

Environmental racism throughout the history of economic globalization

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ABSTRACT

Environmental racism plagues the history and contemporary realities of globalization. To control resources, stake holders seek to dominate lands and peoples in order to produce at a maximum profit. Left in the wake of consumerism are populations of ethnic, religious, and racial minorities. These groups traditionally have an attachment to ancestral lands they wish to protect or are unable to compete with large corporations who establish environmentally unfriendly conditions and unfair working situations for under-served populations. Since a mentality of 'Not in My Backyard' (NIMBY) perpetuates apathy for addressing iniquities, remediation of these issues has been slow to non-existent. The value of exploring specific instances and recurring trends within regions of inequity and destructive ecological policy cannot be understated. Without awareness, change is impossible. Inherently, methodologies used to analyze current global systems are imperialist in nature and create further distance from the subjects exposed to detrimental corporate and policy decisions. This research provides an historic overview of globalized environmental racism in order to address and combat negative choices affecting marginalized communities throughout the world.

KEYWORDS

environmental racism; resources; NIMBY

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1. Introduction

The global economy has major impact on environment with most of its effects hugely altering the ecological balance and future of our planet. Across the world, pollution levels continue to rise, and those not in control of resources become the increasingly marginalized. Land degradation is at an all-time high with agricultural pursuits, deforestation, mining, and the deposition of waste (Kwong 2005). There is a high correlation between the wealthy and environmental fitness as opposed to those who come from poverty being exposed to the worst environmental fallout consequences due to corporate waste zones, industrial pollution, and the pervasive 'not in my backyard' attitude from those who control resources (Bullard 2008). Despite many efforts to change environmental conditions, very few changes have been made. It is imperative that all major actors in the global economy work judiciously to alter the current trajectory of the earth's ability to sustain humankind, because current efforts are not enough and at the detriment to underserved populations.

Without an awareness of the issues facing these under-represented communities, environmental racism will continue to plague the global community. Most realistically, I contend that the means by which to combat environmental racism lies in making people aware of how the mistreatment of the underserved will, in turn, affect those who benefit from the products created by the corporations exacerbating pollution in areas that do not have the representation to advocate for themselves. While the idea 'Not in My Backyard' (NIMBY) is convenient for ignoring the state of global pollution, showing people that the negative effects of production do harm everyone forces those controlling resources to acknowledge that environmental racism is not sustainable (Maiorino 2011). The results may not be seen immediately but will be profoundly obvious when clean water and air become scarce, nutrients in the soil are depleted, and diseases spread from minority areas to those who control economic supply and demand. Making the consequences of environmental racism relative to the entire population so that there is an impetus to reform corporate mishandling of waste treatment and overseeing conservation initiatives in order to manage and restore an ecological balance is of the utmost importance of the future of society. The use of traditional historical review and case studies as examples is an effective means to understand the pervasiveness of characteristics and scenarios surrounding the issue of inequity and environmental racism, serving to bridge the gap between perception and reality.

2. Background

From the dawn of civilization, the allocation of resources has dominated politics at the local, regional, and global levels. This play for ownership has evolved over time and continues to be an area that raises questions about morality, sustainability, efficiency, and capacity for increased profit. Researchers and critics, alike, disagree as to how resources should be dispersed based on the aforementioned issues with some arguing for capitalistic gain at the expense of the masses and others taking a more environmental or humanistic approach. Realistically, these conversations need to come to some sort of affable consensus sooner rather than later because there is a tangible reality that humans are consuming resources at a rate more pronounced than they are recovered, and entire communities are being destroyed in the name of profit. The history of allocation of resources must be understood to decide how to address the issue of global access to supplies of any nature.

