

Note:

The following were
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About Fairness

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About Fairness

from
Rio+10 Prepcom 3 (Serrano 2002)

It's about 'fairness in a fragile world'

Tired, old fashioned, but it's still mostly about justice in this distressed planet. And as others would say, it's all about equity, stupid. As the *Jo'burg Memo* puts it, 'fairness in a fragile world'.

The concept of sustainable development, from when it first popped up as a catch-all theme in the 1987 Brundtland Report (*Our Common Future*), has been at bottom about fairness. It's about fairness between and within nations and societies, and fairness to our environment now severely threatened by human action. This was the idea at the core of the 1992 Earth Summit, it remains the unfulfilled dream ten years after.

The agonizing process of negotiations preparatory to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), a.k.a Rio+10, mirrors the difficulty of negotiating fairness in our fragile

world. It shows across the board, whether the issue is about trade, environment, human rights or financing for development.

Despite their inherent weaknesses the 1992 agreements in Rio (Rio Declaration, Agenda 21, the two framework conventions on biodiversity and climate change, and statement of forest principles) somehow reflected what's possible at the time, that is, by way of a compromise to bring about more fairness in today's world. And how has it been ten years from Rio?

We see a more unequal world in 2002 than we had in 1992. Actions at all levels considered, the world community has failed overall to arrest the decline of the world's biodiversity and the destabilization of the global climate system.



Let's trace our assessment back to a 1992 baseline, for illustration. Around the 1992 Earth Summit, an interagency panel of scientists suggested that if we were to succeed in stabilizing the global climate system each individual then living would be entitled to a CO₂ emission level of only 1,500 kilograms a year. That time an American was already doing over 20,000 kilograms while a poor guy from Afghanistan or Zaire only about 100 kilograms. But more, the 1,500 kg/person norm (call it human right to shit the environment, if you like) had two assumptions: [1] no more deforestation, meaning, the then existing forest stands or carbon sinks stay as is, at least; and [2] zero growth of then around 5.3 billion world population.

Take this illustration as a metaphor of carrying capacity and global inequalities. At once you'd realize what it would take to build a much fairer world. An American would have to give up so much to enable an Afghan or Zairean to live a better life.

And yet Agenda 21 which was intended to address social and environmental problems was itself already a global compromise of sorts as much as it was considered a positive global deal. The so-called 'global deal' meant cutting down on emissions (read consumption or lifestyle) and transfers or sharing (ODA, debt relief, technology, and so on) from

the rich north-side and taking care of biodiversity and carbon sink restoration from the poor south-side. A cross-cutting theme of this agenda was reduction of poverty worldwide.

The overall conclusion about progress ten years down the road from Rio should be obvious. The two assumptions did not materialize, to begin with. The carbon sink continues to sink and biodiversity loss goes on despite efforts to arrest, if not reverse, the trend. World population hit 6 billion by October 1999. The world economy has now rolled into recession even as very little progress, if anything at all, has been made in closing the rich-poor divide. The US, for example, remains a nation accounting for only 4 percent of the world's people but consuming 44 percent of the world's resources. And more. In 2001 up to 1.3 billion people still live on \$1 dollar a day.

Why are things not working as intended and planned? An easy explanation is most intentions produce consequences not intended. And that most plans are often proven wrong anyway. Beyond this, there are any number of contradictory explanations.

The US had one explanation. In one preparatory committee (PrepCom) session of the 2002 UN Conference on Financing for Development (FfD) the US official statement suggested to discard so-called boring outcome documents and instead to just go for a one-pager or two-pager political declaration of allegiance to capitalism. Patterned after the post-September 11 line of "*you are either with us or against us*" by President Bush, this proposed new capitalist manifesto claims that countries suffering from the many ills and deprivations of today's world (social instability, lawlessness, poverty, corruption and so on) have only themselves to blame for failing to bring themselves up a bit closer to the level of



prosperity and stability of countries like the USA. The reason: they did not take the capitalist road or did not embrace capitalism religiously enough.

