

THE RELATIONSHIP SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – ENVIRONMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF WORLD ECONOMIC CRISIS

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Abstract:

A development of the society against nature is costly, risky and dangerous. This is the sound of the warning signal pulled by the participants in the conference “Which Forces Are Driving Europe?” organized at the end of May 2008 by the Romanian Association for the Club from Rome. The rise of the oil price, the lack of own energy resources and the aging of the population represent enough reasons for Europe to adopt the sustainable development way, cooperating with the rest of the continents, stated the Romanian and international representatives of the Club from Rome. The main issue is that there is no vision on a long term. The solution? “Education is the key factor” in this equation. Besides, among the practical initiatives taken into account by the European leaders of the Club from Rome, in the near future, there is “a new integrated program, lasting for three years” which can offer a long term vision of the global development, in a stable balance with the consume and the usage of the natural resources.

Key words: *sustainable, environment, crisis, resource, global, development.*

JEL classification: *O13, O14, O29, Q01, Q27, Q34, Q56*

Of course, the image that man pictures about nature depends on the position that each individual fills in the natural and social plans, and these positions can be extremely different and will have the symbolic projections of the collective or individual ego, in opposition with the natural phenomena.

The relationship with the environment out of which man was created and in which he was placed, should not be on one side, reduced to the man’s satisfaction of needs only, but it should be a dynamic and mutual relationship and man receives but also offers and rebuilds from an ecologic point of view.

We must state that throughout the history, the human society had to confront many times with the nature’s adversity, that in order to overcome it, man brought a lot of prejudices which often turned against civilization. Mankind managed so far to neutralize the difficulties that appeared in its way, by having a community spirit and a moral consensus which unfortunately cannot be found in contemporary society.

Nature has given numerous signs of nervousness and many people have understood that they should change their dangerous habits.

However, numerous people are still guided by arrogance, greed, hatred and jealousy and do not want to see but their personal interests!

A first measure, in the benefit of the environment, could be the globalisation of the policy towards nature. By associating the notions for the protection of common goods like the seas and the oceans, the rivers, the sky and the soil, by uniting the efforts of the scientific research against all the possible prejudices which nature can suffer, people can achieve – by means of a common financial support – a great “leap ahead” towards ecology on Earth and the sustainable development.

The sustainable development essentially represents the intention of ensuring some major possibilities of internal transformation, taking into account the rational modifications of the systems of the environment. This contains the idea of maximum

availability in the future and of rational modifications (and minimum!) in the present. Essentially, the sustainable development represents a particular case of development (as a generic term) within which time has a great importance, due to the preservation of future possibilities of the potential involved in the transformation.

From this point of view, the sustainable development emphasizes the preservation of future availability, through the preservation of the environment and its resources, in the perspective of future generations (that way of thinking and acting rationally now for then), the only element which is not controlled is time (which can influence multiple components of the environment through unpredicted and unwanted actions).

The multiplication of the number and complexity of the problems regarding the relation of mutual conditioning: sustainable development – environment, in the perspective of European integration, has made imperative the necessity for the revision of tasks in this field and the formulation of new ones. Thus, the actions for the protection of the environment are defined in close connection to the policy of economic development, of sustainable development, using the economic prognosis and the social prognosis on short and long terms (2020).

The state of the environment depends on our collective actions. The sustainable environment of tomorrow depends on the way in which we act today... The community must use a more efficient manner, its moral, economic and political authorities in order to intensify the efforts made at an international level for solving the planet's problems and for the encouragement of a sustainable development. The solution is changing our relationship with nature, but also with the society which has become more and more focused on consume! (See picture 1)

