



Sustainability Revamping Systems

NEWSLETTER

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The *Sustainability Revamping Systems*, network and on-line platform, promote participation in sustainable development processes:

- through the evolution, dissemination and mainstreaming of methods and tools in sustainability policy and strategies
- by increasing networking, collaboration and partnership between partners and decision makers
- addressing commitments and requirements of projects carried out at European and local levels



SUSTAINABLE LIFE
DEVELOPMENT (SLD)

The handbook produced by the AWARDS project introduces the Sustainable Life Development (SLD) approach and the associated methods and tools.

Chapter 1 is focused on the driving factors of Life, Sustainability and Sustainable Development. Several colleagues suggest that the concepts of development and growth should be developed further.

In the present newsletter, we provide additional references with both theoretical (definitions) and operational (indicators) implications.

While paving the way for an eventual update of the handbook, these references integrate several approaches of the *Sustainability Revamping Systems*.

The following paragraphs illustrate the distinction between the concept of development and that of growth, expanding on the dynamics that connect them.

ECOSYSTEM, ECONOMY, ECOLOGY

The confusion between growth and development has grown in Western culture, especially in the last two centuries. This confusion has greatly influenced many other cultures and regions of the world.

The risk of reducing the availability of natural resources in relation to production and consumption rates was underestimated, i.e. economic thought prevailed upon environmental thought.

To put this in context, it is useful to explore the meanings of economy, ecology and ecosystem, formed by the Greek terms "oikos" (home), "nomia" (set of norms), "logos" (reasoning, discourse) and "synistemi" (to put together).

Human beings establish rules for management (economy) according to values (ecology) that bring together all the components, human and non-human, of the common house (ecosystem). As a result, the weaker the ecological thought, the higher the risk that human activities compromise the ecosystem.

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Further information on the initiatives quoted in this newsletter can be found in the web site of *Sustainability Revamping Systems*:
<http://www.srseuropa.eu/eng/SRSystem.php>

All persons who become member of the network of *Sustainability Revamping Systems* have free access to its tools, including a demo of customised on-line systems, while the general public is permitted to download the associated examples.

GROWTH

Growth consists in the increase of goods and services (e.g. environmental, productive, technological, social, cultural and health) through human activities.

Growth is quantitative as it takes into account the amount of goods and services over a given time and from a specific ecosystem. It is therefore possible to measure their increase or reduction over time.

The general belief in a linear and continuous growth without limits is the highest risk to natural ecosystems, which have exhaustible resources and services.

DEVELOPMENT

Development consists in the pursuit of values and beliefs necessary for life (e.g. equity and social inclusion, unity and diversity, democracy and justice, freedom and solidarity, environmental integrity and diversity) through norms and ways of acting.

The sharing of values, beliefs, norms and ways of acting is the essence of culture as a set of individual and collective choices (self-organization) that affect the conditions of belonging to a specific ecosystem (local citizenship).

The integration of different cultures, even those conflicting, is the essence of civilization as a set of choices (co-evolution) that affect the conditions of belonging to the Earth ecosystem (global citizenship).

Development is qualitative. Taking into account the orientation towards values and beliefs in a given time and ecosystem, it is possible to assess their translation in norms and actions, as well as their impact over time on the concerned ecosystem.

The human capacity to consciously manage development is the greatest guarantee for the ecosystem, when directed towards maintaining natural resources and services necessary for present and future generations.

The universal definition of sustainable development derives from that assumption: "a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"(1).

(1) WCDED, *Our Common Future*, Oxford University Press, 1987

DEVELOPMENT VISIONS

Buddhist economics (2) focuses on a *Right Livelihood*: simplicity and not violence, consumption and production aimed at meeting human needs through a wise utilisation of all the resources (*good thinking, right understanding and right thought*).

(2) Schumacher E. F., *Small is beautiful*, Abacus Sphere Books, 1974
http://ethics.bkai.hu/html/buddhist_index.htm

In Hindu philosophy (3) the term *dharma* means a way of life based on harmony between humanity and nature, equity and brotherhood, freedom of thought and wisdom, mutual understanding.

