



Ambiente & Sociedade

ISSN: 1414-753X

revista@nepam.unicamp.br

Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação
e Pesquisa em Ambiente e Sociedade
Brasil

ROJAS HERNÁNDEZ, JORGE
CITIZEN PARTICIPATION, QUALITY OF LIFE AND TERRITORIAL TRANSREGIONAL
JUSTICE: A SOCIAL BASIS FOR COMMON GOOD

Ambiente & Sociedade, vol. XX, núm. 1, enero-marzo, 2017, pp. 21-42
Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Ambiente e Sociedade
Campinas, Brasil

Available in: <http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=31750848003>

- How to cite
- Complete issue
- More information about this article
- Journal's homepage in redalyc.org

redalyc.org

Scientific Information System

Network of Scientific Journals from Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain and Portugal

Non-profit academic project, developed under the open access initiative

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION, QUALITY OF LIFE AND TERRITORIAL TRANS- REGIONAL JUSTICE: A SOCIAL BASIS FOR COMMON GOOD

JORGE ROJAS HERNÁNDEZ¹

Is the modernization process inclusive and participatory of society?

This article deals with the relevant topic of citizen participation, especially related to the implementation of mega hydroelectric projects and other megaprojects, which have a strong impact on territories, and the lives of adjacent communities. This discussion is very important, interesting and complex in nature. Of course, the issue should be addressed in an interdisciplinary way. So far, the problem of socio-natural impacts has been absent in most decisions on the localization of energy projects in Chile. The topic has also been absent in other types of social and environmental impact projects, such as hydroelectric, port services, mining, highway construction, landfilling, urbanization, etc. and along with its absence, there have inevitably been numerous conflicts with communities in the vicinity of the project planned. The absence of substantive citizen participation explains the fact that many times these projects end up being judicialized.

The sociological explanation is that modernization in Chile, in the last decades, has been driven without the participation or consideration of society, often affecting the quality of life of the population. Basically, infrastructure has been modernized but not society. Moreover, many mega investment projects are initiated before being subjected to environmental and social impact studies. This explains the existence of many socio-environmental conflicts.

Today, society has awakened and demands consideration, it demands passive *social and environmental* accumulated influences, affecting the quality of life of the population, increasing the levels of poverty, vulnerability and exposure to socio-natural disasters, which have occurred more frequently and intensively in recent years in the country and in Latin America. The concept of “*passive social influence*” means non-inclusion, non-participation, weakness or simply non-existence of citizen participation in environmental impact studies, or territorial interventions without active and informed interventions from the communities that inhabit them. Passive social influences are the social externa-

1. Dr. Phil. Sociologist, University of Hannover, Federal Germany. Full-time Professor in the Sociology Department, Faculty of Social Sciences. Vice President of Institutional Relations and Links to the Environment (VRIM), University of Concepción, Chile. Research Associate of Project FONDAP Center for Water Resources for Agriculture and Mining. CONICYT (CRHIAM). University of Concepción. This article was written for the CRHIAM Center. E-mail: jrojas@udec.cl

lities of projects, which in addition to environmental externalities affect the population. The main passive social externality or influence is the deterioration of quality of life of populations adjacent to a megaproject caused by contamination by emissions of toxic particles suspended in the environment which cause disease, noise pollution, increased movement of cargo vehicles, increased accidents and exposure to extreme weather events, exacerbation of social disintegration processes, usual social tensions and high crime rates. In essence, this paper is about increased *social vulnerability* of populations affected by the installation of a megaproject.

Inequality, the main problem of the country and practically all Latin American countries - and the articulating theme of what was the electoral campaign of the current Government, is nothing more than a very broad, multiple and structural set of historically accumulated passive social influences from generation to generation that prevent the inclusion and the personal realization of the majority of the inhabitants of the territory. Territorial intervention, through energy megaprojects or projects of another nature, constitutes only one of these passive social influences, which is certainly very important because of the impact it has on social life, on the landscape and on ecosystem services.

The answer to the question, "How do we improve localization policies for energetic infrastructures in Chile?" is highly complex. Considering past experiences, obviously it is not only a question of "improving" decisions, giving them a greater "legitimacy", but changing public localization policies, especially when it comes to future projects in locations already populated by human beings and their habitats, their productions, their culture, identities and social networks. Moreover, it may also concern territories that are already environmentally saturated by negative impacts of other megaprojects.

Today, Chile faces the challenge of modernizing its society in a humanistic and sustainable sense and, therefore, reconciling its economic growth with the personal development of its inhabitants and the sustainable preservation of their ecosystems. For this, a profound reform of the State's role is indispensable, so that it achieves a greater consonance with citizens. It is not a question of returning to past "Statism", which current society in development would not allow. Today, a more modern state is required with regulatory power over quality control, exercising effective protection of natural resources (respecting the inherent laws of ecosystem functions and the rights of nature to self-reproduction) and respect for human and social rights. A State that generates the institutional (legal), social, productive, cultural, environmental and human conditions that improve quality of life and the active participation of its citizens in a highly complex globalized world full of uncertainties.

In addition to the necessary modernization of the State and its institutions, the development of a strengthened, substantive civil society is also required; in which citizens have rights and exercise real involvement and interference in public and private affairs that concern them.

Social inclusion continues to be an unresolved problem, difficult to solve within the prevailing neoliberal model framework. Although the model is in crisis and citizen discontent grows with it, this discontent has not translated into a change in the model

yet. The transformation process is slow, marking stages through ruptures, legal, cultural and institutional changes.

