

LANDLOCKEDNESS AND CULTURAL HETEROGENEITY

Sub-Saharan countries and issues for socio-economic development

In September 2000 at the Millenium Summit, the heads of states set out eight Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) to be achieved within 2015 and among them the first is "Eradicate extreme hunger and poverty" (Millenium Project, 2006). Therefore, it should be assert that each society has different priorities and problems to face in order to achieve a socio-economic development. In the world there are regions with high lifestyle, like Europe or Oceania and many developed countries in a position of advantage respect to others. On the other hand developing countries have to face economic and social problems that undermine their development. In fact, there is a kind of developing countries that has an amount of specific challenges: landlocked developing countries. There are thirty-two landlocked developing countries in the world with a population of about 400 million (UN-OHRLLS, 2014). Africa is comprised of fifty-four countries and among them sixteen are landlocked: Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Rwanda, South Sudan, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. As everybody knows, Africa is endowed of a big amount of natural resources, but it is one of the poorest regions of the world. There are many factors that obstruct the development of African countries like the lack of drinking water in many parts of the continent, a not widespread health care system, famines, diseases, high mortality rate, gender inequality, high levels of corruption and many ethnic groups who live in the same country. Often these problems have deep roots in the history of this continent, composed of colonization, exploitation of human and natural resources and boundaries that are the heritage of the colonial domination. Many cases also show how having natural resource does not mean to solve all these problems, but may lead further difficulties if their management is not done well. It is underlined that in the world many progress have been made, but "Sub-Saharan Africa is the epicentre of crisis, with continuing food insecurity, a rise of extreme poverty, stunningly high child and maternal mortality, and large numbers of people living in slums, and a widespread shortfall for most of the MDGs." (Millenium Project, 2006)

Collier (2006) makes a comparison between forty-three Sub-Saharan African countries (SSA) and fifty-six other developing countries in growth per capital from 1960s to 2000s. He noted that in 1970s Africa had the first commodity boom and after five years in which the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increased of seven per cent, it followed a decade of economic washout. In fact, whereas other developing countries had an economic growth, in SSA happened the opposite phenomenon and Africa "missed in large part an opportunity" (Collier, 2009). According to this Professor of Economics and Public Policy at the University of Oxford,

there are different reasons that can explain this economic collapse. First of all, he analysed that SSA countries can be divided via two parameters: wealth or poverty in natural resources and geographic location: more precisely he used terms such as "landlockedness" and "coastal". He matches these variables and creates four categories. Ethiopia and Mali can be examples of resource-poor and landlocked countries and Tanzania one of coastal and resource-poor. Secondly, Collier argued that the most of the population of SSA lives in coastal scarce countries, eleven percent in rich countries and only one percent in land-locked. He stressed that the most relevant difference between SSA and other developing countries is the quantity of households who live in landlocked resource-poor countries. (Collier, 2006) On the other hand Nigeria and Angola are resource-rich because they discovered oil respectively in 1956 and 1955. These two countries are coastal but it is explained that geographical location is not relevant if countries have valuable natural resources (Collier, 2006).

The question that needs to be addressed is if natural resource is a blessing or a curse for the economy of a state (Otaha, 2012); In Collier's words: "In the short term, a commodity boom always helps the economy, but the long-term impact depends on policy choices" (2009). For instance, the discovery of oil in Nigeria in 1956 made this country with one of the most volatile economies of the world (Collier, 2006) due to the volatility of oil prices in international markets. Before that event, Nigerian economy was based on agricultural exports of wood, palm oil, cotton and peanuts. But the Dutch disease generated long term adverse effect, due to the slump of other economic sectors, like agriculture. Conversely, an opposite example can be found in Norwegian country. In fact, Petroleum reserves were found by Norway in 1969, but it "has managed to avoid the so-called Dutch disease", for example through the establishment of the Government Pension Fund Global, formerly called Petroleum Fund (Anderson, Curritive, Merk, 2006, p.11). Therefore, the mere fact of having or not natural resources is not a curse, but the problem concerns their administration. Obviously, it is necessary to state that Norway and Nigeria are two nations too different in many aspects, but this comparison above is only concerning the conduction of oil after his discovering. In fact, one feature that should not be underestimated is the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) that "scores 177 countries on a scale from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean)" (Transparency International, 2013). Results show Norway with a score of 86 and Nigeria with 25 but beyond this analysis, corruption is a pathology of many societies worldwide, albeit in different forms. A report from ONE Campaign has revealed that due to corruption and illegal tax evasion every year at least a trillion dollars disappear to the detriment of development programmes (Nkombo, 2014). This research called logically "The Trillion Dollar Scandal" emphasizes how development and welfare are hindered by the embezzlement of funds. To date without corruption that amount of money may be used in health care, food security and education. Nkombo writes that all Nigerians children under the age of five could be vaccinated with the four hundred billion dollars lost to "oil thieves" since 1960. Put another way, African people are victims of secret deals that undermine their existence and leave them in deplorable living conditions. The problem of corruption is a global