In the Rio+10 process US President Bush seems just as adamant as his father was in 1992: the American lifestyle is not up for negotiation. To give up on high living means deep cuts in emissions. The US would rather buy the rights of 'under-emitters' (Philippines, for example) through carbon trading arrangements, hoping to spread the shit around till the limit of the earth's carrying capacity is exhausted. That's mainly why the US rejected the Kyoto Protocol. That's why US negotiators are so predisposed to blocking any language in every UN document that hints at putting American lifestyle on the chopping block.

In many ways the attitude and position of the US symbolize those of the rich generally. In Prepcom 3, Greenpeace pointed to the US

allies Canada and Australia, and occasionally Japan, as the 'axis of evil' who won't budge on the energy issue. A similar stubbornness shows, for example, in how the OPEC member-countries within G-77 would resist the language 'sustainable energy systems' because this implies moving away from fossil-based fuels toward new and renewable energy regimes. In the case of many OECD countries, representing the rich industrial societies, the symbolism expresses as resistance to debt relief, committing additional resources and ODA, and transfer of technology in soft terms which should be settled issues way back the 1992 Earth Summit.

Likewise, this symbolism also applies to the lifestyle of the rich in poor and developing countries who cheat on their taxes and would not contribute to raising local resources for poverty programs and sustainable national development.

Fairness is once again on the negotiating table in the Rio+10 process. It shows in section after section of the outcome documents of the Johannesburg Summit. And yet, from the way negotiations are going, you would readily sense that the process would be as difficult, if not harder, now as ten years ago in Rio.



About Fairness

from

Bali No Commitment (Serrano 2002)

Report on Prepcom 4 of the
World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD),
a.k.a. Rio+10, held in Bali

A 'global deal' for human survival on this planet is one way of looking at the 1992 Rio summit. The 'deal' is not about the rich and powerful setting conditions for sharing, especially ones that are burdensome and humiliating to the poor. Rich and poor, they both lose in a global ecosystem collapse. What each side is expected to do, under the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, is but a fair share based on differentiated accountability for what had happened and continues to happen. Nobody's a beggar here. If poor peasants do organic farming or if municipal fishers manage coastal resources right, they're doing it for all of us. If a poor country takes care of biodiversity, it's doing a great service for all of humanity. These efforts deserve to be compensated somehow through untied ODA, unconditional debt relief, fair terms of trade, other forms of transfers. Real net transfers could be made possible if only the rich will begin to drastically change in the way they consume and produce things.

Put another way, the 'deal' is about redress of inequality in this world. The US, with only 4 percent of the world's population but consuming 44 percent of the world's energy resources, has got a lot to cut down, give up, and share with the rest of the world for the sake of sustainability and our common future. But American lifestyle is not up for negotiation. Not in Rio ten years ago. Not in Bali this time.

Some rich in other societies, poor or rich, are pretty much like the US. Indeed some of them are even much worse in how they carry on with their spending lifestyles. They own big corporations, travel on their own jet planes, buy mansions in Nice, evade and cheat on their taxes, and don't invest in their own country's development. They too probably let out to the environment more than 20,000 kilograms per



person each year like Americans do. And they too will oppose deep cuts on fossil-energy use, might even support nuclear energy and would not mind having their societies run by dictators.

As in the case of the US, the lifestyle of this other sort of rich is not up for negotiation. Not in Rio ten years ago. Not now in Bali.

That's the bottomline in this Rio+10 process. When you're lost in a hemorrhage of words it can be a handy guide to make sense of what's being proposed by whom and for what. Did you notice the first bold bracketed language in the general *chapeaux* (Section 1 Introduction para 2)? Why would anyone put [common but differentiated responsibility] in bracket? This principle #7 and other equally basic ones, bedrock principles of sustainability already enshrined in the 1992 Rio Declaration, now seem to be under question once again. Does this mean new negotiations or walking away from what they had already signed on to? In the beginning para 6 (b) of Section II on poverty eradication, we find the creation of a 'world solidarity fund for poverty eradication and human development' in a similar fix. No movement at all in trade and finance in Section IX on means of implementation. Look at paragraphs under Section III on consumption and production and you get more of the same. And so on down the line.