2.1 Pre-historic Quest for Resources

In pre-ancient times, the challenge in the days of the hunter-gatherer was to have enough food to survive. When sustenance disappeared, humans moved to another area until those resources also became scarce, repeating the pattern until agrarian abilities formed (Hakim 2005). Once humans were able to find ways to preserve food to consume in times of want, their explorations could be fulfilled on less of a primal level. "In the paleolithic period men were already aware that at certain times of the year animals and plants are less prolific than at others, and seasonal ritual observances to maintain an adequate supply of them were therefore deemed necessary." Even during this early time in history, supply was of utmost importance.

2.2 Emergence of Civilizations and Hierarchy

As humans migrated, so did their cultures, languages, and religions. They developed unique identities that have influenced their regions throughout time. As anthropologists continue to study the remains and artifacts of those who predated the current population, it is commonly agreed that the cradle of civilization is in the Middle East and Northern Africa, with Ethiopia also having a distinct early culture (Haviland 2013). As independent civilizations gathered the knowledge and resources to create agrarian societies with more complex governments and the opportunity for caloric energy to be expended on recreation, social hierarchies developed (Whitrow 2004). The result was a miniscule ruling or upper class, a very limited scholarly or merchant class middle class, and the rest being the working class which supported the entire civilization.

The upper classes had the luxury of time and wealth, while the lower classes toiled on land they did not own, for profits they could not claim. Their needs were barely being met while those in positions of power lived comfortably. As time progressed, the labor of the lower classes and the prowess of the merchant and ruling classes created trade routes spanning various continents. These routes brought with them the opportunity for economic growth through trade, the profits of war, and the acquisition of land for various civilizations. Inevitably, there was an imbalance in resources on all levels (Postgate 1994). In fact, some of the very resources being distributed were the very lowest classes: slaves. The idea of man as a commodity was an idea well-established throughout the continents based on the emerging idea of conquering to claim for political growth (Brace 2004). Unfortunately, the practice of slavery – in whatever form – developed as a reality wherever the acquisition of resources takes place.

2.3 Age of Exploration

By the Age of Exploration, the dominant political and expeditionary forces, except for the various dynasties of eastern Asia, existed in Europe. The focus of established political entities was threefold: gold, God, and glory. Monarchs sought to gain capital by finding gold and other lucrative assets, converting as many foreign civilizations to Christianity, and enjoying the glory of owning more of the Earth's crust through imperialism (Crowley 2015). The Atlantic, Pacific, Indian, and with them a wide variety of seas were now filled with trade route claims for shipping companies acting under the authority of various kingdoms and countries. Once again, the resources were allocated to the few – those wealthy enough to dictate exploration – and mined, cultivated, or manufactured by the masses. At this point in history, agriculture was not nearly as valued as the precious minerals being mined to sustain the desire for riches of the elite in Europe (Williamson 2009). With the demise of natives in colonial expanses, merchants quickly latched on to the market of slaves coming out of the Middle East and Africa, loading human cargo in ships and setting sail for, first, South America, but quickly on its heels, North America, as well. Once the Colombian Exchange was created and agriculture unique to the Americas falling in favor, the Triangular Trade soon followed suit with its own economic cycle. Ships filled with slaves and gold from Africa and the Mediterranean were traded for sugar and molasses in the West Indies where it was turned into rum, and other raw materials from the American Colonies were sent to Europe to be manufactured so they could be sold so that the entire process would begin again (Galeano 1997). Because of the reliance on water routes, countries also hired privateers to act on their behalf essentially as pirates to pull as many

commodities from foreign nations of opposite allegiance as possible.

While so much attention has been paid to European imperialism, the Ottoman Empire (Turks) dominated the Middle East while Asia was a confluence of the major players in Europe as well as Japan and, eventually the United States between colonial times right on up to the inception of World War I. Prior to that period, it had seen several large imperial forces ravage the area. At the very root of colonialism, regardless of location, were resources.

