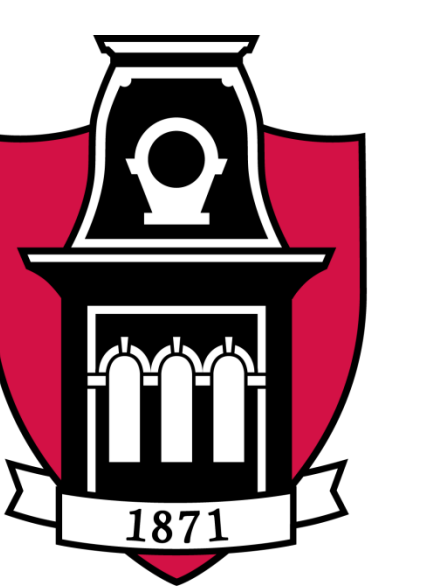


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Current Trends of Development in Peru and Sustainable Solutions: A Case Study Based on Service Learning in Lima, Peru

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A PYRRHIC VICTORY TO COME

A Pyrrhic victory is one that is won with many losses. The name comes from the king Pyrrhus of Epirus, who won a victory over the Romans at the cost of thousands of his own men. In Peru, current trends of development could lead to a Pyrrhic victory marked by the achievement of economic growth at the cost of the environment and social structures. The question is how to win the actual battle of development in Peru without these losses.

Peru's current state is as follows:

Income: 2012 - 7.8 million people living in poverty, 23% of which in extreme poverty.

Employment: 2007 and on: 65% of the economically active population work in small businesses, making less than half that of people who work in large businesses.

Health: 2010: rate of chronic malnutrition in children younger than 5 years of age – 17.9%.

Environment: Carbon dioxide emissions have risen 41,612,103 metric tons since 1994.

THE PROJECT

In addition to the service learning, I studied sustainable development based on the academic text "Human Scale Development" by Manfred Max-Neef, Antonio Elizalde, and Martin Hopenhayn. Though this work is about development on a human scale. it does not discuss the importance of environmental sustainability. I used the two organizations as case studies for how the deliberate protection of the environment fortifies and brings to fruition a true development on a human scale and consequently a process of sustainable development that does not end in a pyrrhic victory.



Children planting seeds (above).
Playing teambuilding games (below).



LA SEMILLA

La Semilla (The Seed) is a non-governmental organization that works with children and adolescents in marginalized zones of Lima. The goals of the ecology program are to raise awareness about issues that affect the ecosystem. In teaching these themes, children are learning not only why the environment is important for a healthy life, but also how to take care of it.

As the children in the program grow up, they become eligible for scholarships for higher education. It can be seen that it is not a program simply for teaching environmental sustainability, but it is a sustainable program in and of itself. It will continue this cycle of producing leaders that take care of the environment and teach the children of the next generation to do the same.

ReciAmancaes

ReciAmancaes is a micro-business dedicated to the collection and transformation of recyclable material to sell as artisanal goods as a form of income for women and as funds for social projects. Their efforts tackle 3 problems in Peru : waste, poverty, and unemployment. They prevent recyclable materials from entering into the waste stream and provide jobs. They also have a garden to provide the children and workers with food.

This business is a good example of human scale development. It is flourishing without outside help. It develops the individual and their abilities for the good of the community. All have their part and both the individual and environmental necessities are satisfied.



Flowers made from recycled bottles (above).
Meche making jewelry from paper (below).



The garden (below).



SUSTAINABILITY

This project most clearly links o the social domain of sustainability. It addresses the current accelerating phenomenon of globalization and hegemonic powers encouraging selective policies from developing countries that are destructive to the environment. The project suggests a change in the way that people and their governments associate with their environment, thus changing the existing socio-environmental paradigm. What is happening in Peru is a perfect example of the global environmental crisis and its effects. Social justice, equity, and resource distribution issues are prevalent in Peru. It is clear, however, that a focus on sustainable development will solve these issues and help sustain the generations now and those to come.

PERSONAL GROWTH

For me, this project solidified my belief that valuing and caring for the environment can naturally lead to a just and healthy society. Volunteering with these two organizations has given me insight as to some best management practices in how to work for social justice causes. I've seen that, by granting responsibility to care for the environment and developing human capacity, change does happen. It has also given me a taste of the kind of work I would like to do in the future. While my behavior did not change, my attitude about how much of a difference small movements can make did change.