

# Sustainable development essay

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



\n[[Table of Contents](#)]\n

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1. [Economics](#): \n \t

2. [Ecology](#): \n \t

3. [Politics](#): \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

Sustainable development refers to a mode of human development in which resource use aims to meet human needs while preserving the environment so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also for generations to come. The term 'sustainable development' was used by the Brundtland Commission which coined what has become the most often-quoted definition of sustainable development: " development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development ties together concern for the carrying capacity of natural systems with the social challenges faced by humanity. As early as the 1970s, " sustainability" was employed to describe an economy " in equilibrium with basic ecological support systems. " Ecologists have pointed to *The Limits to Growth*, and presented the alternative of a " steady state economy" in order to address environmental concerns. The concept of sustainable development has in the past most often been broken out into three constituent parts: environmental sustainability, economic sustainability and sociopolitical sustainability.

More recently, it has been suggested that a more consistent analytical breakdown is to distinguish four domains of economic, ecological, political

and cultural sustainability. This is consistent with the UCLG move to make 'culture' the fourth domain of sustainability. Indigenous peoples have argued, through various international forums such as the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Convention on Biological Diversity, that there are four pillars of sustainable development, the fourth being cultural.

The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (UNESCO, 2001) further elaborates the concept by stating that "... cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature"; it becomes "one of the roots of development understood not simply in terms of economic growth, but also as a means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence". In this vision, cultural diversity is the fourth policy area of sustainable development. Economic Sustainability: Agenda 21 clearly identified information, integration, and articulation as key building blocks to help countries achieve development that recognises these interdependent pillars. It emphasises that in sustainable development everyone is a user and provider of information. It stresses the need to change from old sector-centered ways of doing business to new approaches that involve cross-sectoral co-ordination and the integration of environmental and social concerns into all development processes. According to Hasna Vancok, sustainability is a process which tells of a development of all aspects of human life affecting sustenance.

It means resolving the conflict between the various competing goals, and involves the simultaneous pursuit of economic prosperity, environmental quality and social equity famously known as three dimensions (triple bottom

line) with the resultant vector being technology, hence it is a continually evolving process; the 'journey' (the process of achieving sustainability) is of course vitally important, but only as a means of getting to the destination (the desired future state). However, the 'destination' of sustainability is not a fixed place in the normal sense that we understand destination.

Instead, it is a set of wishful characteristics of a future system. Green development is generally differentiated from sustainable development in that Green development prioritizes what its proponents consider to be environmental sustainability over economic and cultural considerations. Proponents of Sustainable Development argue that it provides a context in which to improve overall sustainability where cutting edge Green Development is unattainable. For example, a cutting edge treatment plant with extremely high maintenance costs may not be sustainable in regions of the world with fewer financial resources.

An environmentally ideal plant that is shut down due to bankruptcy is obviously less sustainable than one that is maintainable by the community, even if it is somewhat less effective from an environmental standpoint. However, this view depends on whether one determines that it is the development (the plant) which needs to be sustainable, or whether it is the human-nature ecology (the environmental conditions) in which the plant exists which should be sustainable. It follows, then, that an operational but heavily polluting plant may be judged as actually 'less sustainable' than having no plant at all.

**Economics:**

The domain of 'economics' is fundamental to considerations of sustainable development, however there has been considerable criticism of the tendency to use the three-domain model of the triple bottom line: economics, environment and social. This approach is challenged to the extent that it treats the economy as the master domain, or as a domain that exists outside of the social; it treats the environment as a world of natural metrics; and it treats the social as a miscellaneous collection of extra things that do not fit into the economic or environmental domains (see the section on Economic sustainability below).

In the alternative Circles of Sustainability approach, the economic domain is defined as the practices and meanings associated with the production, use, and management of resources, where the concept of 'resources' is used in the broadest sense of that word.

