

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD CRISIS AND MIGRATIONS: NIGER

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INTRODUCTION

The preoccupations on the environment in Niger translate a state of generalized and continuous degradation of the ecosystem. The explanations concerning the analysis of the process of damages of the environment in Niger remain an ancient fact (since drought of 1910-1918). In the style of a pendulum, the researches concerning the phenomenon oscillated between two explanatory levels: the ecological evolution and the action of the man.

Until 1990, the researches on the environment join essentially short-term perspective through terrible chain of poverty, characteristic of vicious circle of the difficulties of the majority of the rural: if the drought reduces the cattle and the thin harvest, they cut the green wood to sell it and go to others cities or region. Also, the national policy follows the same trajectory as the researches which introduced them: go and back between technical approach which excluded the farmers and a participative approach.

We will to analyze these topics by following three steps:

I) ECOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Synergetic or social system organization is a kind of self-organization _ like the theory of the dissipative structures developed by I. Prigogine _ is a social sciences theory which concerns mechanisms in future. It is about processes being at the origin of the qualities of system, or, about the construction of the structures in a system. In fact, the synergetic has for object the self-organization and is endowed with following characteristics:

- Multi-composition, that is the constitution of the system from the sub-systems and the elements
- The system is opened, is in exchange with the outside
- The system is in not balance because of the internal and external disturbances.

The appearance of new structures is due from the interactions of elements and sub-systems depending of the cooperative elements which can interact and show themselves by the appearance of new structures from microscopic changes which will widen and to affect the macroscopic sphere.

Broadly speaking, two scenarios appear in the exchanges between elements:

1) The reduced system itself the distances and maintains a relative stability, we talk about order by fluctuations.

2) The system changes under the internal impact of fluctuations and/or external's, it is question of fork of a system which is the critical point from which a new state becomes possible.

In both cases, a new structure appears or the former one remains by taking new characteristics, it is about the principle of minimal production of entropy characterized by an arrangement _ perfect or less perfect of the system.

In sum, two main characteristics determine the evolution of the social systems:

-Self dynamism or self regulation of a social system, showing that the change which arises from internal factors of a system acts on the external factors: as the periodic standards interiorized by all and the predictable penalties known for all. The self regulation fact remains always relative, because of the principle of the structural connection which translates the subordination of the structural, functional and dynamic elements of the system under the maintenance of its character of an inseparable system.

-Social Potential Rest is as a set of systematic social energy and which is created by the system itself. It supplies, in case of necessity, the social energy which forms and stays in the culture and knowledge.

The evolution of the Sahelian (Niger) socio-eco-systems where the confrontation of perception and social standards with the reality plays the leading part while the organization of the functions of the actors and the project of society have a role of support

II. DESERTIFICATION AND SOCIO ECONOMIC SITUATION OF NIGER

A) ECOSYSTEM

According to the group of intergovernmental expert on the evolution of the climate, the global warming accelerates the degradation of the dry lands and the other ecosystems explained the deforestation, erosion of grounds and desertification. The main effects of the changes concerning the environment, so gradual as sudden, are visible from: impoverishment of the natural environment, the disturbance of the hydraulic regime and the risks of extinction of some of the wild fauna.

- Niger, situated in the heart of Sahel, is the most country of the region affected by the desertification and the effects of the drought. The influence of the anthropological, climatic and very unfavorable factor provoked an escalation of the ecological imbalance and an exacerbation of the socioeconomic crisis. Indeed, it was observed since around thirty years, real process of cultural land degradation. The major environmental problem of the country is the desertification which has for consequence: .The high reduction of productive capital (lands, waters and biological resources) ; The increase of the climatic aridity ; The food insecurity ; The increase of the poverty (decrease of the sources of incomes), ; The socioeconomic imbalance and disorganization ; Social disorganization: often murderous land conflicts and absence of a rule of regulation ; The human and animal health ; Precariousness with the disappearance of certain ligneous and herbaceous used in traditional pharmacy traditional ; Reduction of the biodiversity ; The drying water sources and the reduction in the groundwater

B) SOCIOSYSTEM

On the socioeconomic topic, these phenomena's have for major consequence a situation of chronic food insecurity caused by the imbalance between the growth of the population and the potential of the resources strongly decreased.

