

Sustainability definition essay



emrgnc Defining Sustainability – A Hundred Perspectives

Sustainability as an emergent concept reveals deep concerns about fundamental values and our own continued existence. While each person?

s definition of

sustainability is seen to be the most relevant, the question is a universal one and common to all.

Whether our definition of sustainability is anthropocentric, biocentric, egocentric,

ecocentric, econocentric, sociocentric, worldcentric or perhaps simply personally eccentric, they are all valid.

Collected here is a retrospective look at over one hundred perspectives from an

evolving list of thousands of definitions of sustainability, reflecting the different conceptualizations and applications of this emergent concept.

Sustainability is ... 1. “ Sustainability – n.

the property of being sustainable” – Princeton University 2. ?

Sustainable development seeks to meet the needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability to meet those of the future? ?

World Commission on Environment and Development (page 40: 1987) 3.

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains two key concepts: the concept of ? needs? , in particular the essential needs of the world? s poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organisation on the environment? s ability to meet

present and future needs.? ? World Commission on Environment and Development (page 43: 1987) 4.

Ecological sustainable development is using, conserving and enhancing the community? s resources so that ecological processes, on which life emrgnc 2003 emrgnc

depends, are maintained, and the total quality of life, now and in the future, can be increased. ” National Strategy for Ecological Sustainable Development (Australia) 5. “

Sustainable development is base d on the principle that the right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations.? 1992 Rio Earth Summit 6. ?

Output Rule: Waste emissions should be within the assimilative capacity of the environment to absorb without unacceptable degradation of its future waste? absorptive capacity or other important services. Input Rules: a) Renewables: harvest rates of renewable resources should be within the regenerative capacity of the ecosystem. b) Non?

renewables: depletion rates

should be equal to the rate at which renewable substitutes can be developed and deployed.? ? Daly, in Photiades, 1998 7.

Sustainability is a means of configuring civilization and human activity so that society and its members are able to meet their needs and express their greatest potential in the present, while preserving biodiversity and natural ecosystems, and planning and acting for the ability to maintain these ideals indefinitely.?? World IQ 8. ?

Sustainability means using, developing and protecting resources at a rate

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and in a manner that enables people to meet their current needs and also provides that future generations can meet their own needs, ...

simultaneously meeting environmental, economic and community needs.?

State of Oregon 9. ?

Sustainability means living within the resources of the planet without damaging the environment now or within the future. It also means having an economic system that provides a genuine quality of life, rather than depending on increased consumption.?? West London Friends of the Earth 10. ?

Sustainability is a relationship between dynamic cultural, economic, and biophysical systems associated across the landscape such that quality of life for humans continues ?? both for individuals and cultures. It is a relationship in which the effects of human activities do not threaten the emrgnc 2003 mrgnc integrity of the self?

organizing systems that provide the context for these activities.

An ecosystem has integrity if it retains its complexity and capacity for self? organization (arguably its health) and sufficient diversity,

within its structures and functions, to maintain the ecosystem? s self?

organizing complexity through time.?? Eco? Watch (Iverson, CornettT)

11. ? Living on the earth? s income rather than eroding its capital. It means keeping the consumption of renewable natural resources within the limits of their replenishment. It means handing down to successive generations not only man? ade wealth, but also natural wealth, such as clean and adequate water supplies, good arable land, a wealth of wildlife, and ample forests?? The United Kingdom? s Sustainable Development Strategy 12. “

Sustainability is defined as meeting the needs of current and future

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generations through simultaneous environmental, social and economic improvement. ” ? State Sustainability Strategy (Western Australia) 13. “

The principle of ensuring that our actions today do not limit the range of, social, environmental and economic options open to future generations.? ? Maroochy Shire 14.

Sustainability is the economic and social changes that promote human prosperity and quality of life without causing ecological or social damage. It is a new way of thinking about an age? old concern: ensuring that our children and grandchildren inherit a tomorrow that is at least as good as today, preferably better. We want to make sure that the way we live our lives is sustainable ? that it can continue and keep improving for a long, long time. ” ? City of Seattle 15. ?

