



**Conference**  
**ARE WE ON THE RIGHT TRACK?**  
**PARADIGM REVIEW BY CSOs AS**  
**DEVELOPMENT ACTORS**

Prague, Czech Republic, 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> May 2008

**Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2008**

**Thematic working group with T. Rajamoorthy (Malaysia)**

Facilitator: Ondrej Kopečný, Glopolis

**Input T. Rajamoorthy:**

We should be aware of the fallacies of neo-liberal claims. Even the East-Asian Model is not without problems.

**There has been a Democratic deficit** in this model, especially between 1955 and 1973 – whole period was shocking in this term. There are large concerns in term of human rights in the Asian region. Lots of corruption. No doubt there are changes, today they are returning to civil rules. The answer is not what neoliberalism suggests – e.g. free market – but greater participation is the way.

Thanks to the work of NGOs at the recent elections, there is now a greater opportunity for open dialogue. Their work opened up the space for participation from which they benefit further.

**Ecological aspect and sustainability** – Current model of development is failing in this, whole thing is in accumulating profit, problem of water, pollution. The middle-class society is intoxicated by the new consumerism spread all over Asia. How to suggest the new idea of lifestyles to them? T. Rajamoorthy is pessimistic about that.

Solution –we should start by checking what development the earth can sustain. The never ending process of accumulation is not acceptable.

**Comments:**

Olivier Consolo, CONCORD: Environmental movement is more than just a sector – 3 elements for the relative success of environmental movement worldwide, that we have not and from which we can understand the challenges that are ahead of us:

1. Better connected to research and scientific community– why are we so weak in connecting the work in the field with research?
2. There is a taboo in the development sector unlike in environmental movements about political parties. – We do not try to influence political parties programmes, Green NGOs have their own parties!
3. Environmental NGOs manage to get critical mass of citizens support (e.g. 15% of EU citizens support environmental movements).

We should get a good practice from other sectors.

T. Rajamoorthy: The sort of research we have has not been given the right prominence. Lack of such research, number of groups ready to fund and do such research is small and are always the

same. Political parties – major problem, not many parties having courage to get the solutions to development, not really that kind of programme you could get elected for. Society got consumerist. Not easy to control things to protect environment and be democratic. How do you propose to people not to use cars in town city? Not easy solutions. How do you persuade people to change their lifestyle?

Lidia Barreiros, CONCORD Advisory group:

1-How much is the East-Asian model exportable to Africa?

2-What about corruption that deviates money from the goals of development? New EU development policy focuses on budgetary support, but criticised because of corruption. How do you solve corruption in East-Asian model? The EU aid is with conditionality – that there are tools to control the corruption, capacity of government to channel the aid to achieve the objectives. NGOs criticised this way of aid.

T. Rajamoorthy: Does not suggest to export the Asian model, but to show that another way is possible. The point is to take inspiration of some of the practices, but not to replicate the whole model. Specific policy differences can be interesting, but e.g. liberalisation of financial sector on early stage can be a disaster. There are problems with exporting models. There are lessons to be drawn from Asian model on the role of state. About the corruption problems – the only answer is to alert the civil society. For instance, the press in Malaysia is often under control of political parties (have to get licence). But today, internet makes a huge difference as they are watchdogging state's affairs – all affairs are put on website right away + mailing to friends about what government is doing. A lot can be done by civil society about corruption.

Vathsala Aithal, India/Germany: About the change of lifestyle, she took the example of the Tata Nano car in India. Infrastructure is not ready for it, roads, traffic signs not ready for a massive increase of the number of cars.

There are tremendous research findings, but the problem is that the implementation takes 15 years. The research cannot keep pace with ecological destruction. Corruption is going day by day on the global scale.

India has a democratic thinking that is rooted at people level. Any alternative paradigm should be rooted at the local level and with people. Are you pro the Village republic concept, commune concept (took up by Ghandi)?

T. Rajamoorthy: These structures like village communes have their problems, a bit idealistic idea, but the substance is decentralising power in smaller forms, there are social structures to be taken on or destroyed (i.e. without idealising the Ghandi ideas). The constitution of power and participation of people is the core. People in East-Asia think it is their turn to live as they see it on TV (each have car, enjoying the drive) – but not thinking about the sustainability, not able to be constrained by the North that has it already. The technologies should be available, but not seen as the only way to solve everything.

James Mackie, Netherlands: he also had the romantic idea that local democracy is fundamental but realized that local democracy can be very conservative. In Europe there are regions with very local commune based systems (e.g. Swiss). Brussels pushed some of the environment protection measures that our governments do not want to fulfil. We need to have several levels of watchdogs (EU/Brussels watching the national). We are living in globalised world, there is no way we could overcome it without a global link (so local democracy is not the only solution). In Europe, consumerism is also rampant. Excessive consumption is a problem and we have not found a way to curb it yet.

T. Rajamoorthy: Yes, it can be, but there is no necessity for local democracy to be conservative. A whole bunch of people appeared to advocate in Russian case – commune was meant as the Christian base. Marx considered the base of commune as space for socialism.

Participant added to the question on the success of environmental NGOs: Environment gets much closer to people, disasters are also in the North. When you have a better idea of what poverty is, you are more supportive. It is also a question of political will. You must provide alternatives and explain why something shall be changed in order to protect environment.

T. Rajamoorthy: There is also the question about people's incentives to accept alternatives – people still want to have a car, although they can use good public transport. There must be more than just to get a quick public service.

Tobias Troll, Belgium: What is the role of Civil Society in the North? – they shall act as catalyst of change, and explain that aid cannot tackle all problems. The ecological movements are not that old, but very advanced, turning to political level, trying to change the behaviours.

T. Rajamoorthy: The NGOs should not become a substitute for the state.

Florent Sebban, France: Do you think that the Asian case is exportable? Would Europe let Africa to adopt another model of development with more regulation and protection?

T. Rajamoorthy: It is possible. But East-Asian countries are not always behaving correctly to Africa.

James Mackie: It is important to differentiate many types of capitalism e.g. social economy from Germany – with shortcomings, but that recognised the role of different stakeholders. Markets can do a lot of things, but we forget that market cannot distribute.

James Mackie, weblink recommendation - Whither EC Aid? <http://weca-ecaid.eu>

T. Rajamoorthy: There are different types of capitalism but the problem is that the system has its own dynamics of accumulation. You cannot stagnate.

*Minutes: Jana Krczmarova, FoRS, and Aurele Destree, Glropolis*