

# NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: RESOLVING CONTRADICTION BETWEEN MARKET AND SURVIVAL ECONOMIES IN KENYA

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**Key words:**

## **ABSTRACT**

“It’s no use trying to lay hold of tropical Africa with naked fingers. Civilization must be armed with machinery if she is going to subdue those wild regions to her authority. Iron roads, not jogging porters; tireless machines, not weary men; cheap power, not cheap labour; steam and steel, not sweat and fumbling. There lies the way to tame the jungle. More jungles than one”. (Winston Churchill, 1908)

Churchill was subscribing to homo faber concept of development which later was advocated so religiously to justify the expansion of the forces of production to subdue both human and nonhuman nature so that capital could control, utilize and manage natural resources for profit motives.

The mode of subduing and taming tropical Africa coalesced into a system of capital accumulation which marginalised or “rendered useless all properties and processes of nature and society” that were not priced in the market or were not inputs in commodity production. The end result was the emergence of two economies. The first is the market economy, which thrived in favoured capitalist sectors. The second was what has come to be called the survival economy, which spatially and socially was marginalised and hegemonized by capital, as it was considered by capital to be backward, stagnant and invisible to the market economy. For this reason, it was subject of further subduing and taming. In Kenya, the survival economy is to be found in the arid and semi-arid areas. It is the same areas that are subject also of population overspill from market economy areas and expansion of national parks and reserves. The administration of the lands and natural resources is under a different legal regimes (mainly trusteeship) from the market economy areas. Spatial information is also very scant or non-existent in those areas.

As capital accumulation over-exploits the natural resources in the areas comprising the survival economy, the survival economy shrinks and destroys the fragile ecosystems and consequently marginalizes the peoples’ survival. Coupled with the fact that even the market economy are also experiencing depredation and notorious destruction of natural resources one may say this is what has come to be called “unsustainable development”. Analysed deeply, it is the contradiction of between the market economy and the survival economy.

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This paper describes how efforts have been made to resolve the above contradiction. In doing so, it is necessary to revisit the anthropocentric and ecocentric perspective (and its various themes i.e. participation, survival and emancipation) debate of utilisation and management of natural or environmental resources. The objective is to see in a periodized approach, how the ideology of development and particularly its variants of economic growth, growth with equity, basic needs strategy and sustainable development have been used to obfuscate the resolution of the contradiction between the market and the survival economy. It will be shown that a paradox develops in pursuing the market imperatives in utilization and management of the natural resources in Kenya. That is while development is recognised as the root cause of ecological and unsustainability of utilization and management of natural resources, it is the same development which is being offered to solve the same problems in form of sustainable development. The result is to diminish the meaning of sustainability.

The paper continues to discuss in the Kenyan context the following:

- a) The Natural resource base – land; water, forests, rangeland, wildlife, medicinal plants and genetic resources
- b) The legal and institutional framework for natural resource utilization and management
- c) Public interest - eminent domain and police powers and trust land doctrine
- d) Political, economic and ecological imperatives of natural resource utilization and management
- e) Natural resources governance and the intervention of the international community.

The role of spatial information in the natural resources management will be brought out. The objective is to show that the distance between the resources users and the decision-makers increases when spatial information is not adequately available.

The conclusion of the paper is that if development of the natural resources in Kenya is to be of any meaning, it is important to critically examine the current spatial structures, political processes and economic systems with a view to addressing the following three issues:

- a) Efficiency Issue: Optimal allocation of scarce resources
- b) Social/Ethical Issue: Optimal distribution of resources
- c) An ecological/Ethical Issue: Optimal scale of resource use.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES**

G. M. Gitonga Aritho is a Property / Assets Valuer and Environmental Impacts Assessment Consultant. He is specialised in land economics and environmental impact assessment.

His educational and professional qualifications include:

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