But in its fullest sense, sustainability involves a balance of economic, environmental, and social concerns considered over the long term.? Columbia University Biosphere 2 16. “

A primary goal of sustainable development is to achieve a reasonable (however defined) level of fairly distributed economic well? being that can be maintained for many human generations ? Goodland, R. and Ledoc, G. (1987) emrgnc 2003 emrgnc 17. “

Sustainable development means the will to follow a rational approach to economic policies; to show respect for future generations by integrating concern for environmental protection into decision? making; and progressively to evolve towards the full participation of all concerned actors. ? Barboza, N. (2000) 18. “

The simplest definition of a sustainable activity is that it can be continued for the foreseeable future. And this has at least three dimensions: it means

not unreasonably depleting natural resources, not producing waste products that significantly alter natural systems, and not undermining social stability. ” Lowe, I. (1990) 19. “ Sustainable development means:

1. ensuring self? sustaining improvements in productivity and quality of life of communities and societies; 2.

nsuring that production processes do not overexploit the natural resource base and compromise the quality of the environment, thus limiting the options of the poor, the present and future generations; and 3.

ensuring that people have basic human rights and freedoms to

participate societies. ”? Singh, N. and Titi, V. (1995) 20. “

Sustainability means creating a world in which we have: 1)

A positive ecological and sociological footprint (meaning we leave behind wetlands, not toxic waste dumps; healthy, developmentally appropriate educational systems, not ineffective relics from the Victorian era) 2) Cross?

ectoral coordination amongst the public and private sectors

to nurture global economic development and growth (not physical growth, but in standard of living) to occur within our ecological limits, while delivering social justice 3)

An alignment of the different levels of our individual and collective consciousness so that we can create, maintain, and healthily evolve all of this. ? Barrett Brown (2004), Integral Institute for Sustainability emrgnc 2003 emrgnc 21. “

Sustainability requires us to ensure the Four System Conditions: (a) Substances from the Earth? crust must not systematically increase in nature. (This means that fossil fuels, metals, and other minerals can

not be extracted at a faster rate than their re? deposit back into the Earth?
s crust.)

Substances produced by society must not systematically increase in nature.
(This means that things like plastics, ozone? depleting
chemicals, carbon dioxide, waste materials, etc. , must not be
produced at a faster rate than they can be broken down in nature.
This requires a greatly decreased production of naturally occurring
substances that are systematically accumulating beyond natural
levels, and a phase? ut of persistent human? made substances not
found in nature.)

The physical basis for productivity and diversity of nature must not
be systematically diminished. (This means that we cannot harvest or
manipulate ecosystems in such a way as to diminish their
productive capacity, or threaten the natural diversity of life forms
(biodiversity). This requires that we critically examine how we
harvest renewable resources, and (adjust our consumption and land?
use practices to fall well within the regenerative capacities of ecosystems.)

We must be fair and efficient in meeting basic human needs. This
means that basic human needs must be met with the most resource?
efficient methods possible, including a just resource distribution.)“?

The Natural Step (b) (c) (d) 22. “ Sustainability can be defined in three ways.

First, as debt sustainability.

Second, as project or donor sustainability, so when funding for the start up
costs of a project conclude, the project can continue. Third, sustainability of
the environment and ecosystems we must scrap our long? held embrace
of the first two definitions of sustainability in order to help achieve the third.

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Environmental sustainability is defined as preserving the ecosystem while allowing the poor to improve their economic condition. ”? Jeffrey Sachs 2002 emrgnc 2003 emrgnc 23. ?

Sustainability is defined in economic terms as ? non? declining capital? taking capital to mean not just monetary and human capital, as economists conventionally consider capital to be, but ? natural capital? , being the value to human beings of the Earth itself.? Dresner, 2002 24. “

The concept of sustainability amounts to a call to deal with the entire complex of global problems as an interrelated whole.

This challenge goes

well beyond the scope of issues individual organizations and governments have had to deal with before, and it demands new ways of thinking and acting. A sustainable society is one that has in place informational mechanism to keep in check the positive feedback loops that cause exponential population and [physical] capital growth. To be socially sustainable the combination of population, capital and technology in society would have to be configured so that the material living standard is adequate and secure for everyone. ” – Hardin Tibbs 25.

Sustainability exists as a steady dynamic state ...“ if: 1. 2. 3. 26. “

Qualitative change of a finite and physically non? growing economic system in dynamic equilibrium with the environment. ” This is because any physical subsystem of a finite and physically non? growing earth must itself eventually become non? growing. The term sustainable growth would then become self? contradictory, but sustainable development does not. 27. “

Taking nothing from the earth that is not renewable and doing no harm to the biosphere. " ? Ray Anderson, Interface 28.

Transforming our environmentally destructive economy into one that can sustain progress depends on a shift in economic mindset, recognizing that the economy is part of the earth's ecosystem and can sustain progress only
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Its rates of use of renewable resources do not exceed their rates of regeneration.

Its rates of use of nonrenewable resources do not exceed the rate at which sustainable renewable substitutes are developed.

