

# A Sustainable Society: Its Meaning and Objectives

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**Abstract:** Now a days there is a need to understand why Sustainable development is important, because it is now becoming more acceptable as a social goal. What a sustainable society might be like or how it might be created. However, remain elusive and vague. It is generally accepted that such a society must be widespread adoption of activities that are sustainable in economic, environmental and social terms. This paper explores the potential of social capital as a policy concept and the value of the concept for interpreting community dynamics, making strategies to enhance community relations and development and finally how we can build a more sustainable society.

**Keywords:** Development, Sustainable Society, Environment, Ecosystem, Well-being.

Sustainability is the capacity to endure. The word sustainability is derived from the Latin word *sustinere* (tenere, to hold; sus, up). More than ten meanings for *sustain*, are in the dictionary the main ones being to “maintain”, “support” or “endure”. However, since the 1980s *sustainability* has been used more in the sense of human sustainability on planet earth and this has resulted in the most widely quoted definition of sustainability as a part of the concept *sustainable development*, that of the Brundtland Commission of the United Nations on March 20, 1987: “sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” In ecology the word sustainability describes how biological systems remain diverse and productive over the period of time.

Long-lived and healthy wetlands and forests are examples of sustainable biological systems. For humans, sustainability is the potential for long-term maintenance of well being, which has ecological, economic, political and cultural dimensions. Sustainability requires the reconciliation of environmental, social equity and economic demands also referred to as the “three pillars” of sustainability.

Healthy ecosystems and environments are necessary to the survival and flourishing of humans and other organisms. There are a number of major ways of reducing negative human impact. The first of these is environmental management. This approach is based largely on information gained from earth science, environmental science and conservation biology. The second approach is management of human consumption of resources, which is based largely on information gained from economics. A third more recent

approach adds cultural and political concerns into the sustainability matrix.

Sustainability interfaces with economics through the social and environmental consequences of economic activity. Sustainability economics involves ecological economics where social aspects including cultural, health-related and monetary etc. Moving towards sustainability is also a social challenge that entails international and national law, urban planning and transport, local and individual lifestyles and ethical consumerism. Ways of living more sustainably can take many forms from reorganizing living conditions (e.g., eco villages, eco-municipalities and sustainable cities), reappraising economic sectors (permaculture, green building, sustainable agriculture) or work practices (sustainable architecture) using science to develop new technologies (green technologies, renewable energy and sustainable, Fission and Fusion power) to adjustments in individual lifestyles that conserve natural resources.

A universally accepted definition of sustainability remains elusive because it needs to be factual and scientific, a clear statement of a specific “destination”. The simple definition “sustainability is improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting eco-systems” though vague, conveys the idea of sustainability having quantifiable limits. But sustainability is also a call to action, a task in progress or “journey” and therefore a political process, so some definitions set out common goals and values. The Earth Charter speaks of “a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace.”

To add complication, the word *sustainability* is applied not only to human sustainability on Earth, but too many situations and contexts over many scales of space and time, from small local ones to the global balance of production and consumption. It implies responsible and proactive decision-making and innovation that minimizes negative impact and maintains balance between social, environmental, and economic growth to ensure a desirable planet for all species now and in the future. It can also just refer to a future intention: “sustainable agriculture” is not necessarily a current situation but a goal for the future, a prediction. For all these reasons sustainability is perceived, at one extreme, as nothing more than a feel-good buzzword with little meaning or substance but, at the other, as an important but unfocused concept like “liberty” or “justice”. It has also

been described as a "dialogue of values that defies consensual definition".

A sustainable society is one that ensures the health and vitality of human life and culture's and of nature's capital for present and future generations. Such a society acts to stop the activities that serve to destroy human life and culture and nature's capital and to encourage those activities that serve to conserve what exists, restore what has been damaged and prevent human being from future dire consequences.

Sustainable societies are defined as towns and cities that have taken steps to remain healthy over the long term. Sustainable societies have a strong sense of place. They have a vision that is embraced and actively promoted by all of the key sectors of society, including businesses, disadvantaged groups, environmentalists, civic associations, government agencies, and religious organizations. They are places that build on their assets and dare to be innovative. These communities value healthy ecosystems, use resources efficiently and actively seek to retain and enhance a locally based economy. Sustainable development concerns everybody in a society.

There is only one alternative to sustainability that is unsustainability. But sustainability involves a time dimension and unsustainability now rarely implies an immediate existential threat. Existence is threatened only in the distant future, perhaps too far away to be properly recognized. Even if threats are understood, they may not cause much concern now: there still seems to be enough time to disappear or for finding solutions.

In the past, the sustainability of human society was not really at stake: the glacial change of its environment left plenty of time for adaptive response and evasion. Threats to sustainability of a system require urgent attention if their rate of change begins to approach the speed with which the system can adequately respond. As the rate of change overwhelms this ability to respond the system loses its variability and sustainability. The sustainability of humankind is now threatened by both of these factors: the dynamics of its technology, economy and population accelerate the environmental and social rates of change, while growing structural interior reduces the ability to respond in time. Response time lengthens while the time available for adequate response becomes shorter. Thus, the sustainability of human society becomes an urgent concern.

Now the question arises that what are the sources of unsustainability? There are so many factors which plays an important role in creating unsustainable societies. These are as follows:

- We have failed to accept the fact that the economic system is an open system in a closed and finite ecosystem.
- We have been focused on resource constraining which is more susceptible to substitution and

technological innovation. We are now noticing sink constraints, the problems of disposing of wastes of affluence.

