

# Sustainability and Social Innovation

Week 11

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# Sustainability – the concept

- Sustainability for what?
- Introduced as a means for handling the type of problems concerning the deteriorating relationship between our global ecology and an ongoing economic development (Chiesa et al., 1999)
- On the contrary, sustainability is ill – defined, not defined or contradictorily defined (Phillis and Andriantiatsaholiniana, 2001)

# Sustainability – the concept

- Indicates a relationship between a (sustainable) artefact and its environment that exists indefinitely
- Also refers to equilibrium between an artefact and its supporting environment
- Can also be viewed as a predicate
- Therefore, more precise analysis necessary about the characteristics of the artefact

# Sustainability – the concept

- Not exactly new concept
- Evolution affected by different ‘intellectual and political streams of thought that have molded concepts of sustainability’ (Kidd, 1992)
- Different streams of thoughts touched upon
  - Environmental
  - Social
  - Business

# The Environmental discourse

- Concerned with the relationship between human and nature
- Used widely in relation to environmental problems ()
- UN conference on Human Environment 1972
  - 26 principles mostly addressing environmental concerns
  - Carrying concept (Riddell, 1981; WRI/IIED, 1986)
  - Vehicle for creation of UN Environmental Programme

# The Social Discourse

- Key determinants
  - Social justice
  - Distributive justice
  - Equality of conditions
- Also associated with the notion of social responsibility in the context of corporations

# The Business Discourse

- Capitalism and its destructive tendencies are manifest through its greatest creation – the corporation (Gray, 2010)
- Not only eco – efficiency but eco – effectiveness as well (Braungart and McDonough, 1998) and sufficiency (Schumacher, 1973)
- In terms of profitability, productivity and financial performance and also in terms of managing environmental and social assets
- ‘Meeting the needs of a firm’s direct and indirect stakeholders without compromising its ability to meet the needs of future stakeholders as well’ (Dyllick and Hockerts (2002)

- CSR refers to ‘businessmen’s decisions and actions taken for reasons at least partially beyond the firm’s direct economic or technical aspect (Davis, 1960)
- ‘Social responsibility in the final analysis implies a public posture toward society’s economic and human resources, as a willingness to see that those resources are used for broad social ends and not simply for the narrowly circumscribed interests of private persons and firms’ (Frederick, 1960)

# Definitions of Sustainability

- Sustainable development is defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (1987, p. 8) as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”

# Definitions of Sustainability

- ...properly designed environmental standards can trigger innovations that lower the total cost of a product or improve its value. Such innovations allow companies to use a range of inputs more productively – from raw materials to energy to labour thus offsetting the costs of improving environmental impact and ending the stalemate. Ultimately this enhanced *resource productivity* makes companies more competitive, not less (Porter and Van der Linde, 1995, p. 20).

# Aspects of Sustainability

- Artefact
  - Concerned about the tangibility of the artefact to which sustainability is attributed
  - Example: sustainable health care – distinction between entity and construct
- Goal orientation: absolute – relative
  - Point of reference used in determination of whether an artefact is sustainable
  - Continuum with two extremes – non sustainable and sustainable
- Behavioral interaction – static – dynamic
  - Deals with the link between dynamics of the artefact and the environment

# 1997 Kyoto Conference on Climate change

- Represented by Millennium Development Goals
- Established in 2000 for the period 2000 – 2015
- Focused on a set of rights and needs
  - Poverty
  - Health and discrimination

# Challenges

- Integrated sustainability advocated by academics, institutions and cross-country initiatives
- Implications and challenges involved in implementing this integration have received little attention
- Sustainability is not only a complex and elusive notion, but one which is fraught with potential contradictions (Gray, 2010)
- Example: financial and social dimensions of sustainability from the company perspective against addressing social performance is good for financial performance (Boyd et al, 2009; Orlitzky et al., 2003)

# Background of SDGs

- Adopted by all United Nations members states in 2015
- Known as The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- A total of 17 Sustainable development goals
- Call for action by all countries – developed and developing
- Adoption of major agreements
  - Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (March 2015)
  - Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development (July 2015)
  - 17 SDGs adopted (September 2015)
  - Paris Agreement on Climate Change (December 2015)

United Nations. (n.d.). *The 17 goals | sustainable development*. United Nations. Retrieved November 18, 2022, from <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

# History of SDGs

- June 1992 – more than 178 countries adopted Agenda 21 at the Earth summit
- Millennium Development Goals adopted in September 2000
- Eight goals adopted to reduce extreme poverty by 2015
- 2002 – World Summit on Sustainable Development reaffirmed the commitment to poverty eradication and the environment
- June 2012 – Rio +20 adopted outcome document ‘The Future We Want’

United Nations. (n.d.). *The 17 goals | sustainable development*. United Nations. Retrieved November 18, 2022, from <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

# The 17 goals

1. No poverty
2. Zero hunger
3. Good health and well being
4. Quality education
5. Gender equality
6. Clean water and sanitation
7. Affordable and clean energy
8. Decent work and economic growth
9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure

United Nations. (n.d.). *The 17 goals / sustainable development*. United Nations. Retrieved November 18, 2022, from <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

# The 17 goals

10. Reduced inequalities

11. Sustainable cities and communities

12. Responsible consumption and production

13. Climate action

14. Life below water

15. Life on land

16. Peace, justice and strong institutions

17. Partnerships for the goals

United Nations. (n.d.). *The 17 goals | sustainable development*. United Nations. Retrieved November 18, 2022, from <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

# Key Takeaways

- Sustainability is interlinked with Social Innovation
- A clear approach to finding solutions regarding root cause of social problems
- Not perfect but gradually has become a benchmark with factual indicators

# For the next session

- Detailed discussion on the goals
- Targets within goals
- SDGs and social innovation

# References

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Thank You !!!