How to give greater relevance to citizen participation and socially legitimize projects?

Environmental law has already been applied for more than 20 years. Despite improvements to laws, citizen participation remains very deficient - even in many simply void cases - in environmental impact studies. In all honesty, the logic of the neoliberal economic model does not allow real citizen participation. Markets and market societies encourage the individualization and disorganization of society, as a system of domination and subordination of the people. For the same reason, in general, citizen participation remains at an informative, consultation and possible mitigation or compensation level, which is clearly insufficient.

However, Chilean society has undergone important changes in the last decades. These changes are expressed in the emergence of citizens who are more aware of themselves, their rights and are concerned about their natural environment: these citizens demand to be considered in the decision-making processes of issues that concern them as a person with rights and duties. Unlike the past, we live moments of construction and development of individual subjectivity, through citizens of society itself. In the past, during the nineteenth and twentieth century's, Latin American societies were built, their values, norms and institutions pulled from the state, the economy (estate, business, market) and politics (political parties). In the present 21st century, the awakening of citizens, fueled by the abundance of information and the revolution of communications, convulses the social order and questions the top-down/paternalistic/authoritarian government of past institutions. Society and its members become more reflective and self-aware.

In this new social context, a complex and tense process of transition towards a new social and cultural order, it is indispensable to reflect on relevant modalities of citizen participation in the planning processes of territorial intervention projects, in particular mega energy projects and other projects as well. Examining international experiences may be useful, although it is also pertinent to review local experiences, which are also considered in the present study.

Environmental psychologist Irina Rau (Environmental Psychology Research Group, Saarland University and Magdeburg University, Germany) made a presentation at the University of Concepción (14-17.10.2013) entitled "The importance of participation for the acceptance of megaprojects In the energy area" (Rau, 2013), in which it announced a form of citizen participation currently applied in Germany, prior to the installation of a mega-energy project.

As Chile is part of the OECD, it is pertinent to briefly present some aspects of this experience, in general terms. Not to replicate it, but to motivate critical reflection on a modality of its own that overcomes the gaps and weaknesses of the current system of environmental impact studies in the energy sector and other territorial intervention projects of economic and social relevance.

Factors that influence the acceptance of megaprojects are:

- Technology
- Location
- Citizen participation
- Participación ciudadana

These factors strongly influence the social acceptance process of a project: the type of technology to be used (which will actually be used, not what is announced before implementing the project). Investors generally promise projects with clean, cutting-edge technologies, but reality ends up denying these promises. Location refers to territory characteristics (its productive vocation, ecosystem services and cargo capacity) and the impacts that can be suffered by both the ecosystem and the population with the physical location of the project. But, in reality, investors are more interested in the benefits that the territory presents for the implementation of the project (for example, the existence of sufficient water, energy and infrastructure) than the possible benefits that it could mean for its inhabitants. The planning process directly affects how the population is informed, socialized and involved in all stages of the project. This process also includes citizen participation, an essential factor for acceptance. However, we also know that in Chile, citizen participation has not been present in environmental impact studies. Currently, citizen participation represents a great concern for entrepreneurs and for the public sector due to existing conflicts.

Planning Process

The planification process must tend to a balance of criteria and axes that give sustenance, sense and rationality to the sustainability of the project. These axes, classic to international environmental debates, are: *economic, ecological and social*.

Making this virtuous triangle of sustainability converge is difficult. In national environmental impact studies (EIS), the economic factor generally prevails, to the detriment of the ecological and the social. In spite of this, every effort must be made to ensure that projects are guided by this holistic philosophy, pondering, in evaluation and implementation, these three basic dimensions. Its implementation must be verified with an effective follow-up plan.

How does one make these three axes converge? First of all, baseline studies on the ecosystems and micro-macro-society that will be affected by the megaproject are required. Social baseline analysis is often confused with mere statistical data on unemployment, quantitative characteristics of the population, educational levels, age structure, etc. A *baseline study of society* refers to its internal socio-morphology: its internal cohesion, community values, human interrelations, neighborhood type, population history, existing levels of trust/distrust, valuation and perception of ecosystems that will eventually be intervened by the megaproject, as well as living and working conditions.

Respect for the values identified and linked to human communities must be combined with the self-reproduction of ecosystems and the need to produce certain goods,

material or immaterial, for the benefit of society as a whole, such as the need to generate energy.

Energy has become a fundamental element for production and life in a modern society. Modern life is made up of energy exchanges. Obviously, there are different types of energy, with major or minor impacts on ecosystems and human life. The impacts of fossil energy, which has dominated much of the world's industrial history in recent centuries, are already well known, especially with respects to greenhouse gas emissions (CO₂) and impacts on climate change currently under way. We know from IPCC data that CO₂ concentrations have increased from 280 ppm at the beginning of the industrial era to approximately 400 ppm today, with negative impacts on temperatures and precipitation. For the same reason, society is not indifferent to the type of energy encouraged. Fortunately, the development of science and technology has succeeded in boosting unconventional renewable energies that cause less damage to ecosystems and avoid the greenhouse effect. Chile, can move quickly towards an alternative energy matrix - solar energy in the north, biomass in central Chile and wind in the south, the latter especially in the Biobío Region (to mention just a few) - which will also contribute to decentralizing and democratizing the system, reversing dependence on fossil sources.

