

TOWARD SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: *From Theory to Praxis*

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"Sustainable development" has become something of a "buzzword" in development circles. Indeed, sustainable development appears to have replaced such venerable concepts as "growth," "modernization," "progress" and even "accelerated development" as the unifying concept for worldwide development activities. Only the concept of "human development," that currently is being promulgated by the UNDP (UNDP, 1992), represents a serious challenge to the primacy of sustainable development in the new hierarchy of development concepts.

To view the sustainable development "movement" as only a passing fad or as yet another feeble effort to capture the imagination of development policy makers, however, is to miss both the power of the concept. The fact is that the sustainable development has succeeded in uniting widely divergent theoretical and ideological perspectives into a single conceptual framework. The concept has also succeeded in exciting the imaginations of development specialists and lay persons alike, especially with regard to the positive outcomes that can be achieved through a carefully implemented plan of local and global action. And the concept has succeeded, even more remarkably, in animating governmental leaders, development policy makers and others to enter into formal agreements that seek to both promote socioeconomic development and protect the environment.

My view is that the sustainable development concept represents a fundamental and lasting contribution to development theory and practice. In this paper I will: 1) define what is meant by sustainable development; 2) identify the various intellectual and empirical traditions associated with the concept's development; 3) clarify the concept's underlying values and goals; 4) identify the major intervention strategies associated with sustainable development practice; and 5) briefly discuss several

of the lingering uncertainties associated with the concept's continuing evolution. Finally, I will briefly outline my own evolving agenda for worldwide sustainable development.

TOWARD SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Credit for originating the "sustainable development" concept is generally given to the 1987 report of World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987).¹ Popularly referred to as the Brundtland Commission,² the Commission's report, *Our Common Future: From One Earth to One World*, called for emboldened and dramatically new conceptions of development that advanced the material wants of the present generation *without* depriving future generations of the resources required to satisfy their needs. Thus, the Commission conceptualized "sustainable development" rather simply as

paths of human progress which meet the needs and aspirations of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

¹ The concept itself, however, was first used by the Swiss-based World Conservation Union (IUCN) in their 1980 report on *World Conservation Strategy: Living Resource Conservation for Sustainable Development*. The interdependence argument advanced by the IUCN was much the same as that expressed by the Brundtland Commission but the report itself failed to receive the extraordinary attention that surrounded the Commission's report.

² After Gro Harlem Brundtland, Prime Minister of Norway and Chair of the World Commission on Environment and Development.

The Commission's approach to sustainable development emphasized the need for new conceptions of global development that: 1) took cognizance of the fact that social and environmental problems are interconnected; 2) recognized that environmental stresses are not restricted to particular locales or geographic boundaries; 3) recognized that environmental catastrophes experienced in one world region, in the end, affects the well-being of people everywhere; and 4) recognized that only through sustainable approaches to development could the planet's fragile ecosystems be protected and the aims of human development be furthered.

Throughout its report the Commission advanced the argument that sustainable development could only occur under conditions that reflected the realistic limits and "carrying capacity" of a finite planet (Williams, 1989; Wheeler, 1992). Both in the Commission's report and elsewhere Brundtland drew attention to the intimate and inseparable relationship that exists between poverty, development and environmental un-sustainability (Brundtland, 1989):

The gross mismanagement of our planet has much to do with an inequitable distribution of the benefits of development. Perpetuating this inequity can only mean a continuing drawdown on the world's natural resources and the environment. After a century of unprecedented growth, marked by scientific and technological triumphs that would have been unthinkable a century ago, there have never been so many poor, illiterate and unemployed people in the world, and their number is growing. Close to a billion people live in poverty and squalor, a situation that leaves them little choice but to go on undermining the conditions of life itself, the environment and the natural resource base.