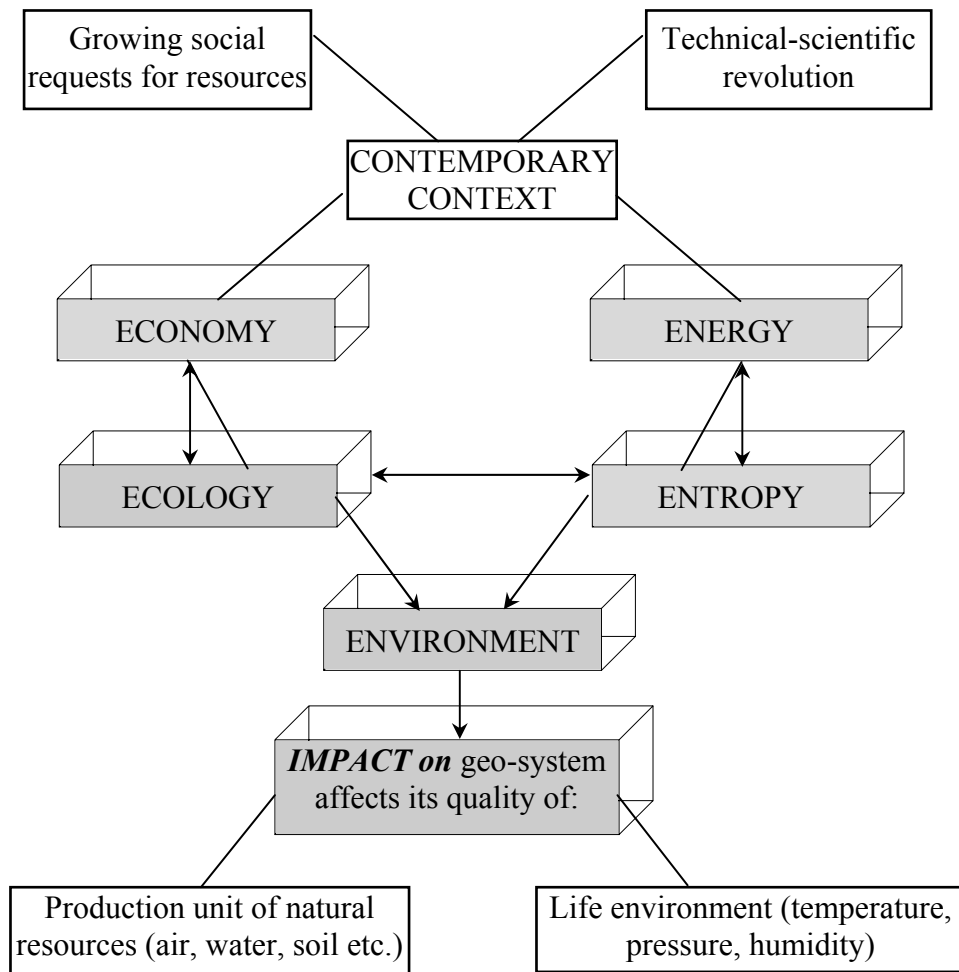
A. The relationship man-environment:

- economic (varied resources offered by nature: air, water, soil, vegetation, fauna, energy mineral resources – renewable, unrenovable);
- social (habitat, social relations, varied social communities – genetically, linguistically, ethnic, cultural);
- ecologic (the divers human ecosystem + the human ecology)
- Philosophical – pre-logic mentality – which tolerates contradictions, but do not tolerate hazard; - logic mentality – specific for the Greek philosophy and is based on reason and proofs; - ecologic mentality – dominates the 20th and 21st centuries from a local level towards a universal one.

B. The reconciliation of the relationship man-environment means:

1. The change of each person's way of thinking (because there is always another alternative)
2. The creation of “a democracy of nature” (especially when there are our lives and environment at stake, in which the human species has become the “guinea pig” of some experiences at the scale of the whole nature).
3. The optimum relational balance – between what we want from nature, what it can offer and what we need to explore without any taxes from nature.
4. The recreation of life conditions and of relation between man and nature capable of reintroducing some of the elementary behaviours of respect towards nature and of imperative responsibility (not confuse or occasional – 5th June Environment Day).
5. The ecologic reconstruction

Picture 1 – The relationship man-environment in the contemporary context



Of the same age, the reconstruction as well as the degradation of nature, and if the first one is delayed, the price of the repairs will rise and we risk to see the following prediction come true “future acts against us” (Louis Armand).

Saving nature gains a new dimension, which follows two objectives:

1. The preservation of fundamental resources: air, water, soil, vegetation and fauna, under the form and in the necessary proportions for the benefit of man.
2. The preservation and the reconstruction of the destroyed and degraded ecosystems, which are so necessary for man from aesthetic and scientific points of view.

In order to succeed, this ecologic reconstruction needs to fulfil the following conditions:

- the identification of the factor or the cause which launched the degradation and unbalance of the respective ecosystem;
- the reduction of the force of action of this factor;
- the produced degradation should not exceed the threshold of function (of interior life) of the ecosystem;
- the application of a set of knowledge and advanced technical means for the set purpose;
- the application of the geographic prognosis of the phenomenon in order to reduce the intrusion in the environment system;

- The knowledge of relations between man and nature, of the ecologic connections involved in the development.

Nevertheless, the ecologic moral, however salutary, could not avoid the disappearance of a species of animal per day and of a species of plant per week, synthetic indicator of the ecologic realities of the world and of the fact that they are far from correspondent with the good intentions expressed in the long term plans of the organisations.

The relation man-environment (see picture 1) has entered a new stage, since the 18th century, together with the industrial revolution. In time, the damages brought to nature by man are irreversible, which has made the English historian Arnold Toynbee say: "From the master of creation, man has become the cancer of the planet".¹

In order to act according to sustainability and globalisation, the human society needs relations between nations, persons, economies, as well as the access to information and a greater knowledge of the general human relationships.