(3) <http://hinduism.iskcon.com/practice/700.htm>

The philosophy of Gandhi (4) pursues the welfare of all living beings in harmony with nature (*sarvodaya*), based on freedom, self-government and self-rule (*swaraj*), through independence, self-confidence and reliance on endogenous resources, commitment and solidarity towards the immediate neighbours (*swadeshi*); a philosophy that echoes principles of Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, as well as Christianity and Islam.

(4) <http://www.mkgandhi-sarvodaya.org>
<http://www.kigs.org>
<http://gandhifoundation.org>

In Bhutan (5) development is understood as happiness, a holistic view of quality of life as a public good whose progress depends on the flourishing of the relationships between humanity and the other components of ecosystems.

(5) <http://www.pc.gov.bt>

Ibn Khaldun (6) analysed the dynamic process of social systems using Arabic words that are usually understood and translated as prosperity, flourishing and promoting life (*umran*) for social solidarity and harmony (*asabiyyah*).

(6) <http://www.isidore-of-seville.com/bnkhaldun>
<http://home.online.no/~al-araki/index.html#>
<http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/ik/Muqaddimah/>

In the Fulbe communities of West Africa, the "living well together" (*baamtare*) is based on solidarity, social harmony and personal fulfilment (7).

(7) <http://www.sodefitex.sn>

Amartya Sen (8) states that development is a process of expanding the real freedoms that human beings enjoy to shape their own destiny, help each other, make choices and to act reasonably also in relation to allocating resources, such as the natural resources, which are "public goods" (goods enjoyed in common).

(8) Sen A., *Development as Freedom*, Oxford University Press, 1999

Edgar Morin (9) argues that a policy of civilization is needed which is based on solidarity among human beings, between them and the other components of the Earth ecosystem. He underlines the need for the metamorphosis of the concept of development in that of "flourishing" to overcome the traditional technoeconomic thinking of growth that affects the approaches on sustainable development.

(9) Morin E., *L'An I de l'Ère écologique. La Terre dépend de l'homme qui dépend de la Terre*, Édition Tallandier, 2007; *Vers l'abîme?*, Editions de L'Herme, 2007

The 2008 Ecuador Constitution (10) celebrates the Mother Earth (*Pacha Mama*), in which human beings belong and that is vital to their existence. This Constitution is geared towards building a new form of coexistence, in diversity and in harmony with nature, to reach the "good living" (*sumak kawsay*). A democratic society that respects, in all its dimensions, the dignity of individuals and of society; a democratic country committed to peace and solidarity with all peoples of the Earth.

(10) http://www.asambleaconstituyente.gov.ec/index.php?option=com_content&Itemid=127&id=16175&task=view

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT (11)

Growth may occur (e.g. income and consumption) without development (e.g. unequal income distribution, poverty and pollution). Likewise, development may occur (e.g. better environmental and health conditions) without growth or with de-growth (e.g. absence of or reduction in production and consumption that are harmful to the environment and living beings).

(11) Latouche S., *Petit traité de la décroissance sereine*, Mille et une nuits, département de la Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2007

<http://www.decroissance.org/>
<http://www.decrescita.it/index.php>
<http://haribey.u-bordeaux4.fr/>

Rist G., *History of Development*, Zed Books, 2008
Sklair L., *The Sociology of Progress*, Routledge, 2007

INDICATORS

The conventional indicator for measuring economic growth is GDP, gross domestic product, that sums all monetary transactions for products and services without distinguishing between costs and benefits for mankind and the environment, between destructive and creative activities as far as resource availability is concerned.

As Robert Kennedy declared in March 1968 (12): "Gross national product counts air pollution and cigarette advertising, and ambulances to clear our highways of carnage. It counts special locks for our doors and the jails for the people who break them. It counts the destruction of the redwood and the loss of our natural wonder in chaotic sprawl. It counts napalm and counts nuclear warheads and armoured cars for the police to fight the riots in our cities. It counts Whitman's rifle and Speck's knife, and the television programs which glorify violence in order to sell toys to our children. Yet the gross national product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages, the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials. It measures neither our wit nor our courage, neither our wisdom nor our learning, neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country, it measures everything in short, except that which makes life worthwhile".