The Need for a New Development Paradigm

The need for a new development paradigm was widely recognized by the mid-1980s. By then, the United Nations had already declared the second and third of its Development Decades a failure, especially in their inability to halt the cycle of poverty that existed in the world's poorest and slowest developing countries. Further, the conditioned loan policies of the World Bank and the International Monetary

Fund--in combination with patterns of development assistance provided through various bi-lateral and other arrangements--succeeded, in the main, in plunging already impoverished countries into even deeper debt.³ Thus, the combination of high debt, slow economic growth, and rapidly increasing poverty exacerbated the profound levels of human suffering that already existed in many of these countries.

Criticisms of the dominant development paradigms were widespread; they emanated from all sectors of development and from all disciplines (Adams, 1993; Brown, 1993; Ekins, 1992; Estes, 1988; Henderson, 1991; Korten, 1990; Latouche, 1993; Max-Neef, 1992; Piel, 1992; Sachs, 1992). Even so, a surprisingly high level of consensus emerged from these debates on at least the following points:

1. *"economic growth does not automatically improve people's lives, either within nations or internationally"* (Adams, 1993; Latouche, 1993; Max-Neef, 1992; Sacks, 1992; UNDP, 1992:3);
2. *"rich and poor countries compete in the global marketplace as unequal partners; if developing countries are to compete on a more equal footing, they will require massive investments in human capital and technological development"* (Brown, 1993; Max-Neef, 1993; Speth, 1990; UNDP, 1992:4);
3. *neither "free-market," "dependency," nor "Marxist" paradigms of development respond adequately to the development needs of the world's poorest and slowest developing countries* (Ekins, 1992; Henderson, 1991; Latouche, 1993);
4. *the socioeconomic conditions of the world's least developing countries (LDCs), in the main, and with important exceptions,*

³ The UNDP (1992:45) estimates that \$245 billion in debt-related transfers occurred from the industrially poor countries of the South to the economically advanced countries of the North.

became worse during the past 20 years (Estes, 1988, 1993a, 1993b; UNDP, 1992; World Bank, 1990);

5. *sectoral approaches to development are inadequate inasmuch as the most fundamental problems confronting the world's developing countries are systemic in nature and, therefore, require systemic solutions* (Piel, 1992; WCED, 1987; Wheeler, 1992:3);
6. *the systemic solutions required to meet the development challenges confronting the world's developing countries require fundamental readjustments in both the goals of development and their methods of achievement* (Brandt, 1980; Estes, 1988; WCED, 1987; UNCED, 1992; UNDP, 1992);
7. new, more systemically-oriented, paradigms of development are needed that take cognizance of: a) the *political uncertainties* created by the collapse of communism, the economic failures of capitalism, and newly revived efforts at the establishment of "a new world order" (Brandon, 1992; Falk, 1992; Halperin, 1992); b) the *vicious cycles of poverty, human degradation, and environment destruction* that exist in many developing countries (Gutman et al., 1989; ESCAP, 1992c; World Bank, 1990); c) the *existence and inter-relatedness of new financial and ecological problems* that are unprecedented either in scope or seriousness (Arnold, 1989; Group of Green Economists, 1992; UNDP, 1992; WRI, 1992); and d) the need for *global mechanisms* to guide international progress toward the promotion and protection of democratic principles, human rights, economic and social rights, and the accountability of public decision-makers for their actions (Speth, 1990; Stockholm Initiative on Global Security and Governance, 1991; UNCED, 1992; UNDP, 1992).

Sustainable Development: The Unifying Concept

The environment--but especially the devastating impact of prevailing development paradigms on the environment--became the focal point for new conceptions of national and global development (WRI, 1992). And central to the renewed focus on the environment as the centerpiece of international development activity was the emergence of "sustainable development." From the outset the sustainable development was promulgated as a concept that could: 1) provide a new vision for national and international development; 2) unify the disparate elements that make up the development community; 3) ease the unbearable pressures on the planet's fragile ecosystems in rich and poor countries alike; 4) lead to the formulation of new solutions to the recurrent socioeconomic needs of the world's least developing countries; 5) foster significantly improved relationships between the governmental, business and voluntary sectors; and, 6) provide greater assurance that contemporary approaches to development would not deprive future generations of the resources needed for their development.