Social Baseline: defense from the Commons

Considering the previous analysis and international experiences, a *Social Baseline* can be understood as a deep characterization of the community affected by an intervention, covering the set of factors and dimensions that compose its history and configure the quality of its social life, culture, jobs, territory and neighborhood. A project should not worsen the current living conditions of a community, as is the case often. On the contrary, it should improve living conditions of communities, which rarely happens. It is known that usually every project or intervention alters social life, either in a positive or negative sense. These alterations should be studied scientifically and can be of a very diverse nature. They depend on the perception of the people, which must be considered and respected. These perceptions can be studied and measured with scientific accuracy.

Social Baseline means knowing and understanding the productive, social, cultural and interpersonal living systems in a community or communities involved in the eventual implementation of a megaproject. It does not mean, as it happens in Environmental Impact Studies (EIS), limiting descriptions of some general socioeconomic characteristics and then deducing eventual social impacts, which consultant agencies responsible for socio-cultural studies tend to minimize. Only deep knowledge of human habitats in their systemic complexity and in their interdependence with the nature that surrounds them, allows analysis of the social impacts a mega energy project, or project of another nature, has on the human community, with future projections.

In an investigation carried out in the Patagonia, on the eventual impact of the HidroAysen megaproject on community values, it could be seen in the Cochrane community, for example, one of the main fears about the project was the arrival of foreign workers without families, which could possibly hinder the good customs, values and traditions of

the community. Effectively, trust is a fundamental value that has accompanied the difficult history of the settlers and the subsistence (isolated) of the Aysén region. Trust has allowed the creation of networks, friendships and the organization of communities based on solidarity and mutual support, indispensable values in geographically remote regions isolated from the national territory and in a way abandoned by governments, such being the case in the Chilean Patagonia as evidenced by several investigations.

Same as in EIS, the natural system baseline should be considered a *Social Baseline*, which takes into account the impacts that project implementation has on the basic constitution of surrounding communities. Indeed, communities have histories, organization, culture, traditions, and social practices, modes of action and interaction, norms and values that regulate it, as well as longings and aspirations to improve individual and collective living conditions. Society, moreover, is not just a mere statistical fact, but a dynamic, changing reality, in a permanent process of transformation that must be taken into account if one wants to invite to its habitat a foreign body to its history, landscape and daily life.

The Social Baseline of a study should include the following aspects and indicators:

- **Community Human Development Index (HDI):** Prepared by the UNDP and contains: i) income level, ii) educational level, and iii) life expectancy. This index can be complemented with the **Gini coefficient/index**, which measures the levels of income distribution.
- **Community quality of life indicators:** social support networks; levels of trust/distrust; internal cohesion; sense of social welfare; subjective perception of quality of life; urban landscapes. It can be measured by survey/interview or other instruments.
- **Access to equipment and infrastructure** (health, public lighting, drinking water networks, schools, public transports, commerce, places of leisure, playgrounds, etc.). Municipalities have this data.
- **Levels of basic needs met** (food/nutrition, housing, health, sanitation, heating, clothing, etc.).
- **Quality of employment**, unemployment levels, poverty levels and inequality
- **Levels of segregation/territorial integration**, violence and neighborhood security
- **Anthropogenic load of the territory/locality or regional/trans-regional justice**
- **Level of identity and community sense of belonging** with its location and environment

These criteria are relatively broad and are not intended to be unique or exclusive to others that could eventually be integrated. It is basic but necessary to consider in a Social Baseline. However, they can be prioritized, establishing those priorities for a given study. Prioritization should consider *Common Good* as a structuring perspective and from

an ontological point of view, everything that constitutes the socio-natural and cultural baseline sustaining human life.

Data on some aspects and indicators already exist in the public system, such as the Human Development Index or Gini Index, as well as data on infrastructure, access to basic services, employment/unemployment, and age structure of the population. Further quantitative and qualitative studies are required to obtain other antecedents. For example, to measure quality of life, spatial segregation, territorial inequality levels of interregional anthropogenic burden, identity and sense of belonging.

Historical Context and Meaning of Quality of Life

Quality of life is a concept that emerged in the sixties. It arises as a critique of development and welfare as necessary products for economic growth. These criticisms have already been expressed by different authors at the beginning of the 20th century, but especially in the post-World War II era, which deepened this perception and debate. Later - in the framework of the post-development discussion - the illuminist idea of “progress” was questioned. The modern, influential thinkers of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century’s thought and spread the idea that progress, supported this time by science and technology, would be a historically uninterrupted, permanent process, but they were wrong. Progress advances and regresses in the history of modern societies, according to stage, class and social group interests, and how social, political and environmental conflicts are resolved. In addition, progress does not benefit all sectors of society equally. Inequality is a permanent phenomenon that accompanies the development of capitalist societies. It represents an inherent and intrinsic characteristic of a system for domination, varying and transforming according to society advancements.

Industrialization not only produced consumer goods and progress. It also produced pollution problems, occupational diseases, modern life stress, depredation of ecosystems, human communication problems and various forms of repression in its multiple expressions. Industrialization tended to standardize life styles, curtailing the individual, limiting and preventing their free realization as a person. Long days of work alienated to obtain economic sustenance that allowed the consumption of perishable and durable goods. The value of a happy and relaxed life was not part of the culture, or the paradigm of economic growth policies, or the ideology of so-called progress.

In this context, there are strong and profound criticisms of the development model, which even included the so-called “real socialisms”, not considered as genuine alternatives for human and social development. Discomfort instills itself in the consciousness of citizens. *Herbert Marcuse* published *The One-dimensional Man* in 1965. Representative of critical social theory, in this work he denounces the tendencies or totalitarian features of advanced societies, with great impact in intellectual and young circles. The system produces false needs through mass media, advertising and the integration of workers into the industrialized consumer society. The system works with a strong dose of individualism. These would be societies of control, which do not oppose social change but contains it.