2.4 Industrial Revolution Through World War I

As colonies in the Americas and Asia fought to gain independence, the Industrial Revolution became the impetus for European nations to find means to obtain raw materials to produce finished products. Known as the Scramble for Africa, Europeans ravaged the African continent, claiming land masses filled with potential income and rivers for transportation at a rapid pace. In 1870, ten percent of Africa was controlled by European entities, but by the onset of World War I, ninety percent had been claimed (Easterly 2009). The fruits of the African continent were being taken at an incredibly high cost to the African people. Despite the atrocities occurring, many wealthy investors ignored the horror of African imperialism.

The beginning of the twentieth century ushered in great transformations, both politically and economically. The emergence of a solid middle class brought about new ideas and challenges to the traditional modes of government. The assassination of Archduke Ferdinand became the excuse needed to embark on a deadly conflict which cultivated a war machine fueled by corporate greed on both sides. Then, the post-war period was difficult on multiple levels. "Industrial production, which had been geared to the war effort, had to be changed over to peaceful uses." This time-consuming process led to unemployment as soldiers from all fronts returned home to find there were few jobs to be filled. Combining this with the Great Stock Market Crash of 1929, the world was struggling to recover.

This time, fascist regimes came forward with economic promises at the expense of freedom and progress which eventually led to World War II where no continent was left unscathed, whether by being directly involved in battle or through commitment of manpower and resources (Gilbert 1979). Corporations showed their disregard for moral principles by choosing to work with enemy governments while providing products for Allied countries. Some of their technological advancements even led to the death of both Allied troops as well as the victims of widespread genocide (Bakan, Crooks, Achbar 2003). To date, corporations involved with this duplicitousness deny direct involvement, taking an amoral approach that they have no control over the use of their product once sold to entities (Bakan et al. 2003).

2.5 Post-World War II

Once World War II concluded, it seemed the world was split between communist ideologies and capitalism. Oil, which came to the forefront during the First World War, dominated economic decisions globally. Europe and Asia were in ravages, while the United States held the upper hand economically on a universal level. It seemed the tables had turned on the former economic and political powers while former colonies exerted their fledgling power in protest of long held oppression. Smaller, previously ignored countries such as Viet Nam and Korea came to the forefront in the fight between capitalism and communism, while the people of those countries were more interested in exercising their independence. Time and again, countries would vie for true freedom from outside influences only to find that they were inherently sewn into the web of globalism. Since Central and South America now had more business ties with the United States than Europe and, as already noted, corporations have a long history with supporting tyrannical governments, this geographic region, like Asia followed by Africa, would find itself in political upheavals at the whim of wealthier governments or connected corporations (Williamson 2009). Even today, the corporate impact over government is undeniable. Corporations such as Monsanto are deeply embedded in the political decisions made in both developed and developing nations (Robin 2008). Essentially, those corporations, the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and World Trade Organization are the equivalent of the ancient Mesopotamian priests, making decisions that affect the lives of many while directly benefitting the few.

3. Environmental Racism

Environmental racism is a concept that evokes considerable controversy but must be addressed in order to protect the future of our planet. The term takes on different meaning depending on the geographic area depicted, but the basic premise is that the ethnic, religious, and racial minorities of a region are underserved in terms of adequate access to basic environmental protections and rights (Lancet Planetary Health 2018). While those currently benefiting from this marginalization continue to refuse to acknowledge the profound damage being done to, not only the minority groups directly involved, but the entire planet, our world is rapidly decaying and reaching a point of irrevocable damage. “Leaders in the environmental-justice movement have posited – in places as prestigious and rigorous as United Nations publications and numerous peer-reviewed journals – that environmental racism exists as the inverse of environmental justice, when environmental risks are allocated disproportionately along the

lines of race, often without the input of the affected communities of color.” The history and pervasiveness of colonization throughout time reinforced environmental racism so it is entrenched within the context of globalization.

