

## The dilemma of the Rio+20 Summit

The productive processes that began with agricultural and livestock activities over 11,000 years ago have been determining factors in terms of environmental impact. However, it is from the nineteenth century onwards, with the universalization of capitalism, that such processes began to cause severe and large-scale socio-ecological transformations.

These changes were exacerbated, especially after World War II, with the intensification of the pace of production and consumption. Worldwide, between 1950 and 1970 manufacturing output quadrupled, between 1950 and 1980 grain production per hectare doubled and fishing industries tripled their catches. In 1940, four million tons of chemical fertilizers were consumed, and by 1990 this figure rose to 150 million. Approximately 10 million chemical substances have been produced since 1900, and between 1940 and 1982, the production of synthetic chemicals increased 350-fold.

The impact on health of this development model has gained visibility in industrialized countries. The photochemical smog of December 1952 in London led to the deaths of approximately 4,000 people in seven days. Social movements and initiatives questioning the existing model then began to emerge. In 1972, the Club of Rome published 'Limits to Growth,' focusing on socio-environmental problems. That same year, the UN organized the United Nations Conference on the Environment in Stockholm, which put the issue on the multilateral agenda, created UNEP and fostered the creation of national entities dedicated to the topic. In 1987, the UN World Commission on Environment and Development published 'Our Common Future,' where the concept of Sustainable Development was highlighted. The work stressed that humanity is capable of making development sustainable, supplying current requirements without prejudicing future generations. It roundly criticizes the unequal distribution of income among countries. However, the core elements that determine such contradictions are omitted, namely the political, economic and military domination of the major powers and the exploitation within each nation, in line with the logic of market societies.

In this context, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED or Rio 92) was convened. It reaffirmed the concept of Sustainable Development and launched Agenda 21.

In 2002, the Johannesburg conference was convened to evaluate the results of UNCED or Rio 92: poverty had increased and environmental degradation had worsened. What the world wanted, according to its General Assembly, was a Conference to work towards achieving results in the eradication of poverty, dangerous chemicals and ensuring investments in sanitation, health and biodiversity.

In June 2012, Brazil will host RIO+20, the core issues of which are "a green economy for the elimination of global poverty and governance for the sustainability of the planet," in the following situation regarding the problems already mentioned: 1) a globalized system where it is up to the major countries to produce high-technology products with reduced environmental impact, while the peripheral countries concentrate on the production of commodities with high environmental impact and effects on speculation on the price of land; the assassination of local leaders by major landowners; monoculture agriculture with intensive use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers and the displacement of the population to "development works"; 2) the crisis of capitalism, with unemployment and underemployment affecting 1 billion workers; 3) a billion people with protein-calorie malnutrition and some degree of food shortage; 4) 1.1 billion people without adequate access to water; 5) three wars unleashed by the U.S. and its allies, with enormous loss of human life and destruction of the environment, namely Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, which are sanctioned by NATO.

My question is: Is this what we call propagated Sustainable Development? Is a green economy for the eradication of global poverty possible, without challenging capitalism structurally?

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