

# Issues of sustainability essay



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“ The phrase ‘ sustainable development’ appears to have been first used in 1972 by Donella Meadows and other authors of the Limits to Growth and by Edward Goldsmith and the other British authors of Blueprint for Survival in the same year” (Wheeler 2004, p.

19)In 1987, the phrase ‘ Sustainable Development’ “ has come to represent mainstream thinking about the relationship between environment and development” (Baker 2004, p. 6) after the World Conference on Environment and Development (WCED) in its report “ Our Common Future” known as well as the “ Brundtland Report” which defined this term as “ development that meets the needs of the present without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987) quoted in Wheeler et al (2004, p. 53)In 1992 the United Nations organised the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) which was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and today it is known as “ the Rio Earth Summit”, and later, in 2002, “ the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) where were spotted the normative principles for an action plan for sustainable development for the future years to come. (Baker 2008, p. 6)But how can we ensure develop of our countries if our needs are actually destroying the capability of the future generations to meet theirs? Just one image comes to my mind; and the root cause of the environmental issues that we are facing today is the volatile growth in population without forgetting the rapid economic development in the emerging countries. Furthermore the social and political issue exceeds the obligation.

There is no perfect definition of sustainable development yet but there are a few of them that Wheeler (2004, p. 24-25) quoted on his brief of example

definitions of sustainable development: "...is development that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland Commission, 1987) "...means improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems" (World Conservation Union, 1991) "... sustainability requires at least a constant stock of natural capital, construed as the set of all environmental assets" (David Pearce, 1988) "... sustainability equals conservation plus stewardship plus restoration" (Sim Van der Ryn, 1994) "... sustainability is the fundamental root metaphor than can oppose the notion of continued exponential material growth" (Ernest Callenbach, 1992) "... sustainable development seeks... to respond to five broad requirements: (1) integration of conservation and development, (2) satisfaction of basic human needs, (3) achievement of equity and social justice, (4) provision of social self-determination and cultural diversity, and (5) maintenance of ecological integrity" (International Union for the Conservation of Nature, 1986) Many of the above definitions have shown that there are three independent areas of sustainable development which are the environmental, economic and social aspects. The definitions above the desirable concept of sustainability may be based in different ways but all seek to maintain development over time. By all means, one of the problems with the concept of sustainable development is the nonexistence of an agreed definition, or at least, a lack of agreement on the implications of that definition.

According to Baker (2008, p. 7) promoting sustainable development is about steering societal change at the interface between the social, the economic and the ecological which constitutes the three pillars of its concept. The

major aim of sustainable development is to fully utilise the goals of the three pillars which is given by the intersection of these circles shown in the Figure 1. This figure shows that an achievement balance is required between these competing needs which is not an easy task to achieve as the world is dynamic and changeable in terms of human systems and needs.

However, giving a concept about sustainable development is in itself challenging, as you can get different meanings from people with different points of view and also taking in consideration at different stages in development. In other words, it will depend on ‘ the colour of the glass you are looking through’. Planning and the three “ Es” (Environment, Economy and Equity) is what sustainability advocate with. In terms of space, “ land is a limited commodity for which there is no substitute and the loss of open space and agricultural land can be visually confirmed every day” (Wheeler 2004, p.

54) and in terms of urban development they goals are oriented to the environmental principles such as transit-oriented development, close-loop resources cycles and pollution prevention among others. (Wheeler 2004, p. 55)There are many pros and cons about the capitalist economy and the market-based from a sustainable perspective, both in theory and practice. From example, there are some valuation issues such as establishing prices on human health, equity and environment quality and also the valuation of the clean air, safe streets or attractive public spaces that no-one is paying for.

Also, the uncertain of the market on interest rates and inflation so it as a difficult task to achieve but there are some strategies that can help to restructure the capitalist economics to meet the environmental and equity as wells as economic goal. (Wheeler 2004, p. 55-56)In the case of the United Kingdom, many people can enjoy the benefits of and services that were formerly available for a few because of the growing prosperity in the country and worldwide. Also, the worst levels of industrial pollution were reduced and the UK has given a step forward to the cleaning air levels.

However, the production patterns and environmental impacts of our consumption remain serious, and its incompetent use of resources hampers the economy and hampers companies in the UK. (HM Government 2005, p. 7)Moreover, the UK has to stimulate mutual supportiveness of trade sustainable development, protection to the environment and liberalization to an international level to support developing countries. Also, another strategy is boosting competitiveness through new business models in order to deliver new products and services with lower environmental impact throughout their life cycle.

Furthermore, social and environmental concerns need to be introduced to people through educational campaigns in order to aware them their important role as citizens and consumers. (HM Government 2005, p. 7)The strategy used to achieve this in the UK has included (HM Government 2005, p. 7): 1. Reinforce British and international actions to improve performance environmental products and services, including better product design.

2. An on-going campaign to improve resource efficiency and reduce waste and harmful emissions in all business sectors, provided by the Business Resource Efficiency and Waste (BREW) (Efficiency and waste of corporate resources)<sup>3</sup>. New impetus to influence consumption patterns, including proposals for new advice to consumers<sup>4</sup>. New commitments on sustainable procurement in the public sector so that the UK is a leader within the EU for 2009<sup>5</sup>.

Support innovation for new products, materials and services<sup>6</sup>. Encourage stronger partnerships with key business sectors such as food, tourism and construction, and<sup>7</sup>. A review of our strategy in terms of waste, with growing emphasis on reducing waste at the point of origin and use of waste as a resource. The British government has committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the country. In its White Paper on Energy, 2003, the Government gave priority to a low carbon economy in its strategy of energy and agreed a long-term goal of decreasing the emissions of carbon dioxide by about 60% to about 2050, with tangible improvement to be revealed in 2020. (HM Government 2005, p.

