

Ecological Debt emerges from the London Fog

The **European Social Forum (ESF)** took place this year in **London from 15-17 October**. The Southwark Cathedral was the location of the opening ceremony, where big names like Gerry Adams, Aleida Guevara, Meena Menon did the warming up for the three following days of debate and protest in order to achieve a better world.



London, as gray as ever because of the rain and the fog, became a colorful place for the other-globalists where we talked on various issues. One of those issues was debated in the workshop which was co-organized by JADES (workshop Environmental Justice, Ecological Debt and Sustainability of the WSSE). Talking on ecological debt is a way to introduce the world wide environmental degradation in the traditional socio-economical analyses made by ESF-public.

Environmental issues are still considered as luxury problems by a lot of Northern organizations (trade unions, Third World organizations, Human Right organizations, ..) , while in the South everybody knows that environment is synonym for natural resources (minerals, forest, air, water, biodiversity,..), so the base of their socio-economic development. Which is not at all considered in the South as a luxury problem, but one of the main problems to be solved. They see and experience every day that those natural resources are plundered, bad managed and deteriorated for centuries now. This is a huge limitation for their sovereignty and endogenous development. For the Northern countries this 'illegitimate appropriation and damaging the environment in the South' is the base of their richness and over consumption.

So it was very surprising that the workshop we organized attracted 200 people. They could listen and debate of the content and importance of the concept of 'ecological debt', but also how you can work with this concept on political level (as policy-instrument) and at local level (awareness raising), and to increase empowerment in the South (as you change the position of the Southern countries into creditors instead of debtors).

We also used the ESF to launch the idea of organizing an "International Tribunal of Ecological Debt, Environmental Justice and Human Rights" (Dec. 2006 in Brussels - see the preparation documents on this site). In a meeting before the ESF we discussed when and how we could prepare this Tribunal in the most effective way. Apart from the logistic things, we considered it very important to stimulate the process in the South and the North in effort to spread the concept of ecological debt. Only then the Tribunal will have the support of a broad range of actors involved and suffering of ecological debt. The networks that already have committed themselves for the organization are: JADES, ENRED, SPEDCA, World Council of Churches, Jubilee South, Friends of the Earth International, and several national NGOs (VODO, De Kleine Aarde, New Economic Foundation, ...)