About Fairness

From

Environment and Poverty (Serrano 2001)

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How inequality matters

The Economist (6/16-22/01) in its cover page asks "Does inequality matter?" I thought that goes without saying. The question is how. How does inequality matter to society and the environment? How does the rich-poor divide impact on the environment?

But the Economist's cover article explains in typically liberal "yes, but..." fashion how inequality by itself is not really the problem in societies that mind equality of opportunities more than equality of outcomes. According to the article, the problem is not that societies produce a Bill Gates or a Tiger Woods, it is that many societies and their governments do not provide equal chances for everyone to be like those icons.

Yes, but not quite. The price of a Gates or a Woods is how much society is willing to pay for their talents, real or imagined. But neither Bill or Tiger paid any royalties to their predecessors. The MS system does not count or pay the people from ancient to modern times who had contributed to the science of computing. The Scots who invented golf have yet to collect what royalty Tiger might owe them. Of course, these nouveau billionaires, like their old super rich counterparts, do give to

charity, to various UN causes, through their own foundations that help ease the conscience and avoid taxes at the same time.

This may seem stretching the point too much. No matter, the reason for high profiling such icons is simply to emphasize here that many of the battles around inequality are being fought around the issue of ownership and use of knowledge generated by so many, known and unknown. The same goes for battles over common property resources, patenting of life forms, biotechnology, genetic modification, and so on.

Equity or equality (in this case used interchangeably) is central to the concept and practice of sustainable development. Its dimensions include relations between and within nations, between men and women, between generations.

More and more Asians are joining the elite league of the world's super rich, as the global economy grew from \$6.3 trillion in 1950 to \$31 trillion in 1990 and to \$42 trillion at the turn of the 21st century (Worldwatch Institute, State of the World 2001). They are among the world's 7 million millionaires and 400 billionaires, coming from countries rich and poor (The Economist, 6/16-22/01).

Between countries inequality has continued to widen. The income gap between the fifth of the world's people living in the richest countries and the fifth in the poorest was 74 to 1 in 1997, up from 60 to 1 in 1990 and 30 to 1 in 1960. The richest 20% has 86% share of global GDP, the poorest 20% just one per cent. In shares of exports of goods and services, the richest 20% has 82% and the poorest 20% only one per cent. The richest 20% shares 68% of foreign direct investment, the poorest 20% one per cent. The richest 20% has 93.3% share of Internet users, the poorest 20% only 0.2% (UNDP HDR, 1999).

Inequality also expresses in ecological footprints. Considering their lifestyles—food, homes, education, health care, pensions, leisure, freedom of movement, and so on—the richest of this world must be consuming an excessive quantity of the world's resources and energy. They also generate much more wastes and emissions. In early 1990s, the Worldwatch Institute estimated that rich countries generated a high of over 20,000 kilograms per person as against about 180 kilograms for each person in Zaire. The calculation considered total energy consumption to maintain a certain lifestyle.

Poverty and affluence differentially affect the sustainability of development.

Despite their numbers the Asian poor contribute less to resource depletion and environmental pollution than all OECD countries do. By the way, this group of industrialized nations include four Asian countries—Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and only recently, South Korea—who have all committed to shift to cleaner production and to reduce their emissions to 1990 levels. Industrialized nations sent a total of 3.5 million metric tons of hazardous waste or harmful trash to countries in the region from 1994 to 1997 (see Box 7 p.14).



Not only are poor people and poor countries denied their just share of the world's wealth and knowledge. Even in the shit generated and let out to the environment, they can never be equal to the rich.

Around the time of the Earth Summit, scientists of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) calculated that each of us could only give out 1,500 kilograms of wastes in order to stabilize the global climate system. This assumed zero population growth and no more deforestation. Poor Asians and Africans had not even come up to that level while people in industrial societies were already thousands of times over the limit.