**Ecology:**

The domain of 'ecology' has been difficult to resolve because it too has a social dimension. Some research activities start from the definition of green development to argue that the environment is a combination of nature and culture. However, this has the effect of making the domain model unwieldy if culture is to be considered a domain in its own right (see below).

Others write of ecology as being more broadly at the intersection of the social and the environmental - hence, ecology. This move allows culture to be used as a domain alongside economics and ecology. III. Culture: Working with a different emphasis, some researchers and institutions have pointed

out that a fourth dimension should be added to the dimensions of sustainable development, since the triple-bottom-line dimensions of economic, environmental and social do not seem to be enough to reflect the complexity of contemporary society.

In this context, the Agenda 21 for culture and the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) Executive Bureau lead the preparation of the policy statement “ Culture: Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development”, passed on 17 November 2010, in the framework of the World Summit of Local and Regional Leaders – 3rd World Congress of UCLG, held in Mexico City. This document inaugurates a new perspective and points to the relation between culture and sustainable development through a dual approach: developing a solid cultural policy and advocating a cultural dimension in all public policies.

### **Politics:**

Sustainable development is an eclectic concept and a wide array of political views fall under its umbrella. The concept has included notions of weak sustainability, strong sustainability and deep ecology. Different conceptions also reveal a strong tension between ecocentrism and anthropocentrism. Many definitions and images (Visualizing Sustainability) of sustainable development coexist. Broadly defined, the sustainable development mantra enjoins current generations to take a systems approach to growth and development and to manage natural, produced, and social capital for the welfare of their own and future generations.

During the last ten years, different organizations have tried to measure and monitor the proximity to what they consider sustainability by implementing

what has been called sustainability metrics and indices. This has engendered considerable political debate about what is being measured. Sustainable development is said to set limits on the developing world. While current first world countries polluted significantly during their development, the same countries encourage third world countries to reduce pollution, which sometimes impedes growth.

Some consider that the implementation of sustainable development would mean a reversion to pre-modern lifestyles. Environmental sustainability  
Environmental sustainability is the process of making sure current processes of interaction with the environment are pursued with the idea of keeping the environment as pristine as naturally possible based on ideal-seeking behavior. Thus, environmental sustainability demands that society designs activities to meet human needs while indefinitely preserving the life support systems of the planet.

This, for example, entails using water sustainably, only utilizing renewable energy, and sustainable material supplies (e. g. harvesting wood from forests at a rate that maintains the biomass and biodiversity). An "unsustainable situation" occurs when natural capital (the sum total of nature's resources) is used up faster than it can be replenished. Sustainability requires that human activity only uses nature's resources at a rate at which they can be replenished naturally. Inherently the concept of sustainable development is intertwined with the concept of carrying capacity.

Theoretically, the long-term result of environmental degradation is the inability to sustain human life. Such degradation on a global scale could imply extinction for humanity. Economic sustainability  
The Venn diagram of  
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sustainable development has many versions, but was first used by economist Edward Barbier (1987). However, Pearce, Barbier and Markandya (1989) criticized the Venn approach due to the intractability of operationalizing separate indices of economic, environmental, and social sustainability and somehow combining them.

They also noted that the Venn approach was inconsistent with the Brundtland Commission Report, which emphasized the interlinkages between economic development, environmental degradation, and population pressure instead of three objectives. Economists have since focused on viewing the economy and the environment as a single interlinked system with a unified valuation methodology (Hamilton 1999, Dasgupta 2007). Intergenerational equity can be incorporated into this approach, as has become common in economic valuations of climate change economics (Heal 2009).

Ruling out discrimination against future generations and allowing for the possibility of renewable alternatives to petro-chemicals and other non-renewable resources, efficient policies are compatible with increasing human welfare, eventually reaching a golden-rule steady state (Ayong le Kama 2001 and Endress et al. 2005). Thus the three pillars of sustainable development are interlinkages, intergenerational equity, and dynamic efficiency (Stavins et al. 2003).