

Making the eradication of poverty an integral objective of all policies by ensuring that they are Nature-inspired

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Nature makes all life possible. Without Nature there would be no human beings, no human societies, nothing on which to base our economies, and no means for poverty eradication. Ensuring all efforts at poverty eradication are in harmony with Nature can help humanity to become once again fully integrated into the Earth System. It can help us to increase Nature's bounty and to benefit from it at every level of our existence.

For all that we are and experience originates in Nature.

Here are some examples of just one Nature-inspired approach where poverty eradication goes hand in hand with the implementation of other SDGs.

Ecosystems

Nature employs eco-systems as fundamental building blocks whereby each element and all systems exist in balanced processes of give and take—the soil, air, water, plants and animals. This balance between giving and receiving enables each ecosystem and all its individual elements to sustain one another.

As human beings, we can, and do, apply the principles that govern ecosystems in many different ways. And these tend to be sustainable and useful to bear in mind as we eradicate poverty while implementing a wide variety of other SDGs.

Permaculture for Food Production Both in Cities and Rural Areas.

Permaculture is a form of agriculture based on ecosystems whereby all animals, plants, water, air and soils keep one another in balance. It provides food for human beings, as long as they partake of the food that the system provides without disturbing the internal balance.

Originally used by Native Peoples, permaculture is now being discovered by people everywhere, including in cities where it can provide food for residents and enable Nature to thrive. Permaculture can help stabilize water tables and purify the air. It can be introduced into parks.

By applying permaculture to private and public gardens, on roof tops, up walls, in school gardens and vacant lots, permaculture combines poverty alleviation with food security (SDG 2), health (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), sustainable management of water and terrestrial ecosystems (SDGs 6 and 15), and economic growth through small-scale development.

By basing poverty alleviation on permaculture, resources can regenerate themselves and all SDGs that are involved become mutually reinforcing. The well being of Nature and economic growth also go hand in hand and no longer need to be seen as in opposition with each other.

The Ecosystem Approach as Applied to Social Interaction: a Commons Approach

Such an approach is applied to the governance structures of many Indigenous and other communities which are run by and for the well being of all community members. Most recently such forms of human interaction are being called “commons” since Elinor Ostrom won the Nobel Prize for Economic Sciences (2009) for her work in this field. Commons consist of people who manage/steward/or produce goods and services in such a way that all share the responsibility of decision making and share the benefits of their common endeavour.

Examples include:

North American fishermen who used a commons approach to regenerate the lobster fisheries in the North Atlantic, thereby saving their livelihoods.

People worldwide who contribute their knowledge to build and improve Wikipedia, a free encyclopedia for all to use, that makes knowledge widely accessible to all including the poor.

People who make software, music, works of art and academic works available using special licenses (Open Source, General Public Licensing, Copy Left, etc.)

Worldwide people are helping to revive flagging local economies using local currencies.

The above examples deal with poverty alleviation in a much wider sense than discussed above. They focus on oceans and seas (SDG 14); education and culture (SDG 4); and both the social and economic pillars.

An ecosystem-inspired social approach has the advantage that it is based on the sum of participants' creativity, motivation and labour, while when people vie for the same resources people very often undermine one another's activities.

Cooperatives

Cooperatives are for profit businesses, based on a commons approach. They are owner operated (i.e. managed by their employees.)

Sharing is central to the “Cooperative Identity.” Profits are shared by all members, while a part goes to alleviate poverty in the community where the business is located and at the global level.

There are 2.6 million cooperative enterprises with in all one billion members, annual revenues of US\$3 trillion and they produce 250 million jobs. Cooperatives have proved to be stable in times of economic downswing. There are schools that are run as cooperatives (where staff, faculty and students share in decision making), agricultural concerns, banks, industries, health collectives (HMOs). They exist in every sphere of human activity and are thus potentially associated with poverty alleviation through every SDG. Because all benefit from the profit of the work they do,

cooperatives tend to flourish, create goodwill and contribute to economic growth and stable societies.

The “Sharing Economy”

These commons and cooperatives moreover constitute a large part of what is being referred to as the “sharing economy” worldwide that makes goods and services in every possible field available to anyone who can use them--many free of charge. One tenth of the French economy is based on the bounty it generates.

This fast-growing grass-roots economy is available to people worldwide. It benefits all the SDGs since it spreads goodwill and shares prosperity while most often enhancing sustainability. It is especially helping to lift those people out of poverty who are able to access and use the Internet. For this reason, universal access to the Internet—which itself uses an ecosystem-inspired approach--would be an important tool in implementing the SDGs without leaving anyone behind.