So, what now? Can the rich afford to come down closer to UNEP's limit by giving up on their disproportionate shares and unsustainable lifestyles? Or will they go about their ways as usual while trying to entice the poor to trade their underutilized 'right to the environment'? In other words, will carbon trading, among other market mechanisms of CO₂ reduction, do and get us by? Looking closely, these and other related questions are what underlie the difficult negotiations of now 200 plus multilateral environment agreements (MEAs), the Kyoto Protocol the latest among them.

Will our planet be better off or worse-off if the richest give up enough of their share of the 'good life' to enable over 2 billion poorest and not-so-poor to lift themselves up to the level of the world's middle class? Will the demands on our environment be lesser? Will restoration efforts come about with less hassles than we grapple with today?

Imagine a world freed from poverty. Imagine everyone enjoying his/her own home with all the modern amenities like a CFC-free fridge, a color TV/VCD set, a telephone or cellphone, a computer, a family car. Imagine also that he/she can freely go places and visit one other country at least once in his/her lifetime. The rising middle class of China now work in offices, eat fast food, watch color television, spend nightlife at karaoke/videoke bars, drive cars, use cellphones and surf the Internet. Ditto for some 400 million middle class of India.

How might that new world look like? Is it something that can be sustained, if it's worth sustaining at all? Is that what we really want? And we means everyone of the 3.3 billion Asians—from the Asian members of the world's exclusive billionaire boys club to the regularly fasting Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and the HIV/AIDS victims in Bangkok—who believe, think, do, value and enjoy different things.



About Fairness

From
**Continuing Education for the Environment
(Serrano 1996)**

Since time immemorial, human civilization has been transforming nature through inventions and labor. Precious little seems to remain untouched and beyond the reach of human activity. It seems virtually nothing will remain forever unknowable and impossible to human beings driven by an obsession to grow and acquire more. In the course of their interaction with nature, human beings have created wealth and waste beyond measure.

By 1990 the measured value of the world's productive capital has reached up to about 20 trillion dollars. The size of wealth is amazing enough, the doubling time of wealth creation is even more incredible. It took all of human history for the world economy to reach 600 billion dollars by 1900 but only two years to produce this much from then on. On average, the additional economic output in each of the development decades — from the 1960s to the 1990s — has equalled the total from the beginning of civilization until 1950. Within this century, the global economy has grown 20 times and nearly five times from 1950 to 1990, from 4 trillion dollars to about 20 trillion dollars.

What this incredible growth story tells is, there is more than enough to feed, house, clothe, educate, lengthen the life, enable the enlargement of choices and freedom of every man, woman and child now living. Probably, enough will be left to include even the cost of clean-up of the monumental mess left behind by the process. But as Mahatma Gandhi pointed out earlier, "The earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need but not every man's greed."

The downside of the grand narrative of growth is described by the 1996 Human Development Report. Wealth creation is just one half of the story. The other half talks about growth that is *jobless, ruthless, voiceless, rootless* and *futureless*.



Jobless growth is where an expansion of the economy results in limiting employment opportunities, increasing job losses, longer hours of work and declining incomes, deteriorating working conditions, increasing burden for women. The world economy, ruled by mega corporations, is rapidly being integrated as goods and services are produced anywhere and traded everywhere but it is also creating a universal condition of job insecurity wherever it goes.

Ruthless growth means widening of the rich-poor gap in favor of the rich. It has created two worlds — that of the poor and the non-poor — divided by what each side has and cannot have or what it can and cannot do. The level of alienation between the richest fifth and poorest fifth have been increasing with every development decade, by a ratio of 30 to 1 in 1960, 32 to 1 in 1970, 45 to 1 in 1980 and about 60 to 1 in 1990. Of the 23 trillion dollars global GDP in 1993, 18 trillion dollars is shared by industrial countries and only 5 trillion dollars by developing countries. The assets of the world's 358 billionaires exceed the combined incomes of 45 per cent of humanity — over a billion of whom are absolutely poor.

Voiceless growth is growth where there is no democracy or empowerment of people. The most impressive growth in recent times happened in those countries where alternative voices demanding respect for human rights and more citizen participation have been suppressed. The debate around bread and freedom trade-offs should have never prospered, to begin with, since people need both.