- According to the statistics of Institut National de la statistique du Niger (INSN), the growth of the agriculture and the breeding in Niger progressed only of 2.2 % the period of 1995-2000, while the demographic progressed is about 3,3 % for the same period.
- Since 1990, the chronic deficit of the food needs is estimated at 20 %.
- The cultivable surfaces were reduced by 25 % because of the irregularity and of the strong decrease of rains as well as the degradation of the lands of cultures.
- The extension of the cultures to face the weak productivity of lands endowed conflicts between farmers and breeders.

III. ENVIRONMENTAL MIGRATIONS AS ANSWER TO THE PHENOMENON OF ECO-SOCIO-SYSTEM

According IOM “Environmental migrants are persons or groups of persons who, for compelling reasons of sudden or progressive changes in the environment that adversely affect their lives or living conditions, are obliged to leave their habitual homes, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their country or abroad”.

So following this definition, the most Niger migrants are ecological migrants. The spatial mobility is one of the essential characteristics of the Sahelian populations which always moved for diverse reasons. The Sahelian space is an opened space which facilitates the big movements (Mauny, on 1961: 220).

The physical, sometimes political and economic constraints of the environment also played an important role in connections between the social groups and their environment and determine the acceleration and the variety of the movements of population.

The French colonization is going to play a decisive bend in the evolution of the migratory practice of sahelian populations. These movements which aimed at escaping the coercive methods of dominion (Olivier de Sardan, on 1984: 174) and which were facilitated by the famines, the population growth and the exhaustion of lands (Sidikou, on 1974: 65).

The various droughts and the famines that knew the country since 1900-1903 contributed strongly to the demographic growth of the city. During 1973-1974 famine, the population of Niamey increased by 100 000 inhabitants (Gado, on 1998: 70) and in 1984-1985, after the famine Dazaï, the population of Niamey increased by a third (Gado, on 1998: 70).

These migrations concerned also rural area in Niger: the movements of colonization start during the drought of 1973-74 and are especially going to develop during 1980s with operation called Aï noma ("let us cultivate") where Tamou region (140 000 Km²) was totally occupied by migrants from Zarmaganda and Koufèye.

It appears two kinds of ecological migrations in Niger :

TWO KINDS OF ECOLOGICAL MIGRATIONS IN NIGER

A. MIGRATIONS OWED TO A ROUGH CHANGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

The most known phenomenon in Sahelian countries because it is directly connected to the big droughts in the region. These droughts generated food crises as well as the famine and they had for major consequences:

The impoverishment of the rural populations and the massive and uncontrolled movements of the farmers towards urban areas unequipped with health and education infrastructures and offering few opportunities of profitable jobs for newcomers without qualifications.

The premature alarm system and the steps of intervention non-existent or ineffective,

The governments met themselves deprived and without means to face these phenomena and to bring adequate answers. So the green belt of Niamey (2500 hectares) welcomes every year, migrants victims of bad productions. This belt is the object of continuously damages because of cutting trees for construction, of anarchy constructions ; exacerbation of the land conflicts . Sexually transmitted diseases, etc

ENVIRONMENTAL MIGRATION CONNECTED TO THE PROGRESSIVE DEGRADATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Face to correlation between degradation of the environment and its effects, and, the strong population growth, certain number of regulating mechanisms exists as the seasonal migrations. This form of migrations constitutes a strategy of survival at the same time as an answer of the populations to the rural poverty. The migrants towards cities offers a shape of security which allows them to get organized differently and to find forms of activities more lucrative than staying in rural areas where raining season is about 3 months. These migrations are temporary or circular because of the socio-cultural links which connect migrants with their soil of origin.

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CONCLUSION

The problem of the development of zones affected by the desertification and its corollaries is known, the food insecurity, the impoverishment of the rural households and the seasonal migrations. The set of systematic social energy is totally empty and the most answer is migrations. There is any societal (macro) solution because of high level of land degradation and lack of resources. The relation between Ecosystem degradation and migration must be rethought on new paradigm of development :

- Solving chronicle food crisis by solving social participation**
- A geo-spatial approach of intervention targeting firstly risk zones at risk.**
- Development projects and actions based on: reforestation and environment protection as Niger Program Special “cash for work”.**