Sustainable Development- Environmental Ethics Relationship Within Eu Environmental Policies

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1.INTRODUCTION

Environmental problems and approaches to environment have an important place within EU policies. There are major impacts of economic development on the inclusion of environmental issues to the Union's area of interest, which aims to integrate European Countries through economic, political and cultural areas and which foresees the free flow of capital, goods, services, labor. It is crucial to form environmental values and provide the member countries to internalize them in order to sustain development without giving harm to environment. In this context, environmental ethics reveals a conflict from the perspective of sustainable development. There emerges an area of conflict between attaining economic, social and cultural development on the one hand and taking into consideration of environmental values and environmental ethics during this process on the other hand.

The desire to improve the living conditions at the member countries through providing economic, social and cultural development and to upgrade quality of life to a common level

around the whole Europe are the reasons why the Union poses a common environmental policy. The increasing pressures on natural resources have put economic sustainability problem on the agenda and new problem areas such as climate change, genetically modified organisms (GMOs) have revealed their reality in everyday life. Sustaining improvements in urban and rural residential areas; developing health precautions, eradicating regional inequalities can only be possible through sustaining a healthy and well balanced environment.

One approach in environmental ethics bases on the responsibilities of current generation to future generations. In this context, environmental ethics is consistent with sustainable development concept but comprises a diverse dimension. This type of environmental ethics considers the human and human values while searching for solutions to environmental problems and emphasizes the understanding which saves that individuals and societies should have environmental values and environmental conscious in order to live a life in harmony with the nature. People are not seen as solely objects of development in this view of environmental ethics. The understanding as "development regardless of its consequences" has threatened biological and genetic variety on earth. This type of understanding on development does not correspond to ethical understanding.

In this study, conflicts between sustainable development and environmental ethics within environmental policies will be evaluated from the perspectives of anthropocentric, egocentric biocentric, ecocentric approaches of environmental ethics by considering approaches to environmental ethics within EU environmental policies. Sustainable development within EU environmental policies will be critically reviewed in terms of environmental ethics.

2.ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS: SEARCHING FOR SOLUTIONS TO SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES

Development as a goal has been evaluated with reference to its broad context emphasizing not only economic growth but also progress in social, political and cultural dimensions in society in an integrated way. Environment is focal to questioning development from the perspective of integrated evaluation of development. Hence, development without giving harm to environment sets the priority of questioning the relationship between environment and development. Environmental ethical approaches become critical when considering this priority. The critical understanding behind environmental ethics in its conceptual whole reveals as the moral responsibility of current generation for next generations. The ecologists take into consideration of human kind without making discriminations either between current and next generations or the ones who live and who are to be born (Heywood 2007: 337). Environmental ethics, as a new discipline that emerged in context of ethical philosophy in recent years, stresses the necessity of critically considering use of environmental resources and the pollution caused by people by paying attention to their impacts on other people in any activity concerning environment (Callicott 2005: 68). The concern of individuals for the future of their generations indicates the acceptance of responsibility of their own (Gower 1992: 11). What remain crucial are the extent of impact area of this responsibility and also realization of an international justice on the basis of sharing this responsibility equally by every country.

Environmental ethics concept is closely related to "environmental justice" contextually which partly looks into the equal distribution of resources among people (Woods 2006: 573). Environmental ethics approach becomes important within the context and implications of sustainable development due to its vision on intergenerational responsibility and justice. Thus, the inclusion of environmental ethics understanding into environmental policies at the

national, regional and local levels becomes crucial. It is a fact that environmental problems would hardly ever be solved without considering their relations with administrative, political, economical structures; science and technology as a whole. It is a fact that understanding in context of environmental ethics reveals as a necessity in the way of evaluating environmental problems within an integrated perspective in today's world where the nature is being acceleratingly threatened and harmed by people.