Rootless growth means the erosion of the integrity of some 10,000 distinct cultures that provide diversity to human life on this planet. With growth comes the domination of our thinking and behavior by a modern culture of accumulation, irresponsible consumption, wastefulness and homogenization at the expense of indigenous cultures and national identities. Cultures and knowledge can be shared and allowed to encounter without being alienated from their roots.

Futureless growth is growth that undermines humanity's survival itself. We have seen how rapid growth has been destroying our forests, farmlands, riversystems, wetlands, lakes, coasts, seas and oceans, polluting the air we breathe and destabilizing the climate system. The present generation has been eroding the basis of its own sustainability.



About Fairness

from
**Rural Development and Environment (Serrano
2003)**

Correcting a bias

A world free of poverty is a rural world freed from this condition. Cities, despite their own share of poverty, will always represent progress and prosperity. It is the progress and prosperity of towns and villages outside of the metropolis that will help cities reduce urban poverty itself to insignificance and keep up to their progressive symbol.

Sustainable agriculture, agrarian reform, natural resource management, rural roads and rural water supply and sanitation should get their due and increasing share in budget allocation. This is but some kind of redress of an outstanding bias against rural areas. More, until this bias is corrected we cannot make the rural areas an attractive place to venture, risk, and make money for anyone with money to invest. But this might also suggest creating disincentives or denying incentives to public and private investors who unreasonably stick to already developed areas. This looks rather negative but it's a necessary complement to positive policies. Cities can and should finance any further urban improvement.

At bottom is the issue of inequality expressed in spatial terms. Urban suggests disproportionate claims on food, education, health, shelter, communication, energy, opportunities for civic participation and cultural interactions, freedom of movement, amenities that make us happy and enjoy life. Rural means just the opposite, though romanticized by environmentalists as "refuge" from polluted brown jungles even as they themselves realize the transboundary nature of most ecological problems.



Equity with equitable productivity

The common RD agenda and strategy remain captive to a productivity orientation, although increased productivity itself is a desirable goal. There's hardly any explicit assertion on needed state action to correct skewed land distribution. Nothing about any funding commitment for land acquisition or "landlord buyout" which most land reform programs amount to, anyway.

The "cheapness" of agriculture is hardly put to question, although most RD agendas talk of improving competitiveness. Production for selling looms large and it is not clear how food security can be secured this way.

The pro-poor bias must be explicit on basic concerns that truly matter to the rural poor. Till now most policies would rather leave it to the markets to redress land inequality and landlessness.

The strategy must be able to address equitable access to other assets, like water, microfinance, infrastructure, technology. Yet even on these, it must also take account of direct and hidden subsidies that favor the non-poor and non-rural at the expense of the rural poor.

Growth with equity or equity with growth? The current debate on strategy tends to be framed

around these questions. Some people think these are mere play of words. On the contrary. The two questions suggest basic differences in perspective, goals and processes.

The starting point of 'growth with equity' is growth, productivity, wealth creation, then sharing benefits later. But sharing rarely happens because the rich find even less incentive to share as the economic pie grows. 'Equity with growth' puts the poor first and last and at the center of all strivings to increase wealth and human welfare. It also means returning to the environment what we take from it, here and now and not later.

Long-term sustainability is compromised when the environment on which it is based gets depleted and polluted. As should be done in the case of the usually-discounted social costs, we must pay the environmental costs of growth now and not later. Resources must be allocated for the regeneration of poisoned soil, water and air, not to mention what should go to our own education on the ways of sustainability.

Growth can be achieved by simply cashing in on the poor. By focusing on building their capacity to address their own basic need for security on all counts – in food, housing, education, health, working condition and freedom of movement – government can get the best value out of every budget peso. What better productivity is there than that which is focused on employing the poor to solve their own problems? If only every problem translates to work, the poor have more than enough problems in their hand to be out of work. Government should consider how to compensate the poor to produce for themselves and the whole nation.



Government need not look elsewhere to find where it can spend its scarce and borrowed resources to make the economy grow, even like an 'Asian miracle', if you will. The poor millions in the uplands, lowlands and seacoasts have been waiting for long to be tapped for the job and be a key player in nation building.

