

Environmental Injustice Contexts and Issues

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Mapping Environmental Injustice

Although the mainstream environmental movement of the 1950s and 1960s alerted the public to the dangers posed by pollution and environmental degradation, these impacts on people's health and the environment were not generally acknowledged (or thought) to be spatially or socially differentiated: everyone was presumed to be affected just about equally.

Mapping Environmental Injustice

- The understanding that environmental problems may impact certain locations and people more than others (and in a predictable pattern based on race and income) is a relatively new concept that gained nationwide attention in the late 1980s.
- It is in the 1970s that the idea of duties of environmental justice acquired the scope of the global issue. In the year 1972, the UN held a conference in Stockholm, Sweden on the issues of the human environment. At this conference, the concept of global environmental injustice was introduced to solve the injustice committed by the developed industrial countries in developing countries.



Mapping Environmental Injustice

- Poor countries usually claim that developed countries posed different environmental injustices in the process of their development and perpetuate to pose the same danger by appropriating more than their share of the earth's resources.
- For instance, poor countries claim that the United States is not only the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases. On a per-capita basis Americans emit twenty-two times as much carbon dioxide as Indians, eleven times as much as Brazilians, and eight times as much as Chinese (Robert Gottlieb, 2007).

What is Environmental Injustice?

Environmental injustice can be defined as the disproportionate exposure of communities of color and the poor to pollution, and its concomitant effects on health and environment, as well as the unequal environmental protection and environmental quality provided through laws, regulations, governmental programs, enforcement, and policies.

What is Environmental Justice?

There are various definitions of environmental justice. The most comprehensive definition of environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, ethnicity, or income in relation to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies.

What is Environmental Justice?

In this sense, fair treatment refers to all groups of people, including racial, ethnicity, religious or socioeconomic groups should bear a proportional share of both positive environmental benefits and the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local, and tribal programs and policies (Bullard & Johnson, 2000).

What is Environmental Justice?

Environmental justice movement began in the U.S. in the 1980s with landmark struggles of poor, often rural, African-American communities against some of the world's largest corporations and unresponsive government agencies.

The definition of the movement first began as "environmental racism," a phrase coined by Benjamin Chavis in the 1982. Environmental justice expanded the movement to include Hispanic, Native American, and poor white groups facing the unfair distribution of environmental injustices (Robert Gottlieb, 2007, p. 285)

Main aspects of environmental justice

The major concern of environmental justice movement is to combat the inappropriate distribution of environmental goods and burdens; the poor and indigenous communities get more environmental burden and less environmental protection.

Distributive justice: the environment is a resource whose allocation needs to be administered and regulated by principles of justice.

Main aspects of environmental justice

Some investigators of the movement and the concept of environmental justice focus on the significance of participatory justice.

Participatory justice is important at the global level. Most of the time, those who do not take part in the decision-making process in environmental issues face environmental injustice.

Environmental disparities

Rising sea levels caused in part by climate change are likely to destroy completely countries such as Sao Tome and Principe, Kiribati, Maldives, and Tuval because their landmass will be underwater these countries may literally cease to exist.

Of the large numbers of people around the world who suffer from climate change, most of them are not included when decisions are made on environmental issues.

Disparities in decision-making

In different environmental debates and conferences, developing and economically poor countries are without any voice and are forced to accept the decisions of the developed countries. In some cases, the participation of the poor is denied because those in question are not recognized as in the domain of justice.



Examples

While there are many manifestations of environmental injustice in Africa, some of these manifestations are transnational toxic wastes dumping and natural resource exploitation, land appropriation and natural resource exploitation adversely affecting the poor and powerless indigenous minorities in underdeveloped societies (Adeola, 2001).

For instance, in Ethiopia, slaughterhouses in Addis Ababa and other cities of the country adversely affect the health, social, and economic life of the society living around those areas.

Examples

In the African context, race, class, and gender cause environmental injustice.

Environmental racism results in a nationwide phenomenon in which minority neighbourhood bear a disproportionately large environmental burden as compared to white neighbourhood (Ulezalka, 2005).

Environmental justice has negative relationships with poverty and marginalization.

The poor and marginalized communities are the dumping sites for hazardous wastes and the risk-takers for environmental burdens that are caused mainly by MNCs.

Environmental Justice Movement

The environmental justice movement has many important concepts of justice like distribution, participation, and capability discourses. The environmental justice movement discusses, analyzes, advocates, and requires justice. That is equitable distribution, recognition, capabilities, and functioning for all individuals and societies at large. (Schlosberg, 2007, 4-5).

The main point of environmental justice is to acknowledge and give recognition and capabilities for nature(humans, individual animals, other species, and natural systems).

Mapping environmental justice

Within the past decade, it has become increasingly prevalent to try to map instances of environmental injustice, usually by geographically plotting facilities or land uses suspected of posing an environmental and human health hazard or risk, and then trying to determine the racial, ethnic, and economic characteristics of the potentially affected populations compared with a reference population.

This often results in dramatic maps showing toxic facilities concentrated in areas with high proportions of African Americans, Latinos, or Native Americans.