

Political ecology assignment



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How the Perspective of Political Ecology Treats Environmental Conservation and Development Issues Student's Name: Environmental Issues in Asia

Tutor's Name: 2 November 2011 OUTLINE: I. Introduction II. Political ecology and environmental conservation and development issues III. Strengths and weaknesses of political ecology approach on nuclear power industry IV.

Strengths and weaknesses of political ecology approach on protection of trees V. Conclusion VI. References I. Introduction Sutton (2004, p. 11) defines political ecology as “ the study of the day-to-day conflicts, alliances, and negotiations that ultimately result in some sort of definitive behavior; how politics affects or structures resource use”. It has a broad scope and it aims to create interplay between political and economic aspects of a given society and its environmental and social issues. Political ecology has drawn quite a lot, and to some extent eclipsed a certain form of analysis called cultural ecology which showed how culture is influenced by, and heavily relies on, the material conditions of society.

Whereas cultural ecology and systems theory emphasize(s) adaptation and homeostasis, political ecology emphasize(s) the role of political economy as a force of maladaptation and instability (Walker, 2005, p. 74). II. Political ecology and environmental conservation and development issues The analysis is framed within the general approach of political ecology (Stott and Sullivan, 2000) by linking the underlying discourses of environmental change to policies and institutions engaged in implementing environment and development.

There are unorthodox dynamics in the way political ecology treats environmental conservation and development issues. It is a sought of give

and take where in some cases, the political aspect of that relationship between politics and environment, takes precedence and concentrates too much on its interests. This creates such scenarios where private stakeholders are the ones left tending to nature whereas it would be more effective if the government puts in more effort to ensure conservation of the environment and development of the society at large.

III. Strengths and weaknesses of political ecology approach on nuclear power industry One of the strengths of political ecology approach on matters concerning the nuclear power industry is that, thanks to political ideologies such as green politics, nuclear plants which harm the biosphere can be phased out. This ideology and its programs have the power to enforce conservation and environmentalism by virtue of having achieved some electoral success through its green parties.

In Sweden and Germany for example, programs had been initiated to carry out a nuclear power phase out. Unfortunately, in the same stride, some of the weaknesses of political ecology are that the main government may step in and directly or indirectly overrule the progress of a program or institution, curtailing it from attempting to conserve the environment. From the earlier example, the Swedish government ended up making an agreement with the nuclear plants to replace their existing reactors.

This in essence saw the end of the phase out policy. IV. Strengths and weaknesses of political ecology approach on protected areas The political ecology strategy on protected areas has received mixed reaction with respect to whether it is doing more good than bad. Granted that the political

influence and power has proved to be beneficial in the creation of areas such as national parks, the question still remains: are protected areas solely for the benefit of the environment?

With the creation of these conservation units, “ political ecologists have devoted some energy to the study of protected areas, which is unsurprising given political ecology’s overall interest in forms of access to, and control over resources” (Hanna, et al. , 2004, p. 203). This goes to show that, while political ecology does benefit the objective of environmental conservation, its weakness is that it can end up having adverse effects. Such effects include the unfair removal of people from various tracts of land in the government’s bid to “ conserve” the resources that are there. Sutton (2004, p. 04) explains that “ in a few cases, perhaps especially tragic local groups have been displaced to create national parks and reserves to ‘ conserve’ the forest. Fortunately, most conservation bodies are now aware that, if a group has been using and managing a forest for several thousand years, throwing it off the land is more apt to destroy the forest ecosystem than to preserve it. ” V. Conclusion Political ecology should be on the forefront of facilitating the achievement of environmental conservation and development. There should be a balance between the interests of the government and the interests of the environment as a whole.

With this in place, factoring in the NGO’s, private sector and other parties, conservation of the environment will be more effective and efficient and the society will develop optimally. References Hanna, K. et al. , 2008.

Transforming Parks and Protected Areas: Policy and Governance in a Changing World. New York, NY: Routledge. Stott, P. A. and Sullivan, S. , 2000.

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