Bias against real producers

A closer look at the production pipeline should reveal to us that those who grow our food usually suffer a double whammy. They get screwed on both ends of the pipe, so to speak. At the head, there's the high costs of land, water, seeds, farm machineries, interests on credit, etc. At the end, there's the pricing down at the farm gate, the high costs of storage or bringing the produce to the market.

Prices and subsidies

The 'cheapness' of the products of rural labor is neither friendly to the producer nor to the environment. To have, say a karaoke set, a poor farmer needs several harvest cycles in a one-hectare farm, assuming no crop failure and good prices. Likewise for a poor municipal fisher who would have to sail out more times to catch more fish from an already seriously depleted fishing ground. Were cell phones to swarm the countryside, there would be more net outflows even as labor and natural resources were more

On both ends, we see the trader. The trader, usually an outsider or local rich, does not only possess the capital and leverage to price up or price down the value of real production. More, he or she is benefiting from the value gained out of easy access to opportunities, mobility, much of which are anyway subsidized by taxpayers' money in one form or another.

intensely exploited to compensate for the deficit.

The rich and urban consumers, the non-agricultural sectors, enjoy cheap prices that discount both rural labor and the land, water, forest resources. Some ways should be found and articulated in the strategy to deal with these negative externalities.

Why is it so easy to sink in money to further widen an already wide hi-way? Why is it so hard to spend for barrio roads, communal irrigation systems, post-harvest facilities, potable water, a rural clinic, a barrio school? Why must a highland dweller be made to pay for the



amenities and convenience of the big city inhabitants?

These questions need to be answered as they suggest lopsided priorities and distorted structure of existing subsidies. How these can be corrected must be made very clear in the RD agenda.

Globalization blues

Usually only the good side of globalization is emphasized by governments and corporate interests, though many are now beginning to question its promised benefits. The downsides of this process appear to be played down, if not entirely left out in policy considerations.

Around Asia and the Pacific, especially after the 1997 crisis, worries about globalization are growing. The questions are many but one that's uppermost in the mind of many people is whether poverty eradication efforts would be better off with more than less regulation in the flow of goods and services. The computer-aided volatile money—the so-called hot economy—is number one target. But questions are unsparing, implicating even the real economy of growing Bt-corn, raising GM-cows and eating McDonald hamburgers.

One need only to look at what people in our neighborhood eat, wear, enjoy learning and doing and what more they desire to have

to see how deeply our everyday living is hooked to globalization. For the rich and non-poor among us, the latest products and services global corporations have to offer. For the poor, one window shopping sortie to the mega mall is already a big treat, better if it comes with a Big Mac and a bottle of Coke.

Underneath this image is the harsh world of buying and selling. Who produces and trades what's being bought (imports) and sold (exports)? Who wins or loses in the exchange? Where stand the poor in all this?

Liberalization or protection is not bad by itself. The more basic question to ask is *what for* and *for whom*. From the perspective of 'equity with growth' liberalization and protection are targeted in the interest of the poor and the environment. The rich, especially the richest 10 percent, can very well protect themselves. It is the victims of their unregulated activities who need a liberal and protective treatment the most. If government truly believes in free competition it must first do away with all the barriers that keep the poor out of competition.

A liberal policy suggests equal opportunity without any basic change in the condition of inequality. This is an unresolved dilemma. In the fashion of a zero-sum, worse still, negative sum scenarios commitment to social and



environmental justice gets undercut by deregulation of market forces who compete to win not to promote competition.

The dominant RD strategy is seen as merely a strategy to accelerate growth in the countrysides and to

facilitate concentration of cheap rural products in the global marketplace. Worse, unwittingly or otherwise, the strategy becomes an instrument for prying loose the world's countrysides for exploitation by global corporate monopolists in food, seeds, feeds, machineries, biotechnology, and so on.

Paper presented at the NGO Forum to the ECOSOC High-Level Segment on "Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development" organized by CONGO on 27 June 2003 at the UN in Geneva.