Steven Arnold (1989:22-23), Director of the International Development Program at American University, identifies five additional advantages of the shift toward sustainable development: 1) sustainable development puts flesh on the bones of the concept of "interdependence"; 2) the sustainability vision offers a more humble estimate of the ability of human beings to understand and control nature; 3) the sustainability concept offers a better estimate of the true cost of natural and other resources whose values have been traditionally underestimated; 4) sustainable development places particular emphasis upon the relationship of the poor, especially poor women, to the development process; and 5) the sustainability vision raises the concern that politico-military views of security and the national interest, which tend to dominate current thinking, are far too narrow.

In his preface to a special issue of *Development* devoted to an analysis of the practical implications of sustainable development, Lindner (1989:3) addresses the unifying power of the concept. Lindner, for example, does not perceive sustainable development to be either static or time-

bound but to reflect a

continuous and on-going process of change and adaptation in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technical development, and institutional changes are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations. Indeed, sustainable development is all about meeting human needs and aspirations--not just those of one country or region, but those of all people who inhabit the earth, both now and in the future.

Lindner's view of sustainable development is one that is widely shared by environmentalists and human ecologists (Brown, 1992; Jacobs, 1991; Piel, 1992a; Von Weizsacker, 1992; WRI, 1992). Increasingly, the basic tenets of sustainable development are emerging as central to the writings of development economists (Ekins, 1992; Group of Green Economists, 1992; Henderson, 1991; Max-Neef, 1992; Pearce, 1990), political scholars (Falk, 1992; Gore, 1992; Redclift, 1987) and others working in a host of sectorally-based fields of development practice (Braidotti, 1993; King, 1990; Korten, 1990; Ponting, 1990; Seidman & Angang, 1992; Wignaraja 1992).

Thus, in its short life the Brundtland Commission performed an important, probably long-lasting, service both to development theorists and, more importantly, to those development practitioners--governments, NGOs and others--who must daily struggle with the human and environmental consequences of failed development initiatives.

Before Brundtland

Sustainable development has a history of conceptual evolution that long precedes the work of the Brundtland Commission. Indeed, the philosophical foundations of sustainable development are deeply rooted in the utopian visions of much earlier writers including Dante, Sir Thomas More, Kant, Rousseau,

William Penn and even Woodrow Wilson.⁴ One can also draw reasonable linkages between the conceptual origins of sustainable development and the religious rituals and magical practices of the world's very earliest peoples, especially those mystical practices that emphasized self- and environmental-renewal through the offering of sacrifices or thanks-giving to deities on whom one's own well-being and that of the earth depended.⁵ Further, respect for the earth--and the necessity of living in harmonious balance with it as a condition of one's own survival--are cardinal tenets of the cosmologies of native peoples throughout the world, including those of the native peoples of North America (Frazer, 1922; Gore, 1992:258-60). Indeed, contemporary references to the earth as a living goddess, Gaia, draw on ancient cosmologies for much of their inspiration (Henderson, 1991:51-70).

In more recent times, the movement's philosophical foundations can be traced to the worldwide environmental and social movements that began in the mid- and late-1960s, the majority of which are still active. There were at least nine of these movements whose separate efforts and energies converged in the late 1980s to bring about the June 1992 United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED). They include: 1) the *early environmental and human ecology movements* of Europe and North America; 2) the *anti-war and anti-nuclear movements* of Europe and North America; 3) the *"world order" movement*; 4) the *"world dynamics modeling" movement*; 5) the European *"green" movement*; 6) the *"alternative economics" movement*; 7) the *women's movement* in North America and Europe and, more recently, in Latin America; 8) the *indigenous peoples movements* in Latin America, Asia, and selected areas of the

⁴ For discussions of these and other utopian visions of the "good society" see Mannheim (1936) and Mumford (1962). For more contemporary visions of the future see Coates and Jarratt (1989).

