

Sustainability and Policy: Past, Present, and Outlook

Sustainability and Policy

Policy =

- 📄 1.a., Prudence or wisdom in the management of affairs;
- 📄 1.b., management or procedure based primarily on material interest.

Sustainability and Policy

- 📄 2.a., a definite course or method of action selected from alternatives and in light of given conditions to guide and determine present and future decisions;
- 📄 2.b., a high-level overall plan embracing the overall goals and acceptable procedures, esp. of a governmental body.

Sustainability and Policy

Environmental Policies that are:

prudent and wise,

based primarily on material interest,

selected from alternative strategies in light of
the future,

and presented in a plan that takes into account
overall goals.

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

What is it?

Is it possible?

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“Sustainable Development is meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

World Commission on Environment and
Development (WCED) - 1987

WCED Definition contains two key concepts:

- ☞ The concept of “needs,” in particular the essential needs of the world’s poor, to which priority should be given; and
- ☞ The idea of limitations - imposed by the state of technology and social organization - on the environment’s ability to meet present and future needs. Thus . . .

. . .the goal of economic and social development must be defined in terms of sustainability in all countries and implies a concern for social equity between and within each generation.

Sustainable Development as Commonly Understood:

- ☞ Concept is anthropocentric - focused on the human species. Ethical question of value of other species is ignored.
- ☞ Concept is ambiguous and impossible to operationalize.

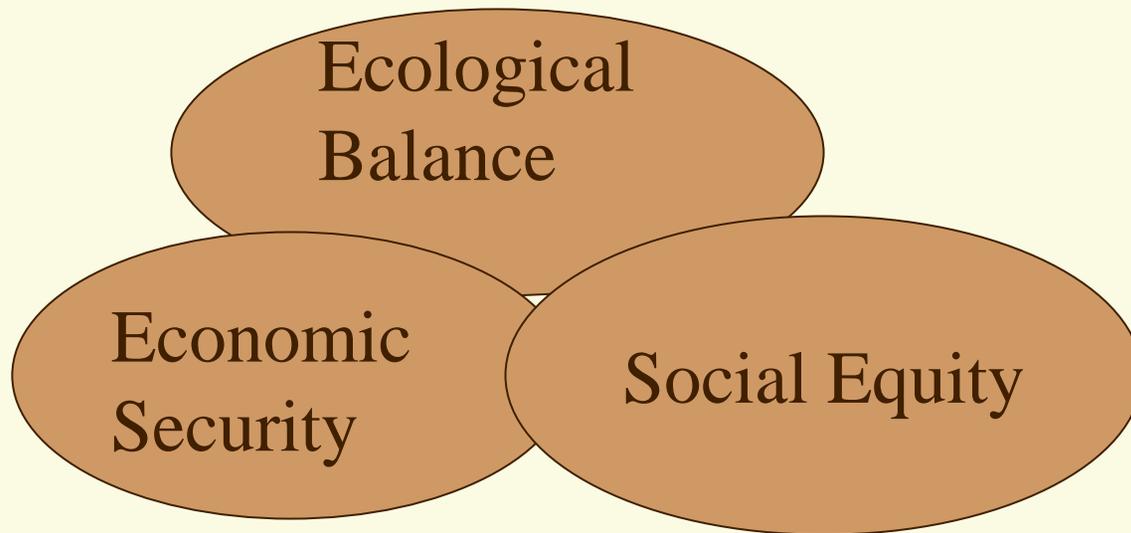
Sustainable Development as Commonly Understood :

- ☰ Concept of a sustainable subsystem in an unsustainable global system is fundamentally oxymoronic
- ☰ Concepts like “sustainable community,” “sustainable firm,” “sustainable product” must be seen as generic indications of goodwill toward environmental issues, not an achieved end state.

Sustainable Development as Commonly Understood

- ☰ Sustainability must be a characteristic of the global system as a whole, including human activity in its totality and the underlying biological, chemical and physical systems.
- ☰ Sustainability requires: ecological balance, economic security, and social equity across generations.

Components of Sustainability



Sustainable Development is ...

... that level of human activity
that can be continued indefinitely without
diminishing the capacity of the biosphere
to support life or assimilate waste.