Contemporary discourse centers around the inherently problematic issues that arise in attempting to address environmental racism. As the result of imperialism and colonization, the injustices associated with controlling resources while maximizing profits often excludes the voices most affected by contamination, pollution, and other inequities (Das, Horton 2017). Furthermore, the inability to respond to corporate policy that negatively affects communities keeps victims of environmental racism from being able to spearhead legal and legislative reform, much less have the resources to relocate to safer areas or access appropriate medical care. “The issues around environmental racism show that environmental and social issues cannot be neatly separated from each other. Resources, legal and financial, need to be made available to those affected so they can be heard when they call this discrimination out for what it is.” Continued concerted efforts on the part of corporations and policy makers to exploit underserved populations and the environments in which they live despite massive studies indicating the negative impacts to the ecology, health, and sustainability of impacted areas.

3.1 The United States

In the United States, environmental racism is typically identified in areas of lower income, dense population, and primarily minority residents, referring “to any policy, practice or directive that differentially affects or disadvantages (whether intended or unintended) individuals, groups or communities based on race or colour (sic)”. These types of communities are found all over the country, in both urban and rural areas, and involving a multitude of races and ethnicities. Ironically, one of the most affected groups in the United States are Indigenous People. “The legacy of institutional racism has left many sovereign Indian nations without an economic infrastructure to address poverty, unemployment, inadequate education and health care, and a host of other social problems.” Despite well-known and accepted histories of cultural interest in the earth and its relationship to humans, North American Indigenous Peoples are routinely found advocating to protect their land and resources from mostly economic entities determined to find profit at the expense of the environment. Most recently, the Dakota Access Pipeline controversy brought to light the conflict between corporate entities and tribal affiliations with the protests over the possibility of contaminating water and infringing on sacred burial grounds at the Standing Rock Indian Reservation (Liu 2016). The sheer apathy of the pipeline’s corporate response caught the American people, as well as

global followers, off guard and brought to light the inequalities feeding into institutional environmental racism.

Corporate indifference to industrial pollution is not unique to the Indigenous communities in the United States: “Two influential studies exploring this relationship – one by the U.S. General Accounting Office (USGAO) and the other by the United Church of Christ (UCC) – found that African-Americans and other people of color were more likely to live close to hazardous waste sites and facilities than whites.” Both studies were conducted in the 1980s and revealed inequities on several levels. The UCC research was able to link race specifically to augmented opportunities for exposure to contaminated materials (United Church of Christ 1987). Most importantly, these studies brought awareness to the fact that minority communities were more prone to environmental racism.

Whether natural or man-made, environmental disasters continue to dominate in areas where poverty and minority communities exist. In 2005, Hurricane Katrina ravaged the Gulf Coast region, specifically New Orleans. The result was chaos and destruction which impacted all strata of society but particularly in the black community. The authors of *Institutional Discrimination, Individual Racism, and Hurricane Katrina* explore the reasons for this inequity in their research, explaining that previous poverty and lack of resources prior to the hurricane made escaping its wrath more difficult while recovery efforts were statistically stunted by governmental sources as compared to predominantly white areas (Henkel, Dovidio and Gaertner 2006). Over a decade later, the area is still being rebuilt, with a focus on the corporate infrastructure dominating the horizon while some families are still living in FEMA provided trailers (Robertson and Fausset 2015). Nature may have created the storm, but society has allowed its destruction to linger in underserved areas.

Other parts of the United States which experienced environmental racism are affected from a corporate vantage point. Detroit, Michigan is historically known as the car manufacturing center of the United States, while its factories sit empty and pollutants continue to corrode the environment surrounding the city and its outlying regions. In 2014, it was revealed that lead levels in the water of Flint, Michigan could be legally defined as toxic waste by the Environmental Protection Agency (Craven and Tynes 2016). As a major contributor to Detroit’s automotive industry, toxins were being released into the air, water, and soil for generations leading to this crisis and affecting a predominantly minority and underserved population. “Flint’s water crisis fits into a historical trend of environmental racism in the U.S., which for decades has allowed polluters to prey on communities of color, in part because of weak environmental regulations.” The industrialized North was certainly not alone in its contributions to environmental racism.