3.Environmental Ethics Approaches

Environmental ethics approaches, in its broader context, takes into consideration of relationships between human beings and nature as a whole. Governments, states and international organizations have started to propose solutions to environmental problems as they become perceived and evoke awareness from the 1970s onwards. The implementation of protective environmental policies have been begun to be implemented. These developments which inform the cognition of environmental problematic have been differentiated among themselves (Turgut 2009: 28). It is possible to determine these approaches as egocentric, anthropocentric, biocentric and ecocentric approaches.

1. Ego-centric Approach: This approach is an extreme antropocentric approach which presumes that human ego is the most important component in cognizing environmental porblematic (Turgut 2009: 29). Accordingly, no matter how nature is being harmed, the only entity that should be protected is always human being. In that respect, the only entity that deserves an ethical behaviour is proposed to be human being (Turgut 2009: 29). Ego-centric approach that sees nature as a resource to be used limitlessly by humans dates back to Renaissance and structures its eventual stage through the Industrial Revolution. Hence, it is admitted to put forward the perception categories of industrial societies (Ertan 1998: 135).

2. Anthropocentric Approach: Nature has been considered only indirectly in anthropocentric approach putting human beings at the focus (Ferry 2000: 24-25). In this approach, the aim of human activities is to compensate human necessities regardless of their costs (Turgut 2006: 29). Although it is accepted that biotic and abiotic entities other than human beings should be protected, this acceptance only exists to protect human interests. Hence, these entites are valueable only due to their provision of benefit for human beings. Likewise, the reason to value nature is to once again protect human interests. The understanding behind this approach is stated not to comprise any questioning on ethical and economical perspective particular to industrial society (Turgut 2006:29).

3. Biocentric Approach

This approach is based on the acceptance of necessity to regard every biotic entity other than humans as subjects of law and the necessity these entities to be treated based on this understanding (Ferry 2000: 25). Accordingly, the mentioned biotic entities are described as all the entities that are able to feel pain and pleasure (Ferry 2000: 25). Biocentric approach emphasizes the importance of all the biotic entities, consisting of human beings, animals and plants in natural life, but it does not foresee an integrated approach to environment. The understanding behind the biocentric approach criticizes toxic chemical waste that threaten the health, beauty and security of urban and rural regions and ruin human environment; soil, air and water pollution; the development of built environment against natural resources at the coastal and urban areas; nuclear stations; the thinning of ozone layer and searches for alternatives for the human beings and other biotic entities to improve their lives (Ünder 1997: 83-84).

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4. Ecocentric Approach: Ecocentric approach regard biosphere and biotic organisms as important as human beings. Hence human beings are not taken into consideration as focal in ecocentric approach. Complementarily, the demand for right of nature on the whole including trees and all forms of vegetative and mineral structures lays the foundation of this approach. Ecocentric approach has not only become the dominant ideology of alternative environmental movements but also put forward the problem of questioning humanism once again and necessarily by using radical terms (Ferry 2000: 25). Ecocentric ethical approach comprises various movements such as deep ecology, ecofeminism, social ecology, eco-fascism. Aldo Leopold from the U.S, Hans Jonas from Germany and deep ecology approach have been effective in the emergence of ecocentric ethical approach.

Deep ecology approach reflects the basic philosophy of ecocentric approach. Deep ecology founds on the criticism of the scientific understanding based on dominance of human beings on nature. The essence of the approach is that all entities including human beings are equal components of the living community on earth and hence human kind has no superiority than other entities (Turgut 2006: 29). Deep ecology claims that mechanical world view causes ecological problems and organic world view could solve them (Görmez 2003: 99). Deep ecology, as contrary to reformist (modern) environmentalism, puts nature to the focus, not human beings particular to the ecocentric perspective. Ecocentrism grounds the thought of protection of nature and variety within nature with the value embedded in nature itself, not the benefits of nature to be brought to human beings (Önder 2003: 96).

4. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

The relationship between sustainable development and ethical approaches to environment is basically founded on the concept of sustainability which binds conceptual areas of values, morality and human rights. Cleary, what relates these conceptual areas in sustainability concept is the idea of sustaining natural environment for the next generations and the acceptance of responsibility for the next generations as a moral attempt.

Sustainability is taken into consideration as a technical concept which is based on environmental carrying capacity. However, moral, social and economical issues also remain focal to the concept. The core assumption of sustainability which is based on the transformation of polluting factors into factors that sustain environment friendly ones at multi dimension is closely related to system of values embedded in human life in every dimension (Kılıç 2006: 84).

The interrelation between the ethical approaches to environment and sustainable development lies at the heart of the social and economic dimensions of sustainable development. Although taken into consideration as a technical concept based on carrying capacity, the social dimension of sustainability has been built upon adaptation and balancing of individual expectations and social demands whose dynamics also comprise concepts such as human dignity, autonomy and justice (Kılıç 2006: 94). In fact, this statement clearly puts the emphasis on the relationship of social dimension in sustainability with human rights which are at the very core of moral and legal common context of compromise.

"Sustainable development" is defined as "the environmentalist world view that aim economic development without sacrificing the principle of use of environmental values and natural resources through rational methods so as not to lead splurge them and by taking into account of the rights and benefits of current and next generations" (Keleş 1998: 112). Having its roots

in Stockholm Conference, sustainable development has firstly been introduced as a concept in Brundtland Report in 1987 (Turgut 2009). According to the report, sustainable development is "compensating today's necessities without sacrificing next generations' opportunity to meet their own necessities" (Keleş 1998: 112). Sustainable development with its assumption that nature and environmental resources are limited and thus growth is also limited reflects a protective understanding towards environment. Sustainable development from the perspective of environmental ethics does not have an ecocentric perspective. Although the basic emphasis in sustainable development is repercussive dependencies between economy and environment (Turgut 2009) there emerges conflicts between sustainability of economic development representing only one dimension of development on the whole and sustainability of ecosystems due to the lack of questioning and restructuring at the economical, social and political stages.

Sustainable development is seen as a solution on the basis of human and nature relations which is supported by the dominant production system (Kılıç 2006: 83). Sustainable development has become the ultimate determinant of environmental policies since the 1980s which has had an impact area that also relates to economical and social development (Mengi ve Algan 2003: 2). Integrating economical and social development with environmental ethics is important in terms of environmental policies. Ethical values in context of environmental philosophy have been defined as the potentialities of realizing right action and way of living. Ethical area has been enlarged through human beings' accelerating capability of regulation and management for both nature and social institutions. In addition, all human problems consisting of natural nutrition, inadequate education, housing in bad condition, very high population, unhealthy living conditions, deteriorated natural environment have enlarged the area of ethics (Ertan 1998: 127). The existence of biotic and abiotic entities other than human beings and the preservation of the right of the universe to be in balance reveal why approaches based on ethics should be internalized (Ertan 1998: 129).

One other dimension in discussion on environmental ethics and sustainable development is environmental right concept. Environmental right is a third generation human right reflecting solidarity and intergenerational responsibility. Thus, environmental right acts as a bridge between policy formulations considering sustainable development and environmental ethical view.

Sustainable development perspective serves to protect ecocentric ethical values in overcoming ecological crisis. However, it puts forward a rather different approach when compared to radical environmental approaches (Ergün ve Çobanoğlu 2012: 99). Environmental policy tools of sustainable development have been evaluated to be to the benefit of producers rather than being effective on consumption behaviours due to the relatively high costs of environmental policies that are beneficial to consumers. Today, even though environmental policy tools are implemented by use of modern technologies in many developed and developing countries, it is hard to control consumption behaviours. For this reason, it is expected for the way of lives and also behaviours to adapt to the requisites of sustainable development (Evans vd. 2005: 25). This is especially evident when observing the deep gap between consumption preferences, consumption forms and ecological balance.