Advanced industrial society operates on one dimension, without room to exercise criticism, real democracy and human freedom.

In this sense, quality of life emerges as a reform for advanced industrial society. It aims to improve the living conditions of the population in general. It takes place within the framework of the so-called Social Welfare State, which is developed, especially in European countries, with lower-quality peripheral expressions in the most industrialized and more politically advanced Latin American countries. It was introduced as a way to quantitatively measure development in the face of the increasing complexity of social structures and to measure the impact of State interventions on economic, social, political and cultural matters.

Quality of life seeks to establish itself as a universal and scientific system of measuring the satisfaction of human needs in developed countries. Debates on quantitative and qualitative parameters for quality of life took place since the beginning. This debate is especially relevant in elaborating *Social Indicators of Quality of Life*: Objective and subjective indicators. Objective indicators are measurable, while the subjective are of an immaterial and differentiated character, according to individual perception. Over time, human needs of a subjective nature have gained importance.

In 1970, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) launched a program to develop Social Indicators of Quality of Life, in order to measure social welfare. It obeys political concerns for social well-being. In 1973, the OECD defined 8 areas of social concern: 1) Health; 2) Personal development through knowledge acquisition (Education); 3) Employment and quality of life at work; 4) Free time and leisure; 5) Goods and services available; 6) Physical environment; 7) Security of persons and justice administration; 8) Participation in collective life (Setién, 1993: 74).

Other Quality of Life models have also been developed in Europe. For example, Germany created the "SPES Social Indicators system", which measures both objective and subjective needs, as well as the evolution of personal well-being. They apply surveys for well-being with certain periodicity, which are socialized through public reports. Beginning in 1972, the universities of Frankfurt and Mannheim investigated and created the System of Social Indicators, financed by the Forschungsgemeinschaft (German research society). They selected 10 Areas, subdivided into 196 Indicators. The Areas are: 1) Population; 2) Social status and mobility; 3) Employment and working conditions; 4) Income and its distribution; 5) Consumption; 6) Transportation; 7) Housing; 8) Health; 9) Education; 10) Participation (Setién, 1993: 91).

In 1982, the OECD made further progress in this area and defined a list of social indicators based on 15 social concerns structured in 33 indicators.

Table 1. OECD SOCIAL INDICATORS

SOCIAL CONCERN	INDICATOR
Health Duration of life Life in good health	– Life expectancy – Perinatal mortality rate – Temporary handicaps – Permanent handicaps
EDUCATION AND KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION Use of educational opportunities Knowledge acquisition	– Regular schooling – Adult education – Functional literacy rate
EMPLOYMENT AND QUALITY OF WORK LIFE Access to employment	– Unemployment rate – Involuntary part-time work – Discouraged workers – Average work duration – Travel time – Paid yearly vacations – Atypical schedules – Salary distribution – Fatal work accidents – Hazards in the workplace
Leisure time Use of time	– Free time – Leisure activities
ACQUISITION CAPACITY OF GOODS AND SERVICES Salary	– Salary distribution – Low salaries – Material deprivation – Asset distribution
Physical Environment Housing conditions Possibility of access to services Hazards	– Housing, interior – Access to outdoors – Basic elements of confort – Proximity to certain services – Exposure to atmospheric pollutants – Exposure to noise pollution
SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT Social integration	– Suicide rate
SAFETY OF PEOPLE Exposure to risk Perceived threats	– Fatal physical injuries – Severe physical injuries – Fears related to personal safety

Source: List of OECD Social Indicators, 1982. In: Setién, 1993, p. 78-79.

These Quality of Life Indicators obviously cannot be replicated automatically in Chile or Latin America. However, in recent decades there have also been frequent talks about quality of life in Latin America and, in particular, in Chile. These talks are held between Governments and research centers. Chile, as a member of the OECD, can consider these Indicators as an important frame of reference for orienting public policies, such being the case in Europe and other developed countries. It is understood that these Social Indicators are not merely conventional constructs, but contain exhaustive specifications, forms of measurement and influence the formulation and application of public policies in respective countries. In addition, they evolve over time, as societies and living conditions change.

In our countries, these social concerns are of great interest to citizens, but are still in primary stages - although with differentiated accents - in the public sphere, as a consequence of the implementation of neoliberal policies in basic areas of social life, education, health and social security. In other areas, such as work and housing, there is a lack of regulation and public control, which guarantees quality, work quality for example. In the case of social housing, it does not conform to human conditions of interior spatiality or due access to the natural landscape. In the case of social housing, it does not conform to human conditions of interior spatiality or due access to the natural landscape, and leisure time does not exist. Leisure time, which is indispensable for exercising freedom and personal fulfillment, is occupied in long working days, in endless geographical journeys in mega-cities, priced by transportation services, or is spent exercising different methods of survival. Life expectancy has been prolonged considerably, but its quality has not improved much. Social integration continues to suffer high socio-territorial segregation and inequality levels.

In short, quality of life is a fundamental theme that should be elaborated and implemented in societies. It is necessary to advance through public policies and citizen awareness. Social dissatisfaction regarding abuse in different aspects of social life, services and consumption in general, are exhaustion and crisis signs of the neoliberal model that generates high expectations that its systems (quality of education, health, provisions, wages, housing, pollution-free environment, etc.), cannot satisfy due to distribution of goods, lacking citizen participation and inclusion.