⁵ Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* is filled with dozens of examples of religious and magical practices whose primary purposes are to maintain a mutually renewing balance between human and environmental needs.

Pacific; and 9) the worldwide *human rights movement*. Chart 1 identifies the major goals associated with each of these movements. The chart also references a variety of authors whose writings are most associated with each movement.

Chart 1.
Historical Antecedents of the Sustainable Development "Movement"

Related Movements	Major Objectives	Major Contributors
Early Environmental/ Ecological Movement	Centered initially in the U.S. the movement sought to: 1) call attention to the massive assaults occurring against the environment; 2) warn of the impact of uncontrolled population growth; 3) warn of the effects on man and nature of uncontrolled use of pesticides and herbicides; and 4) bring greater balance in economic and environmental policies.	Commoner, 1958; Carson, 1962; Borgstrom, 1965; Dubos, 1965; Ehrlich & Ehrlich, 1968, 1970; Toffler, 1970; Brown, 1970; George, 1977
Anti-War & Anti-Nuclear Movement	Initiated in the U.S. as a protest against the war in Viet Nam, the movement quickly spread to Europe where it became both anti-war and anti-nuclear focused. Brought attention to the de-stabilizing consequences of power and resource imbalances between rich and poor countries.	Kahn & Wiener, 1967; Fuller, 1969; Roszak, 1969; IPPNW, 1991
"World Order" Movement	Spearheaded by a comparatively small number of "visionaries" from international law and the world parliamentarian movements, the movement seeks to develop feasible strategies for improving the quality of world order by the end of the century.	Falk, 1968, 1972, 1992; Falk & Mendlovitz, 1967; Myrdal, 1970; Brandon, 1992; Halperin et al., 1992
"World Dynamics Modeling" Movement	Initiated by a series of dramatic reports from the Club of Rome, the movement is now broader and seeks to promote environmental and economic policies that better reflect the limits and carrying capacity of the planet. Much of the movement's criticism is directed at the political and economic imbalances that exist between rich and poor countries with their resultant social inequalities and unbridled growth that pose grave consequences for the world-as-a-whole.	Forrester, 1971; Meadows et al., 1972; Mesarovic & Pestel, 1974; Tinbergen, 1976; Schuurman, 1993
"Green" Movement	Centered in Europe, the movement seeks to promote both peace and sound environmental policies, usually in a nuclear free world. Emphasis is placed on the need for new development paradigms that better reflect the true environmental costs of rapid development.	Schumacher, 1975; Group of Green Economists, 1992; Gore, 1992; Piel, 1992b; Finger, 1993; Von Weizsacker & Jesinghaus, 1992

Related Movements	Major Objectives	Major Contributors
"Alternative Economics" Movement	The movement seeks to provide a practical alternative to prevailing economic systems and policies that pursue short-term economic gains at long-term costs to the environment and people. Priority is assigned to the redistribution of a fairer share of the world's resources to poor countries in the South.	Brandt Commission, 1980, 1983; Hunger Project, 1985; Jolly, 1987; Henderson, 1991; Ekins, 1992; Sacks, 1992; Max-Neef, 1992; Latouche, 1993

Chart 1. (continued)

Women's Movement	Consists of worldwide movements that seek to obtain for women the same basic social, political, economic and legal rights as those available to men. The movement in the South has also tended to embrace environmental issues of relevance to women and their concerns.	Sivard, 1985; Cook, 1985; Afshart, 1991; Braidotti et al., 1993; Mies & Shiva, 1993; Rose, 1992
Indigenous Peoples Movement	Consists of various movements worldwide that seek to: 1) retain or regain lands and resources previously owned by indigenous peoples; 2) obtain increased legal recognition and protection; 3) promote broader sensitivity to the earth-centered values, beliefs and practices that are at the center of their cosmologies and religions.	Fanon, 1963; Friere, 1985; Guitierrez, 1973; Klandermans, 1989; Korten, 1990; Wignaraja, 1992; Rahman, 1993; Seabrook, 1993
Human Rights Movement	The movement is quite broad and works toward the fullest possible implementation and protection of the civil rights and political freedoms articulated in the United Nations <i>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</i> and other internationally promulgated agreements.	Humana, 1992; Freedom House, 1992

