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## Basics of sustainable development

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# Basics of Sustainable Development<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract** *Contemporary preoccupations for this issue stay relatively new, here included in the literature. Roughly, there can be figured out some initiation in the historical moment in which development itself, as effective, equally started being opposite to natural environment and to human individual's life condition or, even more properly when humanity was getting aware of such a new fact. Or, development becoming sustained when not affecting environment only will find here below its conceptual and historical basics, namely in both authors' views and community's approaches. The last part of this below lines will refer to Romania's undertaking in the area.*

**Key words** Development, regional development, sustainable development, types of regions, Euro-regions

**JEL Codes:** Q01

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## 1. Introduction

It was in early seventies that the "Club of Rome" drawn for the first time the international attention that economic development might become worse than previously thought through affecting environment and so the human community. Naturally, the human conscience didn't react too quickly about such an event, but it finally did it and so ecology has got today fashion and any business has no future without. After 2000s, development requires to be equally sustained.

## 2. Literature review

Since Tinbergen (1954) that was a "Club of Rome's" co-founder, ecology and sustained development ideas have grown strengthened and after 2000s plenty of authors acceded to. Our references are large from authors like Paul Krugman, Winifried Lang, Brown Lester and Thomas Allen to others like Maria Barsan, Dinu Marin and collabortors, Diaconescu Mirela, Ion Igant and Ilie Gradinaru, at least for recent contributions. Otherwise, the last part of this paper refers to Romania's developments.

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### 3. Methodology of research

Historical analysis and synthesis here come together with accounting and descriptions of individual industrial activities with their environmental consequences' specific. Concomitantly, the true science of environment is born and specific policies get here expected.

### 4. Conceptual approach

Despite the above mentioned, recent preoccupation' for this topic, just believing that the most highly appropriate introduction for such a debate might come from a reflection of the famous Thomas Jefferson, pronounced as early as in September 1789, meaning that when the world was staying far enough from the present environment jeopardising. I can say, says the US' Constitution author, that the earth belongs to each successive generation as entirely but limiting to its lifetime, the way that none of generations might be allowed to indebt more than she can afford to repay it as such. The human conscience so might account a sustained development strictly referred to either, the earth' – and economics at least indirectly understands it as totality of natural resources –, or to long and very long time terms, as the ones attributed to generations, since 1789.

#### 4.1. What does it mean „sustained“?

As continuing from the above subparagraph, this “sustained” term etymology goes towards the latin subtenir that actually means something about “blotting/keeping” and “bottom-up sustaining”, this last as proper to local people around (Martin 1995). There are places in the world that reunite physical, cultural and spiritual characteristics and so indirectly inspire people to stay more attached to their community; the same for strengthening sustainability.

Besides, it is even more interesting finding the same term come out of the forestry activity. Here there are procedures assuming production capacity and vivid wood in an equilibrium ratio the way that the highest production on the long term does not affect the current wood living stock. This is wood harvesting no more than what stays concomitantly possible to replant. Finally, this is a principle to be extended on all natural resources and ecosystems, here including domains of activity and then sustained development gets at least three specific terms that are: ecological equilibrium, economic security and even social equity.

Back to forestry, it is of two level symbols. First, forestry associates with sustained development on the (long) time dimension here underlined above by Thomas Jefferson. The second reference level is the tree-symbol for the long-time measured. Finally, citing the president of “Context Institute”, Mr. Robert Gilman's worlds, ... sustained development regards the capacity of any social entity, ecosystem and

appropriates to go on working, i.e. saving key resources, (even) when uncertain future... this is the very emergency doctrine through which development and progress ought to stand against time, as ecologically required, i.e. through human and job interfering with biosphere, physical and chemical laws in control.'

