

**I want to give you** a last example of that that I know is very pertinent to many of what people are working with now which is: environmental problems.

**This diagram came** out of the Brundtland Commission, which was in the late '80s, and it was a real siren call for saying that we're concerned about these environmental problems but we are not looking at it with the kind of scope that we need to look at it.

**She said there are problems** of *underdevelopment* and there are problems of *overdevelopment* and you can't address one set without another. In North America, we are mostly concerned with the problems of overdevelopment. We're talking about the air pollution. We're talking about the fact that there are species that are becoming extinct. We're talking about the fact that we may be running out of water or it isn't clean water or there's too much waste and we can't get rid of the waste. We worry about those things.

**In the developing world**, the problems of underdevelopment present initially quite different. We worry about poverty and hunger and their mutual relationship. Lots of work in development studies has suggested that poverty drives poor maternal health,

infant mortality, and infectious diseases. Poverty compromises the education and medical infrastructure which increases the likelihood of poor maternal health going on. The hunger means that we overharvest whatever resources we have. Subsistence farming really strips an environment, as does deforestation, of the trees that you need to provide fuel, for example. That environmental degradation, of course, increases the hunger. All of this is aggravated by overpopulation, which oddly is driven by poverty. People tend to have more children and then demands more resources.

**Those systemic links** and the problems of underdevelopment have been nicely documented. Then it becomes these connection points because we begin to look at the world economic system and we see that, in fact, international debt that is caused by these poor countries having to borrow money increases the overharvesting of resources in order to gain the funds or to trade natural resources because of the debt. We know what's driving that is industrial growth in the developed countries, which means that they turn to and create a global market of food and resources. They subsidize their own food and resources and force the price down of the food and resources we're still buying from the developing world. Then

they lend money to keep those economies afloat, which means that they have to sell more of their food and resources, which means that there's further overharvesting.

**But it gets more.** Industrial growth creates CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, which is creating global warming, which also results in the environmental degradation, which means that there is less food to go around, and fewer resources.

**Increasingly, it's clear** that global warming also contributes to a series of diseases and higher mortality rates, again unfortunately, in the underdeveloped south, and so, of course, does environmental degradation. You have that working as well.

**When you look at that**, you realize that it's just an illusion to say you have the problems of overdevelopment and problems of underdevelopment. It's all one system. You can see that the developed world preaching to the underdeveloped world about how they need to increase maternal health and education and infrastructure manage their resources better is hypocritical at best, because in many ways, it's being driven by what's happening in the global north. The two are inseparable.

## Describing systems | Interconnectedness

**It doesn't mean** that there might not be places that you can intervene and the smart people haven't sorted that out. International debt repayment—eliminating debt—was one strategy precisely based on this kind of understanding this complex diagram that's been used.

**In fact, many** of these other things have gone on unchecked and we also know that if the economies of the underdeveloped world fall part, it's going to bring down the economies of the developed world. There's just no way to separate them. Yet the dialogue remains very much us-and-them.