P R R M - C B I S
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About Fairness

from the
Promise of Habitat (Serrano 1996)
Report on the 1996 Istanbul Summit (Habitat II)

Sustainable human settlements

We are looking to a future dominated by cities. In 2025 more than two thirds of humanity will be city inhabitants. The Philippines will probably go the same way.

Like money, cities are one of the most creative of human inventions. Cities facilitate and make for the most intense human interaction. They are the exchange spaces where people are linked by a dense network of homes, workshops, schools and cultural centers, and other human artifacts. Through this network people are enabled to facilitate sharing of information, build friendships and solidarity, trade goods and services, encounter different cultures and traditions without having to travel far.

Cities contribute to stabilizing the carrying capacity of a country. Imagine a future mega city like Metro Manila. Right now one of seven Filipinos live here. Assuming this ratio to be constant till 2025, this megapolis will still accommodate a huge part of our population within just .002 percent of the country's land area.

Cities do us a great favor by accommodating so many in a small land area and freeing up a vast space for the rest of the population. If other existing and emerging cities go the same way as mega Metro Manila, there should be enough elbow room for agriculture, protection and conservation areas, and human settlements in the countryside.

These positive qualities and contribution of cities tell only a portion of the whole story. The downside makes up the rest. Again this brings us back to the fundamental issue of equity gap which tends to widen at the end of every development decade.



The first dimension of inequity that needs to be dealt with is spatial. Urban areas, Metro Manila in particular, enjoy an obscenely high share of resources compared to rural areas. Cities account for a huge proportion of consumption of food — grains, seafood, meat, fruits and vegetables — and energy that are produced mainly in the rural areas. Education, information, health, transport and other services, capital and technology are concentrated mostly in cities. In other words, cities are largely drawing on the carrying capacity of rural areas and sharing little in return.

The second dimension concerns the rich-poor gap within cities. The super rich enjoy a disproportionate share of land, water, energy, capital and financial resources, technology, education and information, amenities, freedoms, and decisionmaking power.

Disparity also expresses at the end of the pipeline, so to speak. Urban areas, because of their high consumption level, produce more waste than rural areas. Per capita CO₂ emission and waste generation by the super rich is several times higher than that of the bottom poor. Even in shit the poor cannot be equal to the rich. It may not be their role but still cities should strive to contribute in growing part of their food requirements. Urban agriculture

may still have some space even in highly congested Metro Manila, and moreso in emerging cities. Rooftop gardening in Singapore, for example, can cover 20 percent of this city-state's demand for vegetable. A way should be found to produce food as close as possible to where it is consumed.

Existing greenparks and heritage areas must be preserved. The plan and design of new cities should make provisions for green spaces or an equivalent of rural protected areas within the urban or brown ecosystem.

Rising pollution faces the cities. Urban inhabitants should not expect other communities to be a willing host to wastes that they cannot manage within their own backyard. Likewise they should deal with the transboundary effects of their waste emissions and find ways of bringing these down to acceptable levels. It is mainly the responsibility of the nonpoor and the super rich to lead in reducing energy consumption.

Water can be a major source of conflict in the future. It is urgent that government address the inequality in water service provision and the efficiency of the delivery system. Watershed protection and related environmental measures should be vigorously carried out. The Water Crisis Act of 1995 should be able to avert a future crisis scenario in ways that address not only the supply side but also the inequality in water consumption. It is inhuman to fill up the swimming pools of the rich while the poor make do with only a bucket of contaminated ground water.

A major shift to a people-friendly transport system is in order. Presently, our road networks are biased in favor of carowners. Every kilometer added and paved or space widened



simply tends to increase the demand for private carownership. The current transport setup is not designed to unburden the poor who spend a good part of their waking hours and money on transportation, on top of exorbitant expenses on food, education and health services.

It is in the cities, more than in rural villages, where the need for building social capital is greatest. Mutual trust, sharing and caring, the feeling that one belongs to a community tend to be lost easily in the hustle and bustle of the cities. And yet we all know that no city, big or small, can endure for long without them.