BEYOND BRUNDTLAND: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT TODAY

Today, the sustainable development "movement" is multidisciplinary and cross-sectoral. The movement brings together specialists from the physical and environmental sciences along with experts in development economics, political science, appropriate technology, human and women's rights, and others. Early leaders of the European Green movement are active participants in the drive for sustainable development as are people drawn from the worldwide anti-war and anti-nuclear movements. The movement also embraces rock stars ("Sting"), living saints (Mother Theresa), leaders of groups of indigenous peoples, nobel laureates, world parliamentarians, and a host of other professional and lay workers across virtually all sectors of development. Leadership for the movement comes from both the governmental and non-governmental sectors including business, religious institutions, unions, worker collectives, physicians, and so on.

Using the language of the 1960s, the sustainable development movement has become a worldwide "happening" with a conceptual tent that appears to be sufficiently large to embrace all who wish to enter. The movement is quite diverse and is characterized by a sense of enthusiasm that has been all too rare in development circles. I do not mean to suggest, however, that the sustainable development movement is free of the ideological dissension that undermined past efforts at *rapprochement*; indeed, quite the opposite is true. Much of the current dissension that exists in the movement is reflected in its differing, sometimes contradictory, visions of what constitutes "sustainability" (Arnold, 1989; Miller, 1990).

Alternative Visions of Sustainability

Arnold (1989:21) identifies the existence of no fewer than ten separate "visions" of sustainable development:

Some, for example, are concerned largely with environmental protection, while others focus on

problems of financial solvency. Some tend to be sector-specific, examining agricultural practices or energy use, while others focus more generally on issues such as global carrying capacity. Some map out broad internationalist strategies, while others are concerned with self-reliant sustainability at the national or local level.

Sustainability is also viewed by some as the ability of a society or culture to persist despite outside pressures, while others focus more on "capacity building" of local, national or international institutions. Many donors seem to define sustainability in terms of the willingness of recipients to take over financial responsibility for various programmes, while recipients, often burdened with debt, may see sustainability more as a problem of maintaining and even increasing the flow of external resources to avoid further reductions in living standards.

Hence, the differences that characterize competing visions of sustainable development are real and they are substantial. They could also prove fatal to a movement that searching for a new beginning in responding to the complex needs of not only developing countries, but to those of economically advanced countries as well. Thus far, the ideological differences that exist in the movement have not struck a fatal blow to the tentative sense of unity that pervades the field. Rather, the movement is being held together by a remarkable document referred to as *Agenda 21* (UNCED, 1992).

Agenda 21

Agenda 21 is the complex set of international agreements adopted by the 178 chiefs of mission that participated in the June 1992 United Nations

Conference on the Environment and Development held in Brazil (Piel, 1992b). *Agenda 21* is more than 500 pages long and is subdivided into 40 chapters which spell out the comprehensive tasks that must be taken to secure sustainable development.

According to Gerard Piel, the distinguished chair emeritus of *Scientific American* and author of *Only One World: Our Own to Make and to Keep, Agenda 21*

is a program for husbanding the planet's wasting resources. Along with the roster of problems familiar to environmentalists--the ozone layer, global warming, deforestation, desertification, soil erosion, biodiversity--Agenda 21 addresses action to be taken against poverty, infant mortality, malnutrition, epidemic disease, illiteracy and other afflictions that waste that other resource of the planet: its human population.

Hence, *Agenda 21* serves as the clarion call to sustainable development and outlines a global strategy for action that has already been substantially adopted by the majority of the world's governments.