Trust, transparency and participation: a new public policy?

Trust is a fundamental element of all politics, even more so in Chile, a country where distrust predominates, which is a starting problem for any project. The explanation for this mistrust lies in the fact that in recent decades, society – communities and social organizations – has not been consulted in the implementation of megaprojects and moreover, there is a feeling of being deceived or defrauded by politicians and entrepreneurs and generally in broad sectors. Distrust, a structural problem inherited from the colony, which persisted in the post-independence era. High mistrust levels – more than 80 percent – in Chilean society, has become a problem in developing the country. In the case of mega-territorial interventions, this problem must be approached seriously if community acceptance is

desired for the initiative sought to be undertaken in their immediate environment. Deception in project diffusion, with respect to its real objectives, only strengthens distrust, which becomes a social lesson that is internalized in the community, making future project implementation difficult, although it has positive impacts for the community, even in emissions reductions, such being the case for renewable energy projects.

Building trust requires communities or social groups directly or indirectly affected by the project in question to have sufficient information and to be actively involved in the different project planning phases. Project Social credibility is the foundation for generating trust. Credibility requires information transparency, respect for the community and, above all, a lot of dialogue to explain and overcome differences. Transparency and participation implies that a project can also be rejected or modified by the community.

In respects, the Minister of Energy, *Máximo Pacheco*, initiated a consultation process with different actors to define public energy policies. He announced the implementation of a new policy and role of state - absent in previous decades, obeying neoliberal market policies - as well as a new relationship with civil society in search of social legitimacy in energy politics:

“The state cannot sit on the bench and watch this game being played privately. The passive role, with few rules and regulations, hit bottom. We have to play a more active role, because common good exists”

“In fact, the country needs an additional 450 MW per year and have half of what was in execution in 2010 in dispende. To meet your objective, you must lower barriers to take in new actors and incorporate new technologies. It is necessary to guarantee a system that allows companies to develop projects with participation and social dialogue. Unlocking projects is not a technical issue, but how we are able to, society and companies alike, to realize initiatives with social legitimacy that is needed and that is achieved by involving communities, localities and society in early project stages, through strategic social management and evaluation that incorporates community ideas and visions. This is one of the main areas to be addressed, as well as the land use issue of how to ensure good use and distribution of these territories as to harmonize country development, through an active role of the State”

“We are the authority and we understand that our obligation is to make these policies public after listening to people and understanding their contribution value in this process. There are companies that are doing well and others that are not, and these are going to suffer a lot, because this is a sign of the times, it is a new paradigm and a sign of changes occurring in Chilean society and therefore, it is our obligation as a state authority as well as an authority for private companies, to read these changes well” (Pacheco, 2014).

These words insinuate the need for a paradigm shift: from a neoliberal extractive model of territorial intervention with little or no public regulation and little or no citizen

participation. In practice, the layout of the 2050 energy policy, promoted by the Ministry of Energy and currently appearing as a government policy, was made through citizen processes, although limited by the prevailing economic model that denies citizen participation. For the same reason, it remains to be seen if these definitions, once transformed into specific projects in different territories of the country, will be accompanied by real citizen participation. For this to happen, there should be a State policy that allows it, which transcends the will of a Ministry or a focused policy, and which is practiced by a strong civil society, an issue still lacking in the country and in the majority of Latin American societies. It is well-known that neoliberal strategies implemented in the countries atomized social organizations and in general, considerably weakened societies in respects to internal cohesion and shared common sense.

Distributive territorial trans-regional justice: human love and understanding

Territories are constituted by ecosystems of diverse natures and vulnerabilities, with certain vocations, ecosystem capacities and anthropic action assimilation capacities. This is why it is not fair that some regions are burdened by environmental and social externalities to the limit of saturation or existential collapse. Often regions or localities are *overloaded* because of their comparative advantages in natural resources (ex., rivers) and their levels of poverty and social depredation, with little capacity for action or negotiation with companies or public institutions. Many examples exist: the Hydroaysén project, Freirina (mass production of pigs), thermoelectric power plants in the Coronel commune, etc. Generally, local communities are “enchanted” by job creation and a promise to install state-of-the-art technology. But promises often fade over time. Local communities end up assuming new externalities to its already deteriorated quality of life in the environment in which they live.

Trans-regional justice means putting the *cost-benefit perception* of the Region as a whole on the balance. There is often the perception that “only other regions or the generating or distributing company benefit”. Or, that harm comes to a region with contaminant projects that are not accepted by another region. For example, groups criticizing Hydroaysén rightly argue that the Patagonia ecosystems will be affected and that electricity will be produced especially to meet the energy demands of the mines in the north.

Therefore, a fundamental criterion for evaluating an energy project (as well as others with territorial or social impact) should be trans-regional justice. In other words, a balance should be generated between regions, avoiding overloading of environmental and social costs to the same region or locality. It would be appropriate to manage an equitable distribution of the costs and benefits, favoring more under developed locations economically and socially.

According to Mario Marcel, OECD Deputy Director of Territorial Management and Development, Chile, “We are the OECD country with the most territorial inequality.” For Marcel, the OECD’s focus for the territory is as follows:

“Let’s look at territories and how to generate growth and cohesion from them, as well as what resources and institutions are required to achieve those goals” (Marcel, 2014).