In the South, racism continues to be a force of oppression, particularly through corporate impacts on the environment. The USGAO’s study, “Siting of Hazardous Waste Landfills and Their Correlation with the Racial and Socio-Economic Status of Surrounding Communities,” sites lenient regulations and hand-outs for corporations, with little legislation to protect land, water, and air resources (United States General Accounting Office 1983). This information came as a result of the public outcry to the Warren County, North Carolina Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCB) dump sites created by Ward Transformers Company beginning in 1973. While Warren County received support from an outraged populace, other areas of the South were found to be just as contaminated, with a predisposition to place factories, dump waste, and otherwise fuel environmental racism based on the fact that these communities did not have the same representation in political places of power and, in predominantly Latino communities, language barriers added an extra level of under-communication of the dangers of industrial pollution (Bullard 2000). Across the United States, economic growth has been set as a priority while underserved communities continue to suffer from the effects of pollution and environmental degradation.

3.2 Europe

Environmental racism is also experienced in Europe, which has a vast history of discrimination against minority groups which extended its grip through colonization. On its own continent, Europe continues to struggle with its treatment of Romani and Indigenous tribes of the continent. Comparable conditions face the Romani to those of minorities in the United States, as they are relegated to poorer urban areas, with contaminated living situations. The European Roma Rights Centre indicates that “Forced evictions of Roma on environmental grounds are on the rise” while mining and deforestation efforts are threatening the well-being of ethnic groups in the northern regions of Europe (Tauli-Corpuz 2015). Sami, Koni, Yemets, and other Indigenous groups of continental Europe find themselves in similar positions as those in North America, with their food and water supply contaminated by corporate efforts to expand and increase profit (European Racism and Xenophobia Information Network 2009). The environmental threat to these marginalized people is very real and seldom recognized at a global level.

With such indifference toward the well-being of the indigenous groups of the region, it is no wonder that the refugee situation in Europe has been cause for discontent and inevitable environmental racism. Vast amounts of those fleeing political unrest in Africa and the Middle East have converged on the European continent and are often used for undesirable labor that exposes them to dangerous chemicals and extreme weather conditions to work for wages that

do not meet the European standards (Serpis 2015). Further north, refugees routinely jostle with French riot police in Calais as they attempt to access the United Kingdom, living in deplorable conditions that are veritable environmental hazards (News France 2017). The European quest to imperialize has extended this sort of behavior to a global level that remains problematic to this day.

3.3 Latin America and the Caribbean

Latin America and the Caribbean were molded by fierce colonialism and exploitation of the land and its Indigenous people (Williamson 2009). Despite centuries of pillage and annihilation of the native population due to war over resources, slavery, and the spread of disease, the people still take an active role in fighting environmental racism. “Campesino identity and farmworker identity have long been pillars of political participation in rural Latin America, particularly where peasants’ demands for justice figure in national histories of revolutionary violence. Now despoiled landscapes, poisoned watersheds, agricultural chemicals, and other rural environmental problems share the platform with such traditional peasant issues as land, credit, and commodity prices.” The destruction of the environment is largely due to foreign interests either using the raw materials native to South America and the Caribbean or creating industrial settings in these areas to save money on labor, production, and the disposal of toxic waste (Carruthers 2008). Much the same as the other cases examined in this writing, ethnicity, race, and poverty are driving forces which determine where these corporate outposts are located, and the damage done is typically to the underserved community while those with adequate resources are distant from the damage incurred.