#### 4.2. The generation issue

Would Thomas Jefferson, mentioned above, be accepted as parent of the, sustained development' notion, the same for its becoming a ,generations business' rather than ,nature-business' or ecology in the human activity and nature. In context, the most appropriate definition for development that is sustained would be that development satisfying current needs through not stopping the further generations to do the same, i.e. satisfy their own (specific) needs. Grădinaru (2004) strengthens that sustained development primary assumes economic and social aiming always combined with ecological ones, then the welfare base relationship between successive generations. The conceptual exigency of the same sustained development then requires the current needs' revising for not affecting future generations' possession and possibilities, be all these economic security, shelter, food, education, free space, political representation, contacting nature and so on for all generations.

#### 4.3. Nature and ecology

Then there are two more ideas that nearly automatically associate. Nature brings in the ecological dimension of human activity, whereas forestry again does the same with diverse systems in specific equilibrium, as the example of equilibrium between natural and social environments. This way, sustained development further identifies a totality of forms and methods of which's base consists in the equilibrium between social-economic systems and natural capital components. And that whereas initially the same was aiming a solution to the ecological crisis, the last as the result of intensive industrial exploitation of natural resources causing environmental degradation and currently rather extends on life quality, as a complex economic and social issue. Shortly, sustained development equals remaking equilibrium of all problems, be they social, economic and environmental impact ones.

Actually, there are rather contrary precedents, in which life quality improving initiatives and efforts resulted rather into environment spoiling. Moreover, climate changing induces forestry wastes, pollution degree increase and it becomes increasingly relevant that environment needs higher focus in order to avoid the too high price to pay once in such a context; the one of losing the same environment's support for living. Now ecology includes lowering non-renewable resources' use, e.g. of oil and natural gas, a use that boosts pollution against natural systems. Ruckelshaus (1989) notices that it is

pretty recently that industrial development and environment protection were becoming, antagonic processes'.

Sustained development searches for a stable framework for decision taken in all human-environment relationship circumstance, in which context environment enlarges its meaning from natural to economic and social ones. Then, it aims chasing all differences in resources accessing by poor communities, susceptible to grow marginalized, and by future generations that try to ensure to every nation the opportunity of developing according to its own social and cultural values set requirements without disturbing other generations from exerting similar opportunities and rights. In such an order, sustained development's meaning stretches from a behavioral attitude face to environment to a conceptual one face to all: economy, society and even politics.

Economically, key points of sustained development are environment's pollution diminution and natural resources' productivity, the last viewed as more products and services coming out of an equivalent unit of resources spent. Socially, sustained development aims equity of opportunities distribution between generations. The most appropriate link between the last two, economic and social, standpoints might be a high level of employment and of the quality of this.

Politically, changes are the most expected, e.g. defining objectives, measures taking for putting them into practice, steps taking in such an order, all these through considering people, groups, associations and so on.

#### 4.4. Related polemics

In the zone of ideas, Allen and Thomas (1992) expose three approaches for the sustained development: the liberal one, the popular one and the interventionist one, that are detailed here below.

(1) Neoliberal approach – also called 'environment's accounting – sees environment as, natural capital'. Services provided by – alternatively classified as free goods and natural resources and including water, air, soil and subsoil, the last including its specific deposits – are depending in the long run on their preserving, plus some renewal specific capabilities. The liberally thought capital – as a whole, here including natural capital -- is also able to reduce and/or be wasted. It keeps its value, as well, and natural capital makes no exception in such a respect despite its free goods appearance – this might result from costs implied by their maintenance. Though, difficulties remain since not only such accounting, but equally since the need of repeated evaluations in successive generations' times.

(2) Popular approach – as appropriate to 'sustainable communities' in the specific slang – sees the economic activity (i.e. production and trade) directed to local needs' interest, together with sustainable development itself. But this is exactly what creates the specific difficulty to this approach, i.e. in such a view sustained development gets far

from all widespread and globalizing acquiring. In practice, local communities would be able either to stand against large industrial development, or to produce wastes and externalities never being solved or renewed at their own scales.

(3) Interventionist approach rather emphasises the international cooperation on the issue, here seeing international conferences and treaties on the environmental regime and fighting the bad influence of industrial states at the international scale etc.

## **5. Conclusions about the sustained development pillars for Romania**

Four such pillars were here below considered as combining the international understanding with the National Strategy as such in Romania: economic pillar, together with the social, environmental and cultural-educational ones.