8) A growing perception has been seen (in the last 20 years) that the current model of development is unsustainable. “ On the one hand we see the increasing burden our way of life places on the planet on which we depend” (HM Government 2005, p. 12): 1. The consequences of climate change is now inevitable<sup>2</sup>.

The growing strain on resources and environmental systems – water, earth and air – caused by the way we produce, consume and waste of resources,

and 3. Increasing loss of biodiversity, from the rainforest to the fish stocks around our coast. On the other hand, we see a world in which more than a billion people live on less than a dollar a day, more than 800 million people are undernourished and more than 2500 million people lack access to adequate sanitation. A world disfigured by poverty and inequality is not sustainable.

While growing wealth is most commonly associated with the depletion of environmental resources, extreme poverty can also make people be forced to deplete their local environment, which is why the sustainable eradication of poverty depends on the poor to have adequate access to natural resources and a healthy environment. Unless we begin to make real progress toward reconciling these contradictions, all of us, wherever we live, we face a more uncertain and less secure than we have had in the UK over the last fifty years. We have to take a decisive step towards a more sustainable development because it is right and because it suits us long term. It is what gives us the best hope for a secure future.

(HM Government 2005, p. 12) There are a series of British principles used to succeed our goal of sustainable development that have been established by the UK Government, the Northern Ireland Administration and the Welsh Assembly Government. Gather and consolidate the previously existing UK principles, adopting a holistic approach that can share five different strategies (HM Government 2005, p. 16): 1.

Living within environmental limits  
Respect the limits of the environment, resources and biodiversity of the planet – improve our environment and

ensure that the natural resources needed for life are not harmed and continue unscathed for future generations. (HM Government 2005, p. 16)<sup>1</sup>.  
Ensuring a strong society, healthy and fair  
To meet the diverse needs of all people in existing and future communities, promoting personal wellbeing, social cohesion and inclusion, and creating equal opportunities for all. (HM Government 2005, p. 16)<sup>1</sup>.

Achieving a sustainable economy  
Building a strong, stable and sustainable to provide prosperity and opportunities for all, and in which environmental and social costs are borne by those who impose them (polluter pays) and encourage the efficient use of resources. (HM Government 2005, p. 16)<sup>1</sup>.

Promote good governance  
Actively promote effective participatory systems of government at all levels of society – with creativity, energy and diversity of people. (HM Government 2005, p. 16)<sup>1</sup>.

Use responsibly sound scientific knowledge  
Ensure that policy is developed and implemented based on clear scientific evidence, whilst taking into account scientific uncertainty (through the precautionary principle) and the attitudes and values of the public. (HM Government 2005, p. 16)  
The basis of policy in the UK are the below principles, and it must respect all five principles as a whole, for a policy to be sustainable, although we recognize that some policies, despite being underpinned by the five, emphasize certain principles more than others. All compensation must be done in an explicit and transparent. We achieve our goals of living within environmental limits and a just society, and we will do through a sustainable economy, good governance and sound scientific knowledge.

(HM Government 2005, p. 17)“ The UK’s international priorities in sustainable development Sustainable Development Strategy adopted in the UK in 1999 have been framed primarily by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Doha Development Round, the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). These were based on previously existing commitments, including the 1992 Rio Summit and other international processes such as the Multilateral Environmental Agreements” (HM Government 2005, p. 18)The outcomes of the WSSD complement the MDGs reinforce Doha and Monterrey agreements and global goals and targets have arduous in terms of access to sanitation, water, increasing energy efficiency modern and use of renewable energy, fisheries and forestry exploitation sustainable reduction of biodiversity loss on land and in the oceans, chemical management, and environmental impoverishment decoupling of economic growth, i. e. sustainable patterns of consumption and production.

(HM Government 2005, p. 18)UK’s International commitments should be followed closely and implemented as a matter of urgency. This should be done by solving the international impact of our national policies and work with developed and developing countries, and international institutions, to disseminate best practices and maintaining political pressure for change. The British government is working within the United Nations system and with international financial institutions to promote a coordinated approach to environmental challenges, social and economic. (HM Government 2005)The UK continues to work with other states to strengthen the United Nations

Environment Programme (UNEP), whose mandate is to promote the environmental dimension in the entire United Nations system. (HM Government 2005)The UK is playing an active role in discussions on strengthening the regional environmental governance, such as the UNEP proposed to be transferred to a specialized institution of the United Nations.

(HM Government 2005)Summarising the key issues relating to sustainability and sustainable development, the last one should not be handled in isolation as is a challenge for people around the world in order to ensure that the balance between the environment, economy and equity is achieved whilst the environment is also properly cared for our future generations. Although the definition remains vague and between different perspectives, issues concerning about sustainable development are complex with the struggling of needs and interests. We should give a step forward and respond to this challenge and therefore achieve the correct balance to make a better life for present and future generations. The pressures and need for urban development should be made treating with caution the issues and problems that arise with it for the progress.

The spatial planning regulation in the UK attempts to achieve its goals by the implementation of several strategies to reach the sustainable stage.

However, one of the most important considerations is the fact that future generation will need resources to survive and the best policy to achieve it would be recycling and reusing the existing resources in the best way possible. The world requires a new ideology to achieve the economic development and the preservation of the environment in order to realise the sustainable development. There are many ways in which developers can

minimise the harm to the environment through an environmental impact assessment which analyse how the development will affect the environment and try to avoid at all means. Also, the introduction of a well proper and design plan which considers the environmental issues will mean to find any other alternatives less risky to the environment.

The developers are the key to success but it hard for them to keep them interested in developing sustainable places as the profits are committed with their costs. Other policies should encourage them to invest their money in creating quality spaces for people as the physical looks of the development should create a positive atmosphere for future developments on the area.