Thus, the sustainable development means transformations and performances which correspond not only to Romania's current necessities, but also to the global transition of big systems to a new model of civilisation. From a point of view of the geography's insertion into the durable development, this means:

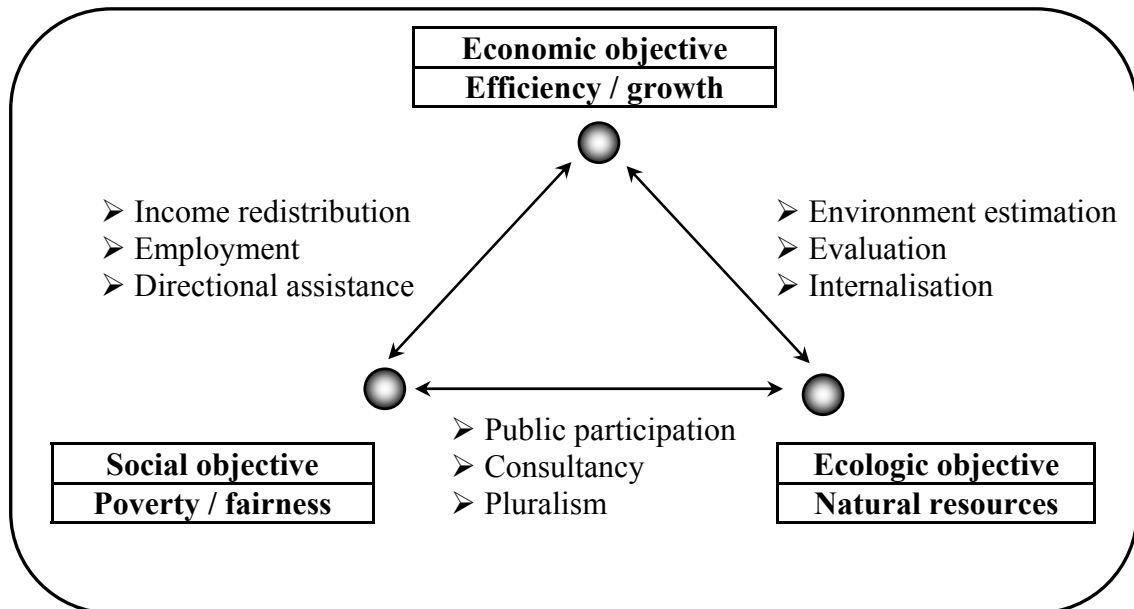
- the constitution and the function of the state, understood as a device that protects the society in a new, competent and visible way: the real democratisation of all the spheres of human existence and the growth of each individual's option, the formation of the ecologic, political cultures;
- the construction of a marketing economy through transformations which can encourage investments (the avoidance of the slogan "we do not sell our country") which can stimulate competence regarding work, free initiative, taking risks, the fight against corruption etc.;
- the direction of the sustainable development towards the improvement of the quality of life – the growth of hope, the assurance of a high degree of instruction, the guarantee of human rights and liberties;
- the promotion of the sustainable development for people and through people, as a unitary process of the economic growth, of the investment in the human capital and of the assurance of the ecologic security;
- The promotion of the continuous development in order to stabilize and to preserve the biodiversity, the integration of the ecologic processes in the decisional act.
- The promotion of a new and real concept of security for people: - food; - ecologic; - social; - of economic alliances at geo-regional and at sub-regional levels;
- The eradication of poverty, the reduction of geo-differences in the lifestyle of different categories of population in different regions of the country;
- The assurance of knowledge, information, awareness and participation of the population in the process of sustainable development;
- The free access to economic, social information and to the creation and usage of the national and international networks of communication in the sustainable development field;
- The ecology of knowledge, the reshaping of the mentalities, the reorientation of the educational, ethical and moral, cultural, scientific and technical systems towards real and authentic intellectual and spiritual values.

¹ Mirela Mazilu, 2004, Ecology and the protection of the environment, Mirton Publishing House, Timisoara, pg. 161;

One of the major objectives of the sustainable development is the protection of the environment, because the degradation of the environment remains an obstacle in the way of the development.

The concept of sustainable development itself has evolved and it contains nowadays three ways of approach, and three objectives: economic, social and technologic.

Picture 1 – Alternatives and Transactions between the three main objectives of the sustainable development



The economic approach is based on the maximum income flux concept which can be generated by the maintenance of a reserve of values (or of capital), which has produced these benefits. This concept is based on the principle of economic efficiency, applied to the usage of poor resources. The problems of interpretation appear at the identification of the types of capital which must be maintained (manufactured, natural or human) and of the possibility for a substitution, the evaluation of the capital types, especially of the ecologic resources. The supplementary difficulties trigger irreversible problems and of catastrophic crash, which are frequent during the last decades.