For *Sergio Boisier*, an expert in territorial planning, development requires deployment of regional endogenous capabilities:

“First, being endogenous means an increased capacity for autonomy from the territory to make its own development choices, choosing, for example, a style that conforms to its traditions, to its culture or simply to a collectively “invented” method for development. This growing autonomy is inseparable from a growing process of decentralization, which leads us to believe that well-understood development is necessarily decentralized” (Boisier, 2010: 102)..

Boisier defines four planes that must be articulated and reinforced as a condition to endogenous development. The second plane refers to the “growing capacity of the territory to appropriate part of the economic surplus generated, for local reinvestment” to ensure sustainability for development and to diversify the material base of the territory, making it less vulnerable to economic fluctuations. The third plane “means that the territory must have a capacity to generate innovations, causing structural change within itself, not just scaling up. This implies the existence of a local system of science and technology... “. The fourth plane “means the existence of a territorial culture which generates an identity that associates the collective being with the territory” (Boisier, 2010: 102-103).

So-called procedural justice should be included with trans-regional justice. There are often inconsistencies between different regulation levels. In Chile, for example, it may happen - and it does happen - that a regional instance fails a project and a national one approves it. This is due to prevailing centralism. Centralism in decision-making is detrimental to more independent and sustainable regional development.

However, in order for justice to be applied, neither the declaration of principles nor its mere regulation by legal norms is sufficient. Neither is it sufficient to declare respect for human dignity or the existence of a certain social empathy with those affected. In fact, many economic interventions are made from contempt for social groups, especially when they are poor or live under “traditional” life systems, considered “non-modern”, as for example with the Mapuche territories intervention in Alto Biobío, Biobío region, with the construction of hydroelectric plants. This happens often with mega projects intervening in ancestral territories occupied by indigenous communities in Latin America. Reason why the author Nussbaum rightly maintains that justice to be effective requires accompaniment by true networks of feelings that intrinsically mean the mutual understanding of the human quality of subjects participating in a social process stressed by interests and crossed by appropriate aspirations:

“Respect alone is cold and inert, insufficient to overcome the negative tendencies that lead human beings to tyrannize one another. Disgust

denies fundamental human dignity to entire groups of people, who are thus characterized as mere animals. Therefore, respect anchored only in the idea of human dignity will be powerless to include all citizens in terms of equality unless it is nurtured by an imaginative machine of individuals in the lives of the other people, as well as an intimate understanding of the full character of their humanity”.

“Therefore, love is important for justice, especially when that justice is still incomplete and in process (as it happens in all real nations), but even so it would be in a society that would have fulfilled its aspirations, if this kind of society exists, then that would be nothing less than a society of human beings” (Nussbaum, 2014: 459).

Citizen participation and democracy

Citizen participation is a modern democratic mechanism granting social legitimacy to any project that involves territories and affects the life of human communities, which can be expected. Citizen participation must be included in the planning process, at all stages. Participation relies on great legitimacy from society, because it is a modality to build cities and societies under the concept and perspective of social inclusion.

“The emphasis placed by liberalism in the re-claiming of citizen rights to the detriment of responsibilities, which, except for obeying laws and paying taxes, are hardly mentioned and is highly questionable. This makes the liberal conception of citizenship have a marked legal-formal character, which is why it is considered a weak citizenry. The existence of citizens’ rights is a necessary but not sufficient condition of citizenship. The liberal conception represents an impoverished version of citizenship, in which citizens are reduced to passive holders of rights, whose freedom consists in being able to pursue their individual interest (or good life)” (Fierro, 2016: 123)

“From a communitarian perspective, citizenship implies both individual rights and social responsibilities, being important to achieve a balance between the two. Only then would the individual accede to the condition of full citizenship, since it implies a strong moral commitment” (Fierro, 2016: 124)

In order for there to be real citizen participation, citizens must participate early in the project in an organized manner throughout the process, making decisions for the projects.

Participation requires, first and foremost, political will, in the sense of wanting and facilitating citizen participation, which is not always a common understanding for the basis of a project. It also requires substantive legal support, provisions that declare it mandatory and clearly define its course.

Participation goes hand in hand with building trust, which means explaining to the public, the true project implications and projections, both for the environment and society.

Asymmetries between actors in the process of citizen participation are frequently observed, which obviously hampers decision-making, generally impairing the entity that suffers from externalities. Asymmetries refer to: different levels of organization and negotiation capacity, different economic capacities, different levels of access to local and national authorities making the final decision (influence and lobbying), different levels of professional capacity to understand the technical design of projects and procedural codes; In short, different access to information and little professional advice. This deficit should be considered at the beginning of the process and be remedied in the best possible way. To approve a project without citizen acceptance means to socially construct a future conflict.

“As a result of criticizing liberal democracy (citizens exercise sovereignty by voting), alternative models have emerged, among them social democracy (which aims to generate higher levels of socio-economic equality), deliberative democracy (which highlights the importance of the deliberation process in political debates and the public use of reason), participatory democracy (which highlights the creation of different forms of direct participation in the political debate, such as public hearings, referendums, plebiscites and electronic consultations), and republican democracy (which rescues the concept of freedom as a collective self-determination rather than domination) (Fierro, 2016: 302-303).

Most Latin American countries still live in low-intensity democratic systems. Dictatorships have violently denied and destroyed popular forms of representation achieved by many countries in the twentieth century. Currently, progress is being made slowly and difficultly towards better forms of democracy. Demands for social inclusion are a symptom of political and social reality. This means that social exclusion remains a major problem in virtually all countries. The same problems persist with regards to citizen participation, a well-known political issue. It is also a symptom of traditional dominating structures of domination and organization of power. There is still a long way to go towards forms of social, deliberative, participatory or republican democracy. The will of political groups in power is lacking and, more important, a better-organized and stronger civil society. Real societal development is lacking, and is found in a state of emergency.

