Ecological Crisis Is A Direct Consequence of Capitalism

For most people who grew up in rural and semi urban areas there was a little innate relationship with nature. We ate wild fruits, chased after wild animals, swam in the rivers, walked barefoot on virgin land, treated using herbs and grew our own food. We listened to the birds sing, rivers and streams flow, sounds of insects and traditional forms of art. I knew a number of birds and insects in my vernacular language. We used homemade manure on the farm and the work was collectively done. My grandmother would preserve and pick seeds to be planted for the season. We had trees that nobody was allowed to touch or prune and during harvests the produce was shared. Whenever an animal was slaughtered my grandfather always shared the meat with other members of the community. Ecological activities then were more of social activities. Despite the historical alienation from nature through colonialism there was some bit intimacy remaining which as we grew up was eroded even more.

The School system ushered us into despising nature. The church complemented it by supplementing what the school did and the family drove the point home. The picture of success painted to us was being holed up in some concrete jungle called the city with a job and a wage.

In the city the so-called staple food which are still forms of colonial legacies is considered not cool. Being fed by corporations is way cooler than getting it from the small holder farmer who is now at the mercy of the middle man, a representative of the corporate. Corporates are also holding farmers at ransom through punitive seed laws, synthetic fertilizers and harmful pesticides which are a threat to the entire natural ecosystem. A representative of a capitalist state like ours colludes with these few individuals to make land the main means of production very scarce and the remaining piece of land poisoned leaving everyone else at the mercy of pharmaceuticals. The small farmers plight is at the will of individuals who have decided to privatize products of nature and put on themselves the power to decide what is to be planted.

When we went into tertiary education, a higher tier of indoctrination in the urban areas we were confronted with further entrenched environmental apartheid. Living in the leafy sub urbs is a preserve of the rich. For the good acting wage earners dubbed the middle class a concrete jungle estate with few green spaces preserved for them. For the underemployed and actively employed reside in shacks christened flats which have almost none to basic amenities. Food is has become more political as every social class has its own handler of food. A retailer in the sub urbs will provide food with all the detailed information and the same retailer will not provide the same information to people living in the slums with worst food. No one explains to these people anything about it. You eat it or starve. Green spaces are commercialized and any attempt to go there as a low tier citizen attracts lots of surveillance. Some are not even accessible to any random citizen. They are a preserve of a few private citizens. There is clear difference between the air, rivers and the general biodiversity between Muthaiga and Mathare for instance despite being close to each other. The river is clearer in Muthaiga but full of garbage in Mathare. The tree cover is thicker in Muthaiga so the air is fresher. This is the case for all the sub urbs with slums just adjacent to them.
Going back to the village is becoming a lesser option with the takeover of corporations in the rural areas. These is after the historical cash crop colonization that forced people to give up on subsistence farming. The former processing mills are on their death beds awaiting privatization, the global prices keep dwindling but the farmers are held ransom by repressive and retrogressive crop laws that do not allow them to shift to growing other crops. The remaining untouched natural resources become privatized each day and locals are driven out of their land to pave way for industrial farms,” eco” lodges for foreigners, grabbing of land in the guise of conservancies where rare species somehow still mysteriously die, mining corporations and palatial homes for the selected private citizens.

These crimes against humanity and every part of nature happen with lots of impunity despite several ambitious policy and legal framework promising the people an immediate shift to paradise. There is the famous Paris Agreement whose articles insinuate that governments and the private sector should care for the environment and the people which is a long shot given the nature of these entities. Kenya is a signatory of that agreement alongside the G7 a clique of “developed” countries who can walk in and out these treaties yet they are all expected to honor these commitments at the same scale. To that effect Kenya has even more ambitious commitments that are not practical at all. The president for instance had declared the country will have transition to 100% renewable energy by 2020. We are in 2021 and energy poverty still exists. Our transport and agricultural systems are hungry for fossil fuel. The government still insists on investing in coal, an obsolete source of energy in a country with numerous renewable energy sources that awaits equitable distribution. Many households are still dependent on biomass and many more will shift as energy becomes more expensive in a country that produces surplus energy. There are many more commitments that do not mirror the material conditions of the people. They are a buffer as poverty entrenches further behind the scenes.

Nairobi is a land of water with numerous water resources from several rivers that intersect with each other, dams and swamps, yet somehow a large part of Nairobi experience water shortages. Water in Nairobi is controlled by companies. There are uncountable private water vendors both bottled and in large scale in the form of trucks. Kisumu and the larger lake western region are equally endowed with natural resources but with so many areas experiencing water crisis. Turkana has an underground aquifer that has a potential of serving the whole country. That means the Northern region should at least have access to water but that’s not the case.

Basic utilities which are most if not all products of nature have been privatized and commodified by corporations in collusion with the neoliberal capitalist state which has been captured by the imperial powers. We therefore have to beg for water, food, housing and energy which can be provided in little droppings as these few individuals dim fit or with a lot of impunity refuse to provide.

Its clear that the ecological crisis cannot be resolved under a global capitalist and imperialist system. It has instead worsened and escalated into an emergency that threatens every living
thing. It’s impossible to mitigate the extremes it has already gotten to. People have little or no access to basic utilities. We cannot have healthy people without quality food, water, housing and energy. To have a healthy working people that can sustainably advance society they have to be in a conducive environment with abundance of natural resources for all. This can only happen when natural resources are nationalized, agriculture is collectivized and the state takes back its role of ensuring every person has basic utilities to attain a decent standard of living.

This will not be done in isolation. There has to be international solidarity among all oppressed people of the world. Humans being are part of nature and nature is interdependent. This is a matter of urgency because its about survival of living species. Fixing the ecological crisis means an end to capitalism and imperialism alongside all the forms of oppression it has as by products including racism, patriarchy, colonialism among others that emerge as it mutates.