To what extent understanding behind sustainable development accord with ecocentric environmental ethics with reference to integrating with nature is contentious, because, sustainable development embodies both restorative and preventive policies (Kılıçoğlu 2005: 5). Restorative environmental policies are based on taking necessary precautions after any harm is given to environment. This understanding clearly does not refer to ecocentric environmental ethical view. Especially, sustainable development for some developed countries is conceptualized as simply protecting environment through protecting current development stage and welfare as well as improving quality of life (Mengi ve Algan 2003: 4-5).

Environmental ethics understanding requisites ecological responsibility and sensitivity. Protection of both natural and cultural environment through taking into consideration of environmental right as a human right is critical for sustainable development since livable natural and cultural environment is essential for human dignity (Mengi ve Algan 2003:11).

The most suitable tool for sustainable development to bind with next generations is the ecological component. This is obvious due to the fact that not only the regeneration capability of nature is being destroyed by human activity but also this threatens next generations' right to live as their basic right apart from their sustainability of welfare. (Ergün ve Çobanoğlu, 2012: 103). This issue once again attracts attention to the requisite of eliminating all the human behavior that harm environment and of adapting the idea behind these behaviours to environment (Kılıç 2006: 84). As a concluding remark, development and environment as comprising indispensible components are integral and cannot be conceptualized separately. Thus, social and economic structure, customs, culture and political system are as complementary to environment as natural components such as flora or water resources (Bener ve Babaoğul 2008: 4). That is why an environmental ethical approach that internalizes integrated view of human and environment should be the basic theme in sustainable development.

5.EU ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

A search for a common environmental protection understanding as a standard at the level of European Union has been due to economic reasons such as protecting free competition to make the common market more effective, rather than due to a perception of environmental problematic (Egeli 1996). Additionally, improving quality of life at the member states has been included directly to the environment protection understanding. Paris Treaty (1951) and Rome Treaty (1957) have remained as the first important steps taken to form EU environmental policies even though these treaties did not directly include any provision concerning environmental policies (Egeli 1996).

The 1970s are important in terms of acceptance of the necessity of formulating environmental protection policies for the EU within the frame of Rome Treaty and the following period has witnessed the preparation of EU Environmental Action Programs (Turgut 2009).The EU Environmental Action Programs are important in terms of directing environmental policy area and its implications at the EU level. Coming from the 1970s to the 2000s, the basic events shaping environmental policy area and environment law can be set as Stockholm Conference

(1972), World Charter for Nature (1982), Brundlant Report (1987), Rio Conference (1992) and Johannesburg Conference (2002) (Turgut 2009).

Briefly, the first four environment action programs have the main theme as "prevention of pollution"; the fifth environment action program has the main theme of "sustainable development and responsibility share" and the sixth environment action program has reflected "Environment 2010: Our Future, Our Choice" based on the implementation of sustainable development.

The First Environmental Action Program (EAP) (1973), which emerged under the affected of the Stockholm Conference and Rome Treaty, comprised general aims, principles of EU environmental policies and relationships between environment and sectoral activities. After the Second EAP reflecting a context in parallel to the first one in 1977, the Third EAP (1983) revealed the view of previously prevention of environmental pollution and also an attempt to relate other policies with environmental policies (Egeli 1996).

The fourth EAP belonging to the period between 1987 and 1992 reflected a process of important change in EU environmental policies owing to be the program prepared just after the Single European Act. The Single European Act is very important because it included special provisions on environmental protection. In other words, it reflected the inclusion of environmental policy to the Union's common policy context (Egeli 1996).

The first text that brought an ethical and moral dimension to the concept of sustainability is the UN Environment and Development Report which is also known as Brundlant Report (1987) with its emphasis on the statement of responsibility of current generations for the next generations in terms of living in a healthy environment (Kılıç 2006: 85).