threat and especially in Africa is the major obstacle to the achievement of needed progress. With an impressive sentence, the World Bank president Jim Yong Kim asserts: "Every dollar that a corrupt official or a corrupt business person puts in their pocket is a dollar stolen from a pregnant woman who needs health care" and he also underlines that "in the developing world, corruption is the public enemy number one" (World Bank, 2013). Often corruption comes from a lack of strong checks and balances in revenues and Collier (2006) suggested that resource-rich countries should built transparency policies. For example, in 2003 the British government introduced the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) in order to mitigate corruption. However, issues about African development derive not only from corruption, but also from the lack of political stability, societal breakdown, economic crises, demographic pressure, hostilities between Christian and Moslem and pervasive poverty (Oyeshile, 2004). Moreover, Africa has distinctive features in human geography as the cohabitation of diverse ethnicities in each nation (Collier, 2006) and it is necessary a brief historical background to figure out why. Historically, Africa has been victim of centuries of exploitation of natural and human resources by western powers. In fact, before colonization due the slave trade almost twenty millions of people were taken away from their lands and enslaved from fifteenth to nineteenth century. (Nunn, 2008). In 1885-1885 the "Scramble for Africa" started with the Berlin Conference, where Europeans partitioned Africa with improper border design and regardless of the different ethnic and cultural realities that lived in those territories (Michalopoulos et Papaioannou, 2011). In 1960s dependence was allowed and a "hasty decolonization created artificial multi-ethnic states" (Oyeshile, 2004, p. 292). It is argued that these historical events have had consequences also in development due to civil wars in countries where miscellaneous groups were forced to be part of the same state (Michalopoulos et al., 2011; Oyeshile, 2004). The proneness to violent conflicts is also stressed by Collier (2006) who analysed which kind of political system is more advantageous in societies comprised of diverse ethnicities and at the and he individualized in democracy a solution. Furthermore, he pointed out that high ethnic diversity is not an obstacle to development, but it leads to several difficulties regarding public services provision and hence the necessity of public spending decentralization. Decentralization may be more suitable because Africa is much more ethnically diverse at the national level than at local level (Collier, 2006) and thus local governments, who are closer to people, can better administrate public spending for each specific local need. However, Africa has a particular need regarding health care that is not highly developed and according to Collier (2006) rich-countries governments need to spend resource rents largely in public sector. Despite being rich, these countries have huge problem to deal with. By way of contrast, there are countries in hinterlands that have much more challenges they have to face in order to achieve an economic development. Collier (2006) underlined that resource-scarce countries have been the worst performance globally. In fact, from 1960s to 2000s the average of GDP is -0.36% in SSA and 1.40% in other developing countries. Indeed, an important question is whether being a landlocked nation can accrue