Dimensions of Sustainable Development

Despite the apparent simplicity of the Brundtland Commission's definition of sustainable development,⁶ the concept itself is rather complex. David Brown (1991), President of the Institute for Development Research at Boston University, for example, distinguishes between four dimensions of sustainable development: 1) *ecological sustainability* implies that non-renewable and other natural resources are not depleted for short-term improvements; 2) *economic sustainability* implies that improvements do not

depend on continuing infusions of resources that cannot be maintained; 3) *political sustainability* requires that changes are consistent with present or emerging distributions of power in the society; and 4) *cultural sustainability* suggests that changes must be consistent with core values, expectations, and mores of the society.

According to Brown, effective approaches to sustainable development must: a) optimize the use of resources that are available locally; b) minimize dependence on resources that must be brought in from the outside; c) not seek improvements for which continuous infusions of existing or new resources are needed; and d) conserve those resources that are needed for improvements over the long-term.

Brown and others also note that sustainable development must also take into account the policy (Honadle & Van Sant, 1985:77; ESCAP, 1992b), institutional (Brandt, 1980; Cernea, 1987), and cultural (Cernea, 1987:5; Korten, 1990) environments of the locales in which such efforts are initiated. Chart 2 contains examples of sustainable and non-sustainable using Brown's four dimensions of sustainable development.

Orienting Values

The clearest expression of the values that inform the sustainable development movement is that found in the writings of Richard Falk, a Professor of International Law at Princeton University. In *This Endangered Planet* (1972), Falk identified seven "informing values" that he regarded as foundational to a "new world order," i.e., a world order based on "*harmony within limits*, harmony among human groups and harmony between man and nature" (Falk, 1972:293-312):

1. *unity of mankind and the unity of life on earth*, with particular recognition that the future of man and the planet are tied to one another;
2. *the minimization of violence*, especially the elimination of state terrorism and the reduction of violence associated with the struggle of various groups for scarce

⁶ "...paths of human progress which meet the needs and aspirations of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs."

resources, space, influence, or prestige;

3. *the maintenance of environmental quality*, including the establishment of global ceilings on such critical factors as population increase, resource use, and waste disposal, etc.;
4. *the satisfaction of minimum world welfare standards*, with particular attention to be given to the elimination of mass misery through the satisfaction of at least the basic social and material needs of people everywhere;
5. *the primacy of human dignity*, with particular emphasis on the establishment of codes of personal and collective freedom, personal rights of conscience and group rights of assembly and cultural assertion;
6. *the retention of diversity and pluralism*, especially to strengthen the existing biological gene pool and to promote greater tolerance and moderation in political and social outlook;
7. *the need for universal participation*, especially to avoid the oppression that is associated with the exclusion of people from actions and processes that directly impact the quantity and quality of their lives.

Falk regarded these values as reflecting an essentially "conservative" vision of the new society, i.e., one that

aspires to maintain the values of individual and collective human dignity, including the basic demand for a political order that enjoys the support of most of the population most of the time (p. 295).

However conservative Falk's vision of the future may actually be, his informing values for achieving that vision are nothing short of revolutionary. This is especially so concerning the shift that these values reflect toward a more interdependent view of the world, but especially their emphasis on man as only part of a larger, infinitely

more complex, planetary system.⁷

The Goals of Sustainable Development

The goals of sustainable development are far-reaching and have as their objective the transformation of contemporary development theory and practice. They include: 1) the formulation of new paradigms of social, economic, political, cultural, and ecological development (Latouche, 1993; Sachs, 1992; Schuurman, 1993); 2) more rational approaches to development that take into account the long-term costs associated with short-term improvements; 3) the judicious use of the planet's non-renewable physical resources; 4) a balance between economic, social, cultural and physical development; and 5) the realization of fully integrated development strategies that bring together all relevant sectors and actors into a common framework of local, national, regional and international action.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1992:17) identifies the following outcomes as minimum additional requirements for achieving the goal of sustainable development: 1) the elimination of poverty; 2) a reduction in population growth; 3) more equitable distribution of resources; 4) healthier, more educated and better trained people; 5) decentralized, more participatory government; 6) more equitable, liberal trading systems within and among countries, including increased production for local consumption; and 7) better understanding of the diversity of ecosystems, including locally adapted solutions to environmental problems and better monitoring of the environmental impact of development activities.

