxim it preaches to others outside of and often even inside its borders? The Kantian principle Richard Kagan alludes to is the categorical imperative. This is not so different from the Christian principle “love thy neighbour as thyself”, and in a way this amounts to the same as sustainable development.

The problem is that our way of life cannot be more generalised than the one of the Americans. It is not Kantian. Therefore this concerns each and every European and not only their governments. If one wants to be Kantian, then the Indians or Chinese have the same rights to things as we do. And how much greenhouse gas do we have the right to emit? 350 kg of carbon per year. This means being Kantian today! However, the Europeans produce 2000 kg per year.

3. Generalised crises: Will insurance and the law help?

Local crises become “generalised crises” (i.e. the people “responsible” for them and their “victims” belong to the same society), when they reproduce themselves around the world because of the generalisation of a development model guided by unique economic logics (of the market and of profit) and end up gaining a global dimension. The multiplication of oil pollution as well as the risks of international trade of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and even more the dissemination of their seeds, are good examples. Clearly the economic logic which increases risk factors is global even if the effects are local. For in the long-term all fields, all plates and all stomachs all over the world are threatened by the invasion of GMOs. Furthermore all the coasts of the world are threatened by shipwrecks (or at least the outgassing) of more oil tankers (due to a world development model that is “energy voracious”), which are less safe (due to a general tendency of large oil companies to “externalise” the transport and even the property of hydrocarbons during their transport).