

The analysis of history and geography of the country from an environmental point of view, show that Colombia was a country of jungles, savannas, wetlands, moors and no deserts. However because of land use that the society has given to those territories and their natural resources throughout history, much of these ecosystems have been replaced by pastures, crops, human settlements and infrastructure.

This has left obvious consequences like noticeable reduction of hunting and fishing possibilities, wood scarcity, impoverished soils, deregulation of water and climate cycles, biodiversity decrease and some ecosystems destruction threats. Paradoxically, our soil impoverishment has not enriched the general population (except some people benefit from this exploitation).

Ecologists propose three premises about the processes of ecosystems transformation¹ in Colombia:

- *Society influences the nature*: the human being has led ecosystems transformation and deterioration.
- *Nature influences in society*: ecosystems and natural resources influence land use and their economic and social future.
- *Transformations induced by society in nature are reversed on society and vice versa*: the country ecosystems that we find today are the result of social, political and economic processes and the current state of the ecosystems will affect and determine these same processes in the future.

According to Marquez 2003, relationship between society and ecosystems throughout the last 500 years in our country is explained by the following stages:

- Resources abundance and labor shortage (conquest and the colonial phase).
- Balance between resources decrease, while population increases (end of colony and early independence).
- Transition to resource scarcity and abundance of labor (late 19th century).

¹ Transformation: changes in the structure and functioning of natural ecosystems, replaced by others with different environmental offer.

- Land abundance and natural resources scarcity with labor excess (current situation).

Some authors, including Marquez, consider land concentration in a few people, as a consequence of natural resources abundance and small population in the early stages of Colombia history. A small part of the population was able to control and exploit the land and natural resources. This exclusionary appropriation was the generator of our unresolved social conflict, which have manifested in migration, poverty and violence.

This situation has worsened in the last 80 years, because of the modification in natural resources - labor relation. Natural resources have declined while population has increased, with social structures that persist and others whose changes have been dramatic. This approach shows a close connection between the initial natural resources abundance and their appropriation and destruction pattern along its history with the social, economic and political situation nowadays.

In the future, Colombia can confront an absolute scarcity of renewable and non-renewable resources because of environmental deterioration, excessive population and increasing demand for environmental services, such as air, water and soil, deepening social inequities. This scenario must face the nation to search harmony between economic needs and social development with an adequate resources management (sustainable development). To achieve this goal, education and training are fundamental.

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