If cities are indeed inevitable, then we have to strive to make them a desirable place to live in. Their linkage to the rural areas should be strengthened in ways that promote the values of equity, solidarity and respect for nature.

P R R M - C B I S
Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement
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About Fairness

INTERNET: Closing or Widening the Divide? (Serrano 2003)

Abstract of paper presented at the World Forum on Information Society on 8-9 December 2003 in Geneva, organized as a parallel event to the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) by the International Research Foundation for Development (IRFD).

The arrival of the so-called information society—and with its recent ‘leap of faith’ in the Internet revolution—has brought about great strides in wealth creation, in linking distant cultures. The IT revolution has caused time and space to shrink, and borders to disappear. In other words, the technology has made the world far richer and much smaller. Yet, despite (or perhaps because of) such unprecedented technological advances we see widening inequalities between and within nations and societies alongside vast improvements in human condition overall. Now the disparities express in a new dimension—in the so-called Internet divide. Rich and poor countries want to bring the Internet to the poor or the poor to the Internet, if you like. Poor countries have been trying hard to close this technology gap through access and transfer, and in the process, they have run smack into the Internet’s formidable hierarchy of access that only further widens and deepens the rich-poor divide. The owners of technology have only been too willing to sell even to the farthest communities barely reached by electricity. But since the technology could be had only at a very high price the poor countries are able to have access at the cost of mortgaging their export earnings and migrant labor, even their natural capital. A mobile cell phone could cost a Filipino farmer several harvest cycles in his one-hectare rice farm. Every expansion of the new economy means more sales of hardware, software, connectivity, consultancy, and other ICT services. The balance at the end of the line is net outflow for the poor. In the new context of information economy, it’s the same old game of catch-up all over again. The gap has not narrowed down a tiny bit though the poor is now somewhat Internet-connected.



About Fairness

NEGOTIATING FAIRNESS in Trade & Investment (Serrano 2002)

Prepared for the WTO-AoA discussion on 24 April 2002 at PRRM; with credits to the following references: Kristin Dawkins, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy and Sustainable Investment Global Network-Asia (SIGN3-ASIA)

When trade is positive & fair (just): people exchange on fair (just) terms what they have/have not & can/cannot do

When trade is negative & unfair (unjust):

- creates poverty & inequality
- inequalities between nations
- depletes & pollutes the environment

How?

By creating imbalances

Where?

- balance of trade
- terms of trade
- price-cost ratio
- social & ecological accounts

Challenge: how to restore balances in these 4 areas.

What must change?

- trade practices
- trade policies
- trade negotiations

Consider these myths:

- “Nations trade”
- “People trade”
- “More trade is always good”
- “Trade imbalances are solved by exporting more, not by importing less”
- “My government negotiates for me”

TRADE-DEBT-AID SPIRAL

- Unbalanced trade: the first stage
- Debt: the second stage
- Aid: the third stage



SUSTAINABLE INVESTMENT (SI)

Fundamental shift from investment-as-usual to one which balances the 3 bottomlines:

- economic growth/profit
- social equity
- environmental sustainability

Principles guiding SI (based on the July 2000 UN-Business Global Compact):

- support & protection of HR
- no participation in any HR violation
- freedom of association of labor & right to collective bargaining
- elimination of forced & compulsory labor
- abolition of child labor
- elimination of discrimination in employment & occupation
- precautionary principle to environmental challenges
- promotion of environmental responsibility
- development & diffusion of environment-friendly technologies





About the author

Isagani R. Serrano is Senior Vice President and Board Member of the Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM). He's written for CIVICUS the following: *Civil Society in the Asia-Pacific*, 1994; *Humanity In Trouble But Hopeful* in CITIZENS, 1995; *Profile: Philippines* for CIVIC INDEX, 1997; *Coming Apart, Coming Together* in Civil Society at the Turn of the Millennium, 1999; *A Global Citizens' Commitment*, 1999. A community organizer, educator, writer, guitarist, 'farmer', and political prisoner for seven years during martial law in the Philippines. Trained in education and literature, community organization and development management. Holds a Master of Science in Environment & Development Education (MSc in EE/DE) from the South Bank University-London.