consequences to economic growth. In fact, most of world's trade is carried by sea and this means that the geography of these kinds of countries could be an element of disadvantage. Generally the international transportation and distribution of goods can be through land (with trains or trucks), sea or air. Among African countries, sixteen of them are landlocked and this implies that they need to be dependent from their neighbours that have direct access to the sea. According to Faye, McArthur, Sachs and Snow (2004) dependence can have different forms; Firstly a "dependence on transit infrastructure", secondly a "dependence on political relations with neighbours", then a "dependence on peace and stability within transit neighbours" and finally a "dependence on administrative processes in transit" (Faye et al., 2004, p. 40). For example, before Eritrean-Ethiopian war in 1998, the landlocked Ethiopia had access to the port of Assab and three-quarters of land transportation passed through duty-free. After that bloody conflict Ethiopians began to use the transit port of Djibouti for trades (ibid., 2004). This case clearly shows how Ethiopia was dependent from his political relationship with Eritrea and due to that warfare, his trade policies had to change. Now Ethiopia is dependent upon a new neighbour. Moreover, Addis Ababa is 918 kilometres far from Djibouti port (UNCTAD, 2013) and it is the closest available port. It is also estimated that Ethiopian economy is affected by tariffs that traders have to pay to Djibouti harbour each year. This amount is over 700 USD (UNCTAD, 2013). Obviously, in addition to fees, there is also a correlation between distances and transportation cost in terms of money and time to exports. In fact, according to data reported by World Bank in 2011, to exports Ethiopian trades need eight documents and also forty-four days and 1890 USD per container (UNCTAD, 2013, p.10). All these data show the existence of a detrimental impact that burden upon landlocked countries' economies and consequently, on human development. Moreover, often their coastal neighbours are in turn developing countries (UNCTAD, 2013) and they have not a good quality of transport infrastructure, for example roads. Data presented in the Human Development Index Report confirm that Ethiopia's HDI is 0.435, Eritrea's has 0.381 HDI, Djibouti's HDI is 0.467 that rank them respectively at the 173th, the 182th and the 170th place among 187 countries at global level (UNDP, 2013). In the words of Collier (2006), these countries are also "air-locked" because of the high cost monopolies of Air Afrique, which does not allow the use of air freight as an affordable option. All these disadvantage factors for development in LLDCs have been formally recognized in August 2003 by governments participating in the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation held in Almaty, in Kazakhstan. They individualized five priorities in the Almaty Programme of Action in order to reduce challenges that LLDCs have to face. They regards transit policy issues like bureaucracy and fees, the development of infrastructure and their maintenance for transports by roads and rails, but also air transport and finally measures for making LLDCs' goods more competitive in International markets (UN-OHRLLS, 2004). Austria is another landlocked country and Vienna was the host city of the Second United Nations

Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries held in November 2014. The Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 has been submitted by President in order to help LLDSs to face with their specific challenges. Progresses have been made, for example the estimate time to exports has decreased from 49 days in 2006 to 42 in 2014, but physical infrastructure is still inadequate (UN-OHRLLS, 2014). Surely, until 2024 much more outcomes will be made.

Given these points, it is possible to assert that landlocked countries have a disadvantaged position among African countries. Surely, their location has impacts on economy due to high costs of transportation and, like a chain, impacts burden on other aspects of development. In fact, if a country has to pay a big amount of money for exporting products, the amount of revenues will be lower. On the other hand, one country that has direct access to the sea can save money and spend them in health care, in education and in infrastructures and in other sectors. I have focused my attention on Sub-Saharan Africa countries and in particular on the situation of Ethiopia. But worldwide there are many developing countries that need measures to embark this issue, for example Kazakhstan is the most landlocked country because its distance from harbour is 3750 km (Faye et al., 2004). As was previously stated, landlockedness is the cause of forms of dependence among countries that restrict the transit for trade and, likewise, these issues regard imports of goods as well. Unfortunately constraints for Africa's development are not only limited to the economic sphere, but they include also cultural features. As has been mentioned, corruption is a "cancer" that damages all the nations of the world, but particularly Africa, where many countries have a very high Corruption Perceptions Index like Somalia that, with a score of 8, is the most corrupt country in the list (Transparency International, 2013). The issue of corruption is much more relevant when such selfish "predators of the society" steal money without caring the impact of their actions on the entire community. I am absolutely sure that this is one of the biggest obstacles to development because it increases inequalities and fosters the black-market. Moreover, the human geography of African countries shows a melting pot of ethnicities in the same land and this characteristic leads inevitably consequences like conflicts and power structures at the expense of minorities. For this reason it has been said that democracy is an appropriate form of government, even if often they are formally democracies. Furthermore, the use of cooperation strategies should be avoided frequent ethnic conflicts due to their impact on population's lives, environment and economy. Difficulties in order to achieve a socio-economic development has roots in African history, when many countries have been colonized and exploited. After having analysed this multitude of aspects, it is possible to state that development is a process that needs time and efforts from different social actors. Indices about Education, Income, Inequality, Gender, Poverty, Employment and Vulnerability, Human Security, Trade and Financial flows, Mobility and Communication, Environment and Demography are all relevant parameters to understand the level of well-being in a country because they create the Human Development Index. In fact, African countries that are rich in

natural resources like Angola and Nigeria, do not have high HDI because they have high indices of poverty and inequality. As a final point, I consider important both the cooperation among the governments of all nations with development policies and the ethics of every human being in order to achieve the United Nations MDGs with regards to the alleviation of poverty.

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