The generation of Agenda 21 as a consequence of Rio Summit in 1992 was characterized by the enlarging acceptance and use of sustainability concept not only at local but also at international arena (Kılıç 2006: 85). Agenda 21 stressed the responsibility of states to put effort in realization of social justice especially in terms of redistribution of use of resources. The actors shaped a large frame of constituents that are citizens, local institutions, non-governmental institutions, investors and other interest groups (Kılıç 2006: 86).

The impact of 1992 Rio Conference to the environmental policy at the EU level was the emphasis on sustainable development understanding in EAP and the provision (113) made available in Union's Treaty (Turgut 2009). Environmental protection has firstly been included in EU goals by the validity of Maastricht Treaty and the necessity of taking into consideration of development together with environmental context (Çokgezen, 2007: 92).

The fifth EAP (1993-2000) was based on sustainable development and considered intergenerational responsibility in evaluating development (Çokgezen, 2007: 95-96). The expression of necessity to evaluate the balance between environmental conditions and socio-economic development was evident with respect to sustainable development. This program also comprised a self criticism on the failure of the union in implementing environmental policies due to the ongoing deterioration of environment (Ökmen, 2006: 344). The main references of the program can be set as the report prepared by the UN Environment and Development Comission, Our Common Future and sustainable development (Egeli, 1996).

Johannesburg Summit which was finalized by the Implementation Plan and the Political Declaration is important in setting the common precautions to be taken in order to implement

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sustainable development and responsibilities on provision of a society on the basis of equality (Kılıç 2006: 87,88). A search for the tools of realization of sustainable development once again bring up the problem and requirement of questioning of the current social and economic structures which reflect unequal characteristics and measures in this respect. This issue parallels the differentiating priority setting in development when considered from the perspectives of developed, developing and less developed countries.

The post-Johannesburg period has witnessed the sixth EAP (2001-2010) that had its priorities as climate change, natural and bio variety, quality of life and sustainable natural resources management.

6.THE SUSTAINABILITY OF EU ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES: A CRITICAL EVALUATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

European Union is shown as an important case to raise awareness to environmental problems and formation of environmental policies. Accepting many treaties on environment at the international level and at the first stage, EU, determined its main goals as integrating environmental policies with other policies, changing consumption types, provision of participation of citizens in decision making process concerning environment and implementation of land use plans (Görmez, 2003: 97).

When evaluating the general characteristics of EU environmental policies, an approach based on the understanding of taking precautions earlier than the emergence of environmental problems and provision of compensation of the cost of pollution by the responsible one arise. The main criticism on sustainable development, especially for its implementation proces, is evident in its stress on economic development as not considering environment as a whole. Nevertheless, ecocentric ethical understanding, in particular, does not accord with sustainable development reflecting ethical understanding of modern industrial society. The mechanisms built up ro protect environment primarily necessitates to take legal precautions on the one hand, however ecocentric enviromental ethical approach claims that ecological problems cannot be solved by using solely legal regulations and punishments.

Sustainable development in EU policies has been supported by bringing forth the economic component that mostly put forward consumption and production dimension. However, social and ecological components of sustainable development are closely related to ecocentric ethical approach. Social component refers to social justice comprising equal opportunity, to be able to live a life suitable to live in dignity and to develop oneself while ecological component presumes the necessity of nature to be protected via its own dynamics (Ergün-Çobanoğlu, 2012:101-103,113).

EU is an important supra state actor in intervening the formation of regional environmental policies and the international context of environmental policy area as well. Through the evolution of the EU environmental policy area, the main criticism can be put forward as the dominant anthropocentric ethical approach, the economy-environment duality although effort to relate, conceptualize and implement sustainable development through interdependencies

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and repercussive interactions. Obviously, ecological value cannot be managed to be given priority particular to ecocentric ethical approach in this context. The lack of questioning the current economic, social and political structures in development and in environmental policy formulation is the remaning criticism for sustainable development understanding embedded in EU environmental policy area.

A sustainable development approach considering equal priorities on social and ecological components apart from economical component is concluded to get much closer to own an environmental ethical approach to be evolved from anthropocentric to ecocentric ethical approach.

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