Its rates of pollution emission do not exceed the assimilative capacity of the environment. " ? Herman Daly emrgnc

if it is restructured so that it is compatible with it.

A stable relationship between earth and economy ?

an environmentally sustainable economy an eco?

economy, requires that the principles of ecology establish the

framework for the formulation of economic policy. Economics integrated into ecology. " ? Lester R. Brown, Worldwatch Institute/Earth Policy

Institute/Eco? Economy 29. " I don? t use the word because I think it? s undefinable (at least after so

many folks have used it to mean so many different things) and not very useful. " ? Amory Lovins, CEO, Rocky Mountain Institute 30. " I?

ve avoided trying to pose one. If I had to give one, tho, I? d likely use Christopher Juniper? ? operations that cause no net loss of human or

natural capital.? Christopher also uses the phrase ? Preservation of

prosperity opportunity into the future? , especially for business audiences. This, however, leaves out the concept of being restorative. It also ignores the time scale issue ? it is essentially impossible to say if an action is sustainable in the short term. Walter Stahel, the father of the cradle to cradle concept talks of sustainability as a long term vision, that includes environmental protection, human health and safety, efficient use of resources and cultural and social sustainability. ? Hunter Lovins, CEO, Natural Capitalism Group 31. “

Sustainable development is a dynamic process which enables all people to realize their potential and improve their quality of life in ways which simultaneously protect and enhance the Earth’s life support systems. ” ? Forum For The Future 32. “

Improving the quality of life for all living beings within the capacity of nature to provide that life. ” ? Paul Hawken 33. ?

Sustainability refers to a vector of development (said ? vector? understood as containing a set of normatively desired socio? conomic objectives and targets) the realization of which does not normally lead to the sustained erosion of the natural capital of the society (where ? natural capital? is understood as referring to both the stock of environmental resources and the human socio? cultural assets used in creating the knowledge that defines the mode(s) of interaction between human society and the emrgnc 2003 emrgnc

environmental resources), and for which the period of optimal decision? making always reflects considerations of inter? generational equity and welfare.? Nikoi Olai Kote (Economics Professor at School for International Training) 34. “ Responding to all people?

s basic needs with what they have in co? evolution with nature. ” ?

Gunter Pauli (Founder Ecover, Founder ZERI ?

Zero Emissions Research and Initiatives) 35. “

The sustainable society is one that lives within the self? perpetuating limits of its environment. That society... is not a ? no growth? society... It is rather, a society that recognizes the limits of growth... [and] looks for alternative ways of growing. ” ? J. Coomer (ed), ?

The Nature of the Quest for a Sustainable Society,? (1979) 36. “

Sustainable development is the maintenance of essential ecological processes and life support systems, the preservation of genetic diversity, and the sustainable utilization of species and ecosystems. ” ? IUCN, WWF and UNEP. The World Conservation Strategy.

Gland, Switzerland. 1980. 37. “ Sustainable development ? development that is likely to achieve lasting satisfaction of human needs and improvement of the quality of human life. ? R. Allen, “

How to Save the World” (1980) 38. “ The World Commission does not believe that a dismal scenario of mounting destruction of national global potential for development ? indeed, of earth?

s capacity to support life ?? is an inescapable destiny. The problems are planetary ? but they are not insoluble. I believe that history will record that in this crisis the two greatest resources, land and people, will redeem the promise of development. If we take care of nature, nature will take care of us.

Conservation has truly of age when it acknowledges

that if we want to save part of the system, we have to save the system itself.

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This is the essence of what we call sustainable development. There are many dimensions to sustainability. First it requires the elimination of poverty and deprivation. Second, it requires the conservation and enhancement of the resources base which alone can ensure that the elimination of poverty is permanent. Third, it requires a broadening of the concept of development so that it covers not only economic growth, but also social and cultural development. Fourth, and most important, it requires unification of economics and ecology in decision making at all levels. " Prime Minister H. Gro Brundtland. Sir Peter Scott Lecture, Bristol, 8 October, 1986. 39. "

A major challenge of the coming decades is to learn how long term large scale interactions between environment and development can be better managed to increase the prospects for ecologically sustainable improvements in human well being. " W. Clark and R. Munn. Sustainable Development of the Biosphere (1986) 40. The core of the idea of sustainability, then, is the concept that current decisions should not impair the prospects for maintaining or improving future living standards... This implies that our economic systems should be managed so that we can live off the dividend of our resources, maintaining and improving the asset base. This principle also has much in common with the ideal concept of income that accountants seek to determine: the greatest amount that can be consumed in the current period without