3.4 Africa

Well documented activity exists of so-called first world national corporations sending toxic waste to Africa, stripping the continent of its natural resources without regard to ecological balance, and exploiting labor is pervasive throughout colonial history (Kigotho 2015). Environmental racism is a volatile issue in Africa, with political unrest being only a portion of the violence as impoverished communities continue to be affected by contamination, disease, and lethal living conditions. “South Africa is in a state of ecological collapse moving towards ecological catastrophe,” with “[m]ost black South Africans continu[ing] to live on the most damaged land, in the most polluted neighbourhoods near coal fired power stations, steel mills, incinerators and waste sites”. Sadly, the experience of black South Africans is far from an abnormal representation of the conditions suffered by the indigenous people of Africa (Cock 2015). The Ogoni people were victims of environmental racism when

Shell Oil began drilling on their tribal lands, leading to toxic environmental levels in what was previously nutrient rich soil (Spitulnik 2011). After a massive outcry from the people and very public protests, the Nigerian government arrested and executed nine protestors to quell the situation, ultimately siding with Shell Oil and continuing to allow large scale pollution. Ultimately, the same sort of patterns of environmental racism present themselves in Africa as has been seen elsewhere, with the underserved populations and minorities being exposed to dangerous levels of pollutants and contamination.

3.5 Asia

Geographically, Asia is an interesting area because it is filled with island countries as well as being home to major industrial nations including Korea, Japan, and China. It constitutes an enormous amount of the planet and includes a wide range of ecosystems, governments, ethnicities, and industries. It also is home to the largest ocean on the planet which, as Haunani-Kay Trask attests, “The vast Pacific is a dumping ground for toxic and hazardous wastes” (Trask 1993). Aside from the tremendous number of environmental contaminants released during World War II, the area remains rife with industrial activity that releases pollutants at the expense of indigenous people of the region.

Even on the continental mainland, environmental racism has been prevalent throughout the area. In 1983, Texas owned Union Carbide Corporation experienced an industrial catastrophe when its plant mixed methyl isocyanate, a chemical fertilizer, with water causing a noxious gas to loom over the town of Bhopal in India, exposing 520,000 people in the area. Within three days, approximately 8,000 native residents were dead and thousands more would be diagnosed with lung fibrosis, blindness, tuberculosis, neurological issues, severe body pains, while the death toll continued to mount (Das Gupta and Das Gupta 2008). The sheer number of those affected is staggering in comparison to many of the other regions of the world, which makes sense considering that Asia homes 59.63% of the world’s population (United Nations 2011). Another common denominator making this disaster like others of its kind in Asia is that the incident occurred with an outsourced subsidiary of a Western corporation. The combination of geographic size, massive diverse populations, varied resources and ecosystems, and economic competition make Asia ripe for opportunities to extort its local populations.

3.6 Not in My Backyard – NIMBY

Throughout time and space, a common theme that keeps arising is NIMBY, an acronym for Not in My Backyard (Bullard 2008). In short, those who pollute are sure to place the waste or damage in an area that will not directly impact or inconvenience their

lifestyles. Reviewing the evidence researched, it is fair to argue that environmental racism continues to impact the underserved and under-represented. The predominant cause of the issue is a desire to save money at the expense of the environment, thus affecting large segments of the population who do not have the resources by which to fight large corporations (Albareda 2008).

Without an awareness of the issues facing these under-represented communities, environmental racism will continue to plague the global community. Most realistically, I contend that the means by which to combat environmental racism lies in making people aware of how the mistreatment of the underserved will, in turn, affect those who benefit from the products created by the corporations exacerbating pollution in areas that do not have the representation to advocate for themselves. While the idea of NIMBY is convenient for ignoring the state of global pollution, showing people that the negative effects of production, in fact, do harm everyone forces those controlling resources to acknowledge that environmental racism is not sustainable. The results may not be seen immediately but will be profoundly obvious when clean water and air become scarce, nutrients in the soil are depleted, and diseases spread from minority areas to those who control economic supply and demand. Making the consequences of environmental racism relative to the entire population so that there is an impetus to reform corporate mishandling of waste treatment and overseeing conservation initiatives in order to manage and restore an ecological balance is of the utmost importance of the future of society.

