

Kapi, Mara Idrissou (Director) Release Date (2005) [Arlit, Deuxieme Paris](#). California Newsreel www.newsreel.org TRT: 78 minutes. Niger/France. In French, Hausa and Tamashek with English sub-titles.

Every now and then a documentary comes along that sparks the interest of citizens all over the world about the plight of the powerless in our global society. The world in its present arrangement of development pivoted on haphazard extraction of natural resources is always bound to produce some form of catastrophe. Environmental degradation is a certainty that follows natural resource extraction and as such due diligence must be carried out in order to protect the environment and the people that occupy it.

The developed countries of the world see great opportunities for economic growth in the underdeveloped regions of the world. The opportunities are in the form of raw material, cheap labor with little or no development policies to help steer development in the right direction. A development that is truly sustainable is one that is lasting or durable and one that exhibits diversification from the primary resource into secondary and tertiary industries. Development of a natural resource is sustainable when it offers opportunities to transform the primary resource to other forms of substances which offer employment opportunities. Usually the training of the indigenous people of the place where the resource is being extracted is of great significance for such a transformation. Such educational training covers a whole range of expertise – from technical to college degree which most certainly can empower the people to manage the resources in perpetuity and to manage and control their destinies. Resource extraction and development, in general, require deliberate plan for the site, housing for workers and their families and general development of the communities surrounding the site. Health plans and compensation for the workers are of utmost importance. Plans should be designed for short range, medium range and long range development.

However, it is quite apparent that in Africa, development plans are often distorted and poor planning and mismanagement usually happen because of lack of clear development plans and policies and African governments are often ill-prepared to go into reasonable negotiations with foreign entities.

Arlit offers a good example of how not to do development. At issue here are matters concerning migration and a total neglect of environmental problems due to the mining of uranium in Niger's portion of the Sahara Desert. There was a complete lack of economic analysis of law in Niger as far as the mining of uranium is concerned. One could argue that in Arlit, the multinationals of Europe extracted uranium for nuclear power, made a lot of money and left the people of Arlit with the problems of health due to radiation, contamination and unemployment. The sudden drop in the world price of uranium triggered the departure of the multinationals. There is a lesson here for all developing countries endowed with natural resources.

This is an excellent documentary which brings to light the plight of the powerless people of Niger (Arlit.) The dire economic situations in many African countries make them vulnerable to being taken advantage of by many multinationals and the ignorance and greed of the governments in Africa exacerbate the plight of the majority of the people. What is clear in this documentary is that economic problems are multifaceted. Local and national governments must be called upon to act responsibly in their development efforts. International organization must double their efforts in monitoring and reporting the bad and irresponsible activities of companies doing business in Africa.

Arlit became a company town, upon the discovery of uranium and the operation of the mine. People from all over West Africa and expatriate from Europe arrived to benefit from the mining operations. Work in the town which concentrated on the mines increased exponentially and local people worked in the mines without the knowledge of the ramification of radiation and environmental pollution. The repercussion of the uranium mining on the people is obvious today in the deaths that are associated with the health impact of uranium.

Upon the collapse of the economic infrastructure that followed the departure of the multinationals, many people put their lives on the line in their attempt to immigrate to European countries. Journey across the treacherous Sahara desert is precarious. The emerging business of smuggling people across the desert is focused upon in the documentary. The plight of Africans attempting to escape poverty at home is very well documented. The desperate determination to improve themselves is depicted in some parts of the documentary.

This documentary should be available for all undergraduate international and development studies programs. Public libraries should have this documentary in order to inform the general public. This documentary should be made available in all countries of Africa which are endowed with natural resources. This will certainly help in informing policy makers so that their natural resources extraction would proceed cautiously, intelligently and properly in order to reduce environmental degradation and health problems. Environmental impact assessment must be conducted and social and economic impact analysis along with benefit/cost/risk analysis must be undertaken prior to the development/extraction of the natural resource. The devastation of the environment and the people of Africa must be discouraged.

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