### **5.1. The economic pillar**

Economic targets of the sustained development are rather interested in economic disparities reducing between Romania and developed countries. Actions in this sense are related to modern and efficient industrial development, modernized agriculture, development of services sector, reducing the extreme poverty and certainly disparities reducing in the region. The private sector strengthening, together with the private-public partnerships are here deeply considered.

Promoting efficient restructuring policies to the economy requires development and modernizing their infrastructures and their connection to the modern European and world systems. It is here to talk about transport ways, energy transport and distribution, brand new electric power stations non-polluting, but even a management like the one of city drinkable water feeding or, on the contrary, of irrigations and processing used waters, plus telecommunications and information technology.

### **5.2. The social pillar**

The social dimension of Romania's sustained development needs to base on a local social model, certainly compatible with its European counterpart. This is concretely thinking about national and social solidarity, social equity and justice, here including poverty fighting, i.e. all the more for the extreme one and for the effects of social polarizing concomitantly with increasing employment. In social terms, sustained development implies compatibility achieved between economic efficiency and profit, directly resulting from the market competition, on the one hand, and justice and social equity, on the other, as human values. Lastly, the aim of all policies corroborated is life quality improving for all and the tool of this would be at least the economic growth.

Middle class is equally required to be promoted in context, namely a sustainability component for development and social equilibrium and against social polarizing. Individuals must be protected when these. Social and environmental policies lie with

the central role of sustained development. Besides, taxation relaxing comes for stimulating both savings and investment of all individuals, households and organisations and so is viewed as priory. Such agendas are likely to work together with reducing number of taxes.

### 5.3. The environmental pillar

It is not even necessary to remind the importance of the environment problematic. Recall that the first alarm came 35 years ago from the scientific community pointing on the industrial civilisation – environment conflict created, i.e. the report of the Club of Rome. This report was highlighting:

(a) Quantitatively: trend of natural resources' exhausting for food, raw materials and energy;

(b) Qualitatively: physical and chemical deterioration (pollution) of environment factors, as individually, e.g. water, air and soil, that recommends economic growth to stop, i.e. the "zero growth" alternative.

Lester Brown (2001) has the merit of having defined the sustained development concept for the first time from the ambiental point of view. He advocates changing the relationship between economy and environment. Economists see the environment as an economic subsystem, whereas ecologists see exactly the opposite of the same terms. That is why the author prefers the two camps agree each other for a 'new economy' called even, 'eco-economy' the way that it ought to get bearable for the environment.

Besides, the environment is global by its aspiration and tendency the way that development strategies require their correlation with environment agendas of all States of the world.

### 5.4. The cultural and educational pillar

Education and culture might be seen as a key-element of improving quality and creativity of human capital. This is the factor of production with the highest weight in the economic growth model equation. One of results consists in the increasing role and priority for the national education system's contribution to the targeted period policies implemented. Then, there come the (today) young people, as both main beneficiaries and contributors for the Strategy in debate. And it is to be reviewed the current and, unfortunately, anachronistic system of accessing education by and in the order dictated by individual cash resources.

Besides education and its system, an important place of the "new economy" gets filled by cultural goods, as symbolic goods. Traditions have to be either prioritized as national cultural inheritance, or put into value as internationally in our use. And real

particularities come on the Romania's position worldwide, i.e. for local crafts and handicraft that could act for the last's good improvement.

Some people believe that here around might equally be the security pillar for the same sustainability. In their recent report on "The Environment Future", first page, the United States seem to recognize that, war did change national priorities in favour of the inside security and chasing international terrorist organizations'. Here the question is whether so sustained development could be really dethroned. In our view, things are much different than such an idea: sustained development, as solved problem, would rather be able to reduce social anxiety and so the international terrorist danger. On the contrary, when increasing number of young people anxious because pure state and impossibility of passing over it, anti-American and anti-Western ideologies and hate would easy come up as the most dangerous and explosive social combination.

In the present complicate context, sustained development shouldn't ever become a topic to be added or wiped out of all States' agendas.

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