The ecologic approach is based on the biologic and physical stability of the ecosystems. The viability of the subsystems that are essential to the global stability of the entire system is also very important. A fundamental aspect is offered to the protection of the biological diversity. Moreover, the natural systems can be interpreted this way too, in order to include all the components of the biosphere, including the anthrop ones, like the cities. The accent is placed on the preservation of the elasticity and of the dynamic capacity of such systems to adapt to change in time and space, and not on the preservation of an ideal state.

The social and cultural approach looks for the preservation of the stability of social and cultural systems, including by reducing the destructive conflicts. The important aspects of this type of approach consist of the promotion of fairness within the same generation (especially the eradication of poverty), as well as of fairness between different generations (involving the assurance of the rights of future generations). It is recommended to pursue the preservation of cultural diversity existing all over the world, as well as the usage of the knowledge related to the viable practices included in the less dominant cultures. Modern society must encourage and promote pluralism and the original participation for the purpose of creating a more efficient

decisional frame for the sustainable social development, examine the maintenance of a set of possibilities in relation with the strict preservation of the basic values. This is due to the fact that the preferences and technologies are not constant throughout the life of more generations, so that the preservation of a basic value proves to be excessive.

We know that many of the ecologic accidents multiplied exponentially and far from being naïve, are considered costs of progress.

The second millennium has just stepped out of the limelight, and it has allowed ecologists and lovers of nature to complete the balance from increasing unbalance of late-effect threats, nuclear weapons and nuclear plants to the pollution around us. Each of them has admitted on the spot the signs of evil: the unlimited exploitation of nature. In fact, nobody thought about it anymore.

It disappeared from our horizon together with its name and complexity, but nature has reappeared and has reminded us that it exists, that the mere fact of living depends on it. It has not reappeared with all its glowing beauty, but like a ghost, mobilizing people to form the well-known ecologic movements which obsessively present the “end of nature”...

Of course we do not expect these movements to surf on the top of the waves nor the spectral return of the inner Hamlet who repeats: “to be or not to be for nature, that is the question”.

We cannot afford playing with nature, or the wizard apprentice, because this means entering consciously in the circle of a society which destroys itself. If there is human kind, it is one which dominates “what it does” and “what it knows”, which breaks this circle anytime this is formed.

Each time it is talked about creating a society able to maintain the connection to nature, to evaluate the sciences and technologies, to impose a calling. In other words, the promotion of these social relations between groups, genders and generations has been wished for in order to allow such a replacement of nature ... knowing the fact that “man is a nesting animal, in all situations, it needs a home to offer its body. This home has become an infernal machine.”²

The action of protection the environment (supported by geography as well) can be realised through education. The extension of the environmental dimension in the didactical network, strategy confirmed and supported by UNESCO, is the main objective of the education referring to environment (education relative a l’environnement), having as perspectives the awareness of the severe environmental problems, the formation of a responsible attitude and also of a positive one of the young generation towards the protection of the environment.

Considered a priority, the promotion and the realisation through geography of education related to environment through the instruction (theoretical and pragmatically) – constitute the most efficient way of solving the complex problem of the environment, becoming aware of its inexorable laws.

“Thus, we should know that this thing, together with a decreasing demographic balance (Romania has lost during the last 18 years almost 1.7 millions of inhabitants, to which we add the 2 millions of Romanians who work outside the country), lead to one conclusion: the increase of the human quality.

It is also true the fact that starting from the contemporary world picture so troubled by paradoxes, we consider that too much hope has been put into the power of education and in the assuming of social responsibilities at an international level, when the contemporary society offers us the image of a social, economic and cultural assembly loaded by inequalities and differences, if we take into consideration only the economic situation of states, their way to a real democracy and the multitude of cultural

² Serge Moscovici, About nature, Metaille Publishing House, 2004, Scientific Publishing House, Chisinau.

models which constitute, in fact, the uncontested wealth but also the subtle and difficult to overcome resistance factor of the contemporary world.

That is why I consider that in a world in which everything seems to change its configuration, and the rhythms of achieving the new are more and more soliciting and alert, the teachers should learn how to accept transformation and to assume the responsibility of managing it.

We are the contemporaries of a policy of means, and we do not care at all for the purposes, in the name of that old dream of human kind, that of assuring the man's domination over nature, the victory of intelligence over material, not realizing that this dream would turn into a nightmare.

Let's dream of the imperative reconciliation of man with nature because the ones who cannot dream of a better world do not know how to change it either.

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*** *The collection of Terra magazine – The National Society of Geography in Romania*.