(12) <http://www.jfklibrary.org/Historical+Resources/Archives/Reference+Desk/Speeches/RFK/RFKSpeech68Mar18UKansas.htm>

Indicators used to measure development generally incorporate social and environmental dimensions into the economic ones in the proper sense.

The Human Development (HDI), Human Poverty (HPI) and Gender-related development (GDI) indices (13) combine GDP and income per capita with parameters related to health (e.g. life expectancy at birth) and knowledge (e.g. adult literacy rate and enrolment ratio).

(13) <http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev/hdi/>

The Sustainable Human Development Index (SHDI) extends the HDI with components concerning the environmental impact of human activities (14).

(14) <http://ideas.repec.org/p/rtr/wpaper/0041.html>

The Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI) and the National Welfare Index (NWI) derive from the Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW).

While these systems are somewhat different (in methods of calculation, components and data sources), they follow a common approach, that being to take into account income-inequality, to make additions to account for the non-market benefits (e.g. volunteer time, housework, parenting and other socially productive time uses), to make deductions to account for costs due to environmental damages (e.g. various types of pollution, greenhouse, reduction in or loss of natural and energy resources) and damages to health (e.g. road accidents, crime, commuting, under-employment, loss of leisure time) (15).

(15) Daly H.E. and Cobb J.B., *For the Common Good*, Beacon Press, 1989
http://www.rprogress.org/sustainability_indicators/about_sustainability_indicators.htm
<http://www.neweconomics.org/gen/>
<http://www.beyond-gdp.eu/>

The European Union Sustainable Development Indicators (SDI) concern 10 themes: socio-economic development, sustainable consumption and production, social inclusion, demographic change, public health, climate change and energy, sustainable transport, natural resources, global partnerships, good governance (16).

(16) http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=1998,66119021,1998_66292168&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

The Ecological Footprint calculation considers the demand for natural resources, expressed in the area required to produce them according to the consumption rate of the associated population (hectares per person). The ecological footprint is compared with the biocapacity of the concerned ecosystem. The biocapacity measures the supply of natural resources, expressed in the area available to regenerate them and to absorb wastes (hectares per person). This comparison shows, for example, how many Earths would be required to support the current lifestyle of the world population (17).

(17) <http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/>

The Happy Planet Index (HPI) correlates three indicators (ecological footprint, self-assessment of life-satisfaction, life expectancy) to show the ecological efficiency with which the countries of the world use natural resources for human well-being (18).

(18) <http://www.happyplanetindex.org/>

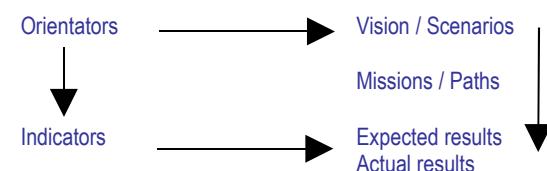
The Gross National Happiness (GNH) uses indicators to 9 themes (standard of living, health, education, environmental resilience and diversity, cultural vitality and diversity, time use, good governance, community vitality, psychological well-being) to manage the space - time interdependencies between the components of ecosystems (19).

(19) <http://www.pc.gov.bt/default.asp>

DEFINITION OF DEVELOPMENT

The above-mentioned examples demonstrate evolution, convergence and divergence of the development concepts. Dialogue between these concepts implies a new definition of development, e.g.: ***Development is the process whereby human beings use their knowledge, understanding and capacity to improve the quality of the ecosystems with which they interact, including the other components of nature.***

Indicators may be used to follow the dynamics of this process. The indicators serve to make visible what is happening in a given context (spatial and temporal) and to assess any change process. Orientors, therefore, are needed to identify the indicators. Orientors serve to determine the directions of development by anticipating and creating change according to values and visions that concern styles of life, production and consumption.



As change-agents and "eyeglasses", orientors change over time and space, also in conflict with indicators when the latter become watchdogs of lifestyles which are no longer deemed acceptable.