Developed countries, especially European, have gone through long and complex processes of social, political and cultural struggles to achieve better levels of social and participatory democracy, which is always exposed to dangers and threats of destabilization, as is currently the case with tensions provoked by the discussion about immigration and the emergence in several countries of far-right movements and parties, known as “right-wing populists.”

Sustainable development: ontology of common goods

Proper and efficient participation requires transparency, clarity and information concerning project processes, its objectives, contents, costs, impacts, deadlines and mo-

dalities of citizen participation, as well as to establish with precision the real possibilities of influencing communities adjacent to the project.

Social experience indicates that communities affected by interventions in their territories, generally react and base their arguments in light of their individual and collective interests. They defend the heritage of their common goods, be it water, an ecosystem, a landscape, clean air, wetlands, traditional crops, forms of coexistence or local cultures.

For the same reason, for a consultation system to be truly democratic and generate conditions for dialogue and eventual consensus, it is essential to *clarify interests, common assets and motivations* of actors involved in the project. The concealment of baseline interests and motivations impair the acceptance of the same. Interests are not purely rational as they also involve emotional experiences and expressions:

“... in a deeper sense, public culture needs to nourish and sustain itself from something that is deeply rooted in the human heart and draw from it its most powerful feelings, including passion and humor. Without these feelings, public culture is as superficial as it is dispassionate and incapable of motivating people to make the slightest sacrifice of their particular personal interest for the common good” (Nussbaum, 2014: 61-62).

Another important aspect to consider in a project relates to the possibility of *creating added value* for the regions. Many projects merely extract raw materials, devoid of adding value. These projects keep regions in poverty, transforming them into mere cheap natural resource suppliers. On the contrary, projects that generate added value contribute to the development of people (through qualified personnel demands) and the region/locality, through value chain promotion, knowledge and technologies creation, and commercial trade improvement.

Along with adding value to what is produced, a project should also consider the *identity* of the locality or region. It is known that some projects deteriorate and even destroy regional identity. The identity of a region is closely tied to its ecological, productive, social and cultural history. A sense of identity strengthens regions by reinforcing their sense of belonging and respect for their ecological and human habitats. Identity has an irreplaceable and immeasurable value because it supports the social and individual life of the community.

Prior to the emergence of private property and the capitalist mode of production, communities occupied territories with a vision, practice and culture based on the community or the common good. The world of “Commons im Pluriversum” (common in various worlds), in Escobar’s terms, takes on an ontological character (Escobar, 2015: 334-345). The ontology of common good bases its philosophy on the existence of a world or several worlds with common senses and belongings that serve as a basis, making the emergence of human life possible within the framework of a habitable and interdependent natural habitat.

“The demand for common good has been born, first of all, in the social and cultural struggles against the capitalist order and the business state. Principal term for the alternative to neo-liberalism,

“common good” has become the effective principle of combats and movements that, for two decades, have resisted capital dynamics and have given rise to action and original speeches. Far from being a purely conceptual invention, it is the formula of movements and thought currents that oppose the main tendency of our age: the extension of private appropriation to all spheres of society, culture and life” (Laval, Dardot, 2015: 21).

This *ontological vision* of the world, centered on the basis of sharing common goods, prevailed for thousands of years, until the private arrival of capitalism as a mode of production and social and cultural life construction dominated the modernization process of the Modern Era and buried instilled in the commercial exchange culture, old ecological traditions, still present in indigenous communities and in local convivial practices.

Defending local identity is not easy. In today’s globalizing trends, it means going against the current, as argued by leading thinkers such as Zigmunt Bauman and Edgar Morin.

“With globalization, identity becomes a hot topic. All reference points are erased and biographies become puzzles whose solutions are difficult and changeable. However, the problem is not the pieces, but how they fit together” (Bauman, 2005: 104).

“Identity, put clearly, is a ‘hotly contested concept’. Wherever you hear that word, you can be sure that there is a battle going on. The natural home of identity is a battlefield. Identity only returns to life in the tumult of battle; Falls asleep and remains silent when the roar of battle fades away... ‘Identity’ involves a simultaneous struggle against dissolution and fragmentation; An intention to devour and, at the same time, a determined refusal to be eaten...” (Bauman, 2005: 163-164).

Globalization tends to “devour” local aspects, disintegrating and fragmenting what remains of community life and local culture, to subject it to unifying “techno-economic” logics, analyzed by Morin (2011). However, local aspects do not disappear. Local aspects endure in common sense valuation, uniting, producing, and giving meaning and feelings of belonging to a living human community in permanent transformation.

The scientific community at a university, such as the University of Concepcion, can make a significant contribution to added value creation in the Biobío region productive, social and ecological life. Value creation is needed urgently to overcome its considerable delay and to move towards sustainable development, improving the quality of life of its population. In fact, many Latin American regions need it. Creative capacities exist in all countries and localities.

“Could the community itself become a vocation? Faith, identity and informal sociability suggest ways in which the poor or marginal

communities could be supportive, but not completely... We prefer instead to imagine the community as a process of entry into the world, a process in which both the value of face-to-face relationships and the limits of those relationships are elaborated. For the poor or marginalized, these limits are political and economic; Value, on the other hand, is social. Although the community cannot fully fulfill a life, it promises important pleasures" (Sennett, 2012: 383).

