

West Africa : From the salt routes to sustainable development – The case of Ghana

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Motivations

- 1) Interest of revisiting the first trade route to understand globalization
- 2) Place of Africa in the premises of globalization
- 3) Assessment of the contemporary paradox
- 4) Proposal of improvement within the framework of the sustainable development

Gold and Salt

- 1) Gold is the King of Metals and the Metal of Kings
- 2) Before the colonial era, travellers had reported that a country called Ghana was abundant in gold in the Middle Ages
- 3) The first mine was built in 1482 by the Portuguese
- 4) The history of Ghana is linked with the history of trade and the first trans-saharian route
- 5) White Gold or salt is an essential product for life.
- 6) Salt is very old "The Old Testament tells us about the *Alliance of Salt*"
- 7) Salt is also a money of exchange in Asia and Africa
- 8) The empire of Ghana (Senegal, Mauritania, Niger, Mali,..) was built with salt and gold

Centuries of cultural wealth and exchanges

- 1) From these routes trading gold and salt allowed medieval cities like Timbuktoo and Gao to build their wealth
Timbuktoo: 100 000 inhabitants and 25 000 students at the University (courses of the planets, tonality of cords of music instruments, quotation of materials,...)
- 2) A salutary interdependence: globalization or not?
- 3) The arrival of the Europeans result in a reversal of the flows of commercial exchange for the benefit of the Atlantic coast and the collapse of the trans-saharian trade (in the 17th and 18th centuries)

Globalization and WTO

- 1) Africa has experienced globalization for centuries. During 400 years, between 10 and 60 million men and women were kidnapped and transported to other countries where a new way of life, a new language, a new civilisation were imposed on them
- 2) Gold trading and slave trading turned Africa into a pole emitting towards the West
- 3) Nowadays, the place of Africa in the world trade is twofold: exporting commodities (coffee, cocoa, oil, sugar, ...) and importing manufactured goods

Under principles and rules imposed by industrial countries and guaranteed by the World Trade Organization

Africa and globalization

- 1)
 - Weakness level of accumulation of capital both human and physical
 - High level of corruption, low level of savings '13%'
 - 80% of the currency income come from 2 to 4 export commodities
 - Budget deficit, economic downturn, massive debt, huge trade deficit (600 million \$ in 1990 to 11 billion in 1996)
- 2) Africa exports more than 75% of its production whereas France exports only 25%

Therefore Africa needs a different model of development enabling the continent to root its economy firmly on the domestic level before opening up to the world

Sustainable development

The 8 development objectives for the Millennium

- 1- reducing extreme poverty and hunger
 - 2- ensuring primary education for all
 - 3- promoting gender equality and the autonomisation of women
 - 4- reducing infant mortality
 - 5- improving maternal health
 - 6- fighting HIV/AIDS, malaria and other endemic diseases
 - 7- ensuring a sustainable environment
 - 8- setting up a partnership for development
- 2) *The concept of sustainable development offers an adequate framework*

Sustainable development

1) A pluri-dimensional approach. That is :

- an economic dimension based on the objective of the increase of long-term income,
- a social dimension based on equal opportunity and on taking into account the interdependence of the human communities, and finally,
- an environmental dimension aiming at protecting the long-term integrity and productivity of the planet's ecological systems and infrastructures

2) The instruments

- Good economic governance
- Good social governance

The case of Ghana

1) Ghana has been presented as a model of economic revival in Africa. During the nineties, while working with development partners, Ghana reduced by 14% the number of people living in poverty

Surprisingly, in spite of the tonnes of salt it might be able to produce, Ghana has never exploited this resource. Finally, the industrial consumers of salt import it from Brazil, Argentina and Australia. The project is thus to aim at the fruitful market of neighbouring Nigeria that buys for 1.5 billion dollars of salt outside Ghana.

2) The University of Food Sciences in Toronto and that of Ghana have put their observations in common and designed a new salt, which is enriched in iodine and in iron. In Ghana, 30% of the population suffers from a deficiency in iodine, whereas 50 % of the women and of the children suffer from a deficiency in iron.

Kofi Annan – UN

“We won’t profit from development without security, we won’t profit from security without development and we won’t have either without respect for human rights. Unless we ensure the promotion of these three causes, none of them will be successful.”

*Kofi ANNAN, Secretary General of the
United Nations, Nobel Peace Prize*

Laureate 2001. A. Chanaian

René MAGRITTE, La Bataille de
l'Argonne, 1959

Conclusion

With gold, salt and water, Ghana, the darling of the IMF, has all these resources at its disposal which, in principle turn the earth that contains them into a God-blessed place, and we would be considered as overoptimistic if we considered the situation of Ghana as definitely on the way to growth.

At the very least, we can hope that the initiatives taken from the moment they are organised under the form of a dialogue with the local populations may result in a real policy of development.

Sustainable development is a fabulous chance for the African continent as long as it is careful not to look like “neocolonialism”.

The Ghanaians have well understood the stakes of this new deal and in this sense they honour NEPAD’s policy

Epilog

The background of the slide is a painting by René Magritte titled 'La Bataille de l'Argonne' (1959). It depicts a landscape with a large, dark rock formation in the foreground, a body of water, and a sky with a crescent moon. The overall tone is somber and contemplative.

- 1) EDHEC School Business: Proposal: Students open on the world and worried about the becoming of the principles and rules of the sustainable development.
- 2) Action: education projects and co-operation between generations (Professors, students, ...)