- We have failed to recognize that the environment is the basis for all life and for all production. It is not an interest competing with other interests; rather it is the playing field upon which all other interests compete.
- We did not understand that, as a result to accept nature as a model and mentor, rather, we exhibit disdain for nature and nature's forces and a belief that we can manage it and master them.
- We have failed to examine our love with technology, despite the fact that today's problems are all fact that today's problems are all too often yesterday's solutions.
- We have failed to distinguish between "growth" and "development" perhaps driven by our beliefs in technology as savior. We use the words interchangeably, based explicitly or implicitly on the assumption that there are no limits or that they are far off and therefore largely irrelevant. However, as a recent World Bank report notes: "Following the dictionary distinction...when something grows it gets quantitatively bigger; when it develops it gets qualitatively better. Our planet develops over time without growing. Our economy, a subsystem of the finite and non-growing earth, must eventually adapt to a similar pattern of development" (Goodland et al. 1992). The phrase "sustainable growth" is an oxymoron, because growth cannot, by definition, continue in a closed system. Sustained growth in the economy, as in the human body, is a cancer to be feared.
- We have failed to recognize that growth does not automatically lead to equity and justice within and among countries, regardless of the political or economic system.
- We have failed to examine our faith in the market system to deal with the public good, especially ecological sustainability and justice and the market system by creating "desires and wants" above and beyond our needs, places greater strain on the ecosystem.
- Finally, we, as a people as well as our present economic system, have failed to consider future generations, whose well-being defines the core of a sustainable world-which itself must be at the core of any conceptualization of a sustainable world.

#### *Objectives of Sustainable Society:*

Some important characteristics and objectives of a sustainable society can be scientifically narrated in the following manner such as:

*Economical goals:* Through this goal we need to make some effort like:

- Creation of jobs that enhance the nature of work
- Equitable income distribution within and among the countries
- Economic stabilization and system equilibrium
- Technology exchange, not simply technology transfer, emphasizing technologies that emulate rather than destroy nature.
- Economic self-sufficiency, at community, national and international level and
- Sufficiency, rather than efficiency, since high levels of consumption are generally incompatible with the conservation and preservation of nature's capital.
- Particular attention to unintended socioeconomic, cultural and ecological consequences of technology, management and regulation.
- Zero toxins as a more suitable goal for production process.
- Balancing ecological debt within and among countries
- Maintaining biodiversity and
- Population stabilization

*Social and Cultural goals include:*

- Equity and justice, emphasizing needs over wants, especially in the more industrialized countries.
- Full status for all regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation or age.
- Maintenance of cultural diversity, including respect and support for indigenous peoples.
- Strengthened communities through participation of individuals and social groups in the conduct of their own affairs.
- Revitalization of sustainable rural communities through the development of environmentally sensitive and economically profitable agriculture, family farming and appropriate value-added environmentally sound industrial development and
- Revitalization of communities within urban settings.

*Political Goals include:*

- Political security, including community participation in defining and solving problems
- Strategic security, including the community's ability to defend itself against external threats, whether economic or political and
- Environmental balance between the community's population and the demands made upon it relative to economic endowment and performance, including its natural capital and its level of technology. This recognizes the right to protect itself from environmental assaults generated outside the community, such as befouled air from a neighbor that destroys its forests. This right carries with it the responsibility to be protective of the rights of other communities by not transporting its wastes to them.

*Ecological goals:*

- Ecological stability planning with emphasis on waste reduction rather than waste management and on renewable and recyclable supplies of resources, taking account of resource and sink constraints, necessitating.

To build a sustainable society, a delicate balance between current needs and future needs has to be reached. In the past, the law of nature ensured this balance. Today, the law of nature still applies. However, with our capability to utilize the reserved resources, human beings have a choice to make. We could continue to use up all the reserved resources and let our children suffer the consequence of resource starvation or we could aggressively move away from non-renewable resources and put ourselves on a sustainable footing once and for all.

We can see that a stable population would form one of the first characteristics of a sustainable society would have. We would need to keep the population at about the same level. No more exponential growth. That would mean that we would not have a economic system that needs growth to maintain it. We could sum up as reducing our demands on the Earth. The less we need the less we need to produce and the less we take from the Earth. We can reduce our demand through reducing waste and increasing efficiency, thus getting more with less. Though building products that last and through matching our supply to our demands. No more producing things for profit, wasting resources as we go. Reuse forms can also help. If we take what we have and use it again or use it for another purpose we save the need of having to produce another item. In doing so we can help cut back on our production and pollution. A sustainable society would also recycle as much as it can. This comes after reducing and reusing as it takes a bit more energy to recycle. Through putting back into the system things that people no longer have a use for we save the need of having to extract the resource from the Earth thus helping to reduce what we produce and the associated pollution.

Mahatma Gandhi has said, "Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed." The Earth had vast resources to satisfy our needs. The only reason we are running on a resource deficit is that we did not keep our greed in check. We have allowed our population to grow at a rate which nature could not support. At the same time, we have allowed our resource consumption per capital to rise rapidly. To make things even worse, we treat natural resources as a free giveaway. Our efforts have been focusing only on how to retrieve it fast and with minimum cost to us, regardless of what impact it could have to others or future generations.

Our ability to think coupled with our greed has led us on a collision course with nature. If we continue on this

path, a final showdown with nature is imminent. However, this is not necessarily the only course for human beings. If our ability to think is coupled with our care for future generations, we will be able to strike a balance between current needs and future needs. That way, we will make peace with nature. This is the only way to build a sustainable society.

Shortly speaking from environmental point of view as a researcher, I may affirm that a sustainable society could be easily formed by making removal of aggression, violence, social discrimination and injustices provided to the people, poverty, socio-cultural barriers and ecological destabilization. Regardless formation of a sustainable society

could also be made possible by removing sources and signs of unsustainably in a long run perspective.

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