References

- BAUMAN, Z. **Identidad**. Buenos Aires. Argentina: Losada, 2005.
- BOISIER, S. **Territorio, estado y sociedad en Chile. La dialéctica de la descentralización: entre la geografía y la gobernabilidad**. Santiago, Chile: Mago Editores, 2010.
- ESCOBAR, A. 2015. Commons im Pluriversum. In: HELFRICH, S.; BOLLIER, D. und HEINRICH-BÖLL-STIFTUNG (eds.). **Die Welt der Commons. Muster Gemeinsam Handelns** (El mundo de lo común. Modelo de acción común). Bielefeld, Alemania: Editorial Transcript, 2015. p. 334-345.
- FIERRO, J. **La ciudadanía y sus límites**. Santiago, Chile: Editorial Universitaria, 2016.
- LAVAL, Ch.; DARDOT, P. **Común. Ensayo sobre la revolución en el siglo XXI**. Barcelona, España: Gedisa, 2015.
- MARCEL, M. Somos el país de la OCDE con más desigualdad territorial. Entrevista de GONZÁLEZ, M. Diario **El Sur**. Reportajes. Concepción, Chile. 4 de abril 2014.
- MARCUSE, H. **El hombre unidimensional. Ensayo sobre la ideología de la sociedad industrial avanzada**. México: Editorial Joaquín Mortiz, 1965.
- MORIN, E. **La vía para el futuro de la humanidad**. Barcelona, España: Paidós, 2011.
- NUSSBAUM, M. C. **Emociones políticas. ¿Por qué el amor es importante para la justicia?** Barcelona, España: Paidós, 2014.
- PACHECO, M. "El rol de un Estado pasivo tocó fondo" (Entrevista de Carmen Gloria Sandoval). Diario **El Sur**, Concepción, 12 de abril 2014.
- RAU, I. La importancia de la participación para la aceptación de megaproyectos en el área energética. Grupo de Investigación Psicología Ambiental. Universitaet de Saarlandes y Universitaet de Magdeburg, Alemania. Presentación en la Universidad de Concepción. Concepción, Chile, 14 al 17 de octubre de 2013. irina.rau@fg-upsy.com; fg-umwelt.de
- SENNETT, R. **Juntos. Rituales, placeres y política de cooperación**. Barcelona, España: Anagrama, 2012.
- SETIÉN, M. L. **Indicadores sociales de calidad de vida. Un sistema de medición aplicado al País Vasco**. Madrid, España: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS), Monografías N° 33, 1993.

Submitted on: 03/09/2016

Accepted on: 15/01/2017

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/1809-4422ASOCEX0001V2012017>

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION, QUALITY OF LIFE AND TERRITORIAL TRANS- REGIONAL JUSTICE: A SOCIAL BASIS FOR COMMON GOOD

JORGE ROJAS HERNÁNDEZ

Abstract: For globalized local worlds undergoing transformation, territorial interventions are increasingly producing larger social and environmental impacts. Macro-interventions profoundly alter the functioning of ecosystems and human habitats or communities, becoming inclusive in extreme situations of exploitation or extraction, risking their very existence. Therefore it is necessary to develop a system or Social Baseline that clearly establishes the philosophical bases, restrictions and criteria that regulate and curb the negative impacts of such interventions. This implies defining methods for citizen participation. This article focuses on defining a basic framework with criteria and indicators that regulate the impact of macro-interventions - of different natures - on human territories and communities.

Key Words: Citizen Participation, Territorial Intervention, Justice, Quality of Life, Sustainability.

Resumen: En el mundo local globalizado en proceso de transformación, las intervenciones territoriales producen cada vez impactos sociales y ambientales de mayor envergadura. Las macro-intervenciones alteran profundamente el funcionamiento de los ecosistemas y el hábitat humano, las comunidades, poniendo inclusive en situaciones extremas de explotación o extracción, en riesgo su existencia misma. Por lo mismo que se requiere desarrollar un sistema o Línea Base Social que establezca con claridad las bases filosóficas, restricciones y criterios que regulen y frenen los impactos negativos de dichas intervenciones. Ello implica necesariamente definir modalidades vinculantes de participación ciudadana. El presente artículo se ocupa precisamente de definir un marco básico con criterios e indicadores que regulen el impacto de las macro-intervenciones - de diferente naturaleza- en los territorios y comunidades humanas.

Palabras claves: Participación ciudadana, intervenciones territoriales, justicia, calidad de vida, sustentabilidad.

Resumo: Em um mundo local globalizado que está em processo de transformação, as intervenções territoriais produzem cada vez mais impactos sociais e ambientais de maior escala. As

macro-intervenções alteram profundamente o funcionamento dos ecossistemas e do habitat humano, as comunidades, ficam em situações extremas de exploração ou extração, deixando sua própria existência em risco. Por isso a necessidade de desenvolver um sistema ou uma Linha Base Social que estabeleça com clareza as bases filosóficas, restrições e critérios que regulam e freiam os impactos negativos dessas intervenções. Tal implica, necessariamente, definir modalidades vinculativas de participação cidadã. O presente artigo aborda precisamente a respeito de definir uma estrutura básica com critérios e indicadores que regulem o impacto das macro-intervenções - de diferente natureza - nos territórios e nas comunidades humanas.

Palavras chaves: participação cidadã, intervenções territoriais, justiça, qualidade de vida, sustentabilidade.