Other writers emphasize that sustainable development must also succeed in: 1) restructuring the existing system of international trade (Brown, 1993); 2) creating a new system of international financial institutions (Adams, 1993); 3) obtaining

⁷ Other perspectives on the orienting values and goals of sustainable development can be found in: Ekins (1992); Group of Green Economists (1992); Henderson (1991); Jacobs (1991); Jaffee (1990); and Wiganaraja (1992).

debt forgiveness for the world's poorest countries from at least official lenders (UNDP, 1992:45-46; Estes, 1993b); 4) ending international trade in armaments and tools of human destruction (IPPNW, 1991); 5) converting all programs of bi-lateral military assistance to humanitarian purposes (UNDP, 1992:86; Lumsdaine, 1993); 6) imposing effective controls on the non-sustainable activities of transnational corporations (ESCAP, 1991c); and 7) creating regional economic solutions that embrace the

Chart 2.
Selected Examples of Sustainable and Non-Sustainable Social Development Practices

	NON-SUSTAINABLE STRATEGIES	SUSTAINABLE STRATEGIES
ECONOMIC	<p>international systems governed by rules that work to the advantage of already rich countries and to the disadvantage of poor countries</p> <p>the existing concentration of 83% of the world's total income in the richest 20% of the population</p> <p>the persistence of widespread absolute poverty, especially within land-locked and resource poor developing countries</p>	<p>markets that fix prices for goods and services with reference to the human and environmental investments incurred in their production</p> <p>progressive "global" taxes based on wealth and consumption patterns</p> <p>the establishment of a global banking system that creates a common currency, maintains price and exchange-rate stability, channels global surpluses and deficits, and equalizes international access to credit (UNDP, 1992:78-79)</p>
POLITICAL	<p>war; state terrorism; oppression of historically disadvantaged populations</p> <p>centralization of power in the hands of self-serving elites</p> <p>the systematic exclusion of people from participation in the formulation and implementation of policies and laws that directly affect their well-being</p>	<p>popular participation in all aspects of governmental policy formulation and decision-making at all levels of social organization</p> <p>non-interference in the legitimate organizing activities of opposition political parties</p> <p>a significantly strengthened non-governmental sector, especially at the level of grass roots organizations and collectivities of people at local levels of political organization</p>
CULTURAL	<p>Efforts to "homogenize" peoples and cultures with the goal of eliminating or minimizing cultural differences</p> <p>persistent socially-supported oppression of historically disadvantaged populations including women, religious and cultural</p>	<p>the emergence of values, expectations and social mores that foster tolerance and moderation in accepting cultural differences of others</p> <p>gender role definitions that permit women and men to share equally in the making of decisions that affect them separately and</p>

	NON-SUSTAINABLE STRATEGIES	SUSTAINABLE STRATEGIES
	minorities	together

Chart 2. (continued)

ECOLOGICAL / ENVIRONMENTAL	<p>cash crop and other forms of agriculture that leave food exporting-countries vulnerable to hunger or malnutrition</p> <p>agricultural and other practices that depend on technologies and resources not available locally</p> <p>technologies that consume more energy than they generate</p> <p>approaches to short-term economic development that deplete non-renewable natural resources and pollute the environment</p>	<p>a stabilized world population</p> <p>the elimination of weapons of mass destruction</p> <p>developing and sharing appropriate technologies, especially those that reflect local needs, available natural resources and ecological realities</p> <p>protect and promoting biodiversity</p> <p>dependence on energy from ecologically renewable sources</p>
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needs of people everywhere (Group of