4. Theories of Application

Those who have power wield it over those who do not, monopolizing access to resources and strategically withholding it from those who need support the most. The question lies in how to adequately deal with the unequal distribution of resources globally. While theorists debate the merits and best practices of economic development, it is imperative to remember that the past is the key to the present. Humans repeatedly choose to ignore past iniquities, continuing to make the same mistakes. It is imperative to note that case studies which qualitative data, mentioned throughout this discussion, have existed since the early 1980s and continued to be released. Environmental racism persists despite years of study.

Classical liberal economists argue for a more traditional view of economic development, ignoring the fact that viewing developing nations with a primitive lens that is often condescending and, in fact, reinforces an imperialist mentality. Walt Whitman Rostow, after all, strongly supported efforts by the United States in Viet Nam which led, not only to failure and a highly corrupt government, but to environmental

and human destruction with the introduction of Agent Orange by corporate influence of Monsanto as well as the overall destructiveness of war (Milne 2008). This approach to economic development has been proven, time and again, to be opportunist and elitist, not to mention unsustainable.

Still, a neoclassical movement evolved to advocate for free markets and accountability through private investment and market efficiency. Although this is the predominant theory in practice to date, inherently it is problematic because the investors logically are those who have the means to pay into the system in order to make an influence. The negative effect on those marginalized and their environments persists without the ability to advocate for themselves beyond a limited grassroots effort.

Unlike the previous two theories, the social theory of development holds the most promise for the global community. This philosophy emulates the desire to view commodities within a framework of sustainability and cultural milieu. As Ernst Friedrich Schumacher advocated in *Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered* (1999), individuals need meaningful work for proper human development and “production from local resources for local needs is the most rational way of economic life” (Schumacher 1999). Instead of solely relying on economic growth as the key measure of success, social economic theorists contend that addressing systemic issues such as poverty, inequality, population migration, premature death rates and other social problems with positive outcomes is just as important.

Localization and decentralization lead to more access for all parties involved to have a say in the allocation of resources, which is not to say that globalization is a bad thing or that the interconnectedness of global production networks is a blight on the future of the planet. Rather, the social theory of development suggests that taking the time to assess local and regional assets and have them managed by the locality is beneficial for everyone because it adds a layer of personal interest to what is often a distance transaction. As Peter Dicken (2015) so aptly explains, “The real effects of globalizing processes are felt not at the global or the national level but at the local scale: the communities within which people struggle to meet the needs of their daily lives”. Affording localities the ability to make choices, and applying this mode of management universally, ensures a better chance of a checks and balances system requiring entities to work with one another to solve issues. Though clearly not a panacea, utilizing local interest is an effective means by which to improve circumstances. The result may not be the cheapest, fastest, nor the most technologically advanced, but there is a better chance of sustainability of mankind. Most importantly, the social theory of development engages stakeholders at myriad levels to create a conversation set apart from other efforts to confront environmental racism.

5. Conclusion

Historically, humans struggle with sharing resources equitably and with respect to everyone, regardless of class, ethnicity, religion, or race. As the economy became more globalized, machinations were put into place to exert control by the few over the many. The effects have been devastating, ethically questionable, and unsustainable. In order to move forward, the global population needs to recognize that NIMBY passes the negative aspects of economic growth on to those with more difficulty exacting change. While it is highly unlikely global cities are willing to relinquish their pervasiveness, it is certainly possible to create more centers for trade and commerce in order to enable diversity in influence. At the time of this writing, cities in Central and Southeast Asia continue to climb to prominence as a chief example. Beyond this, progress in identifying environmental racism and its characteristics continues to pinpoint specific examples of ecological and human devastation. Due diligence in battling policies and procedures that allow this discriminatory behavior must be applied. Currently, such organizations as the United Nations, Transparency International, and the O'Neill Institute are working vigorously to bring incongruities to light, with localized grassroots efforts struggling to be heard and taken seriously. Proactive recognition of the vast scope of environmental racism through involvement, awareness, and practical application is the only viable solution to confront an endemic problem.

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