

The Importance of the Environment in the Development of Society

In the past, the development process was equal to the economic growth and wealth of society. However, it soon became apparent that health is one of the most valuable resources available to people, and the rapid growth of GDP had an adverse impact on public health. Development and the preservation of the environment are not mutually exclusive terms. However, with the attention of human society being concentrated on expanding the accumulated wealth, it became apparent that there was a conflict between these two notions due to the approach people chose. By not considering the ecological impact of new technologies, people damaged the ecosphere of the planet to an alarming point where this harm is easily observed. The effects of environmental degradation are bound to outweigh the benefits of economic growth in a long-term perspective (Alvarado & Toledo, 2016). While some studies show that development is linked with environmental degradation, this effect is present due to the widespread approach to the growth that puts generated value first, which will eventually lead to more losses.

Many communities continue to pursue rapid economic growth due to the fictitious goal extracted from the examples from the past. Western countries have set the planet on this path by judging countries based on the rates at which their economies expand (Muratori, 2019). However, as many of these countries have passed the Industrialization Era and nowadays enjoy the service-based economics of the Information Era, other countries continue to increase their exhaust each year. Third World countries that try to follow the path of Western countries face social, economic, and environmental issues (Muratori, 2019). This approach might eventually cost them more than they are gaining from expending their natural resources for export since the future generations will receive less output from the exploited land (Alvarado & Toledo, 2016). It is essential to establish a different set of standards that

will put factors other than generated wealth at the top of the list of priorities during development.

It is the duty of every country to put the well-being of its citizens first when developing new strategies for achieving progress. Muratori (2019) argues that “the Western lifestyle is characterised by the production of superfluous goods that go far beyond our needs and do not increase our well-being” (p. 82). The ongoing pursuit of wealth in society does not directly reflect the increase in the health and well-being of people. Environmental issues have a multitude of confirmed adverse impacts on the health of the population (Muratori, 2019). Therefore, this tendency is more likely to have an opposite effect on one’s health due to the strain people tend to put themselves through when pursuing wealth.

The current expansion is based heavily on the consumption of a vast amount of energy, which is achieved by exhausting fossil fuels at an alarming rate. However, these resources are not infinite and cause significant harm to the environment via emissions and technogenic disasters, such as oil spills, when used (Acheampong, 2018). In purely empirical researches, it is evident that economic growth is tied to energy consumption and pollution rates (Acheampong, 2018). While this is true for most developing countries, there is evidence that the increase in GDP does not cause higher energy consumption in the Asia-Pacific region due to its reliance on renewable energy (Acheampong, 2018). Moreso, Muratori (2019) argues that “endless growth is not possible or sustainable in the long term in a world with finite resources” (p. 81). Therefore, it is possible to avoid the development stages that require substantial power for wealth generation by using eco-friendly options for producing energy.

Some may argue that it is inevitable for developing countries to pass through the same levels of environmental pollution during their advancement toward modern standards of living. However, it is not a necessity for governments to consider this path as the only one available, as there are many alternatives provided by scientific society to facilitate economic

growth without harming the environment. Acheampong (2018) states that "energy consumption positively causes economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa while it negatively causes economic growth at the global" (p. 677). Alvarado and Toledo (2016) state that "encouraging change in productive activities, more efficient energy use, and, in particular, more efforts in changing energy sources" (p. 1216). Therefore, it is in the interest of the developed countries to supply the developing countries with the technologies and resources necessary to avoid harming the environment.

In conclusion, people need to stop treating the environment as an inevitable casualty in the process of development. The need for change is revealed to society via global climate change, the increased rate of natural and anthropogenic disasters, and the rising inequality between developed and underdeveloped countries. While there is no definite solution to the issue, it is vital for humanity to put more resources into expanding the understanding of sustainable development. Theories, such as degrowth, and global efforts to encourage conscious growth, such as the sustainable development goals, are vital for the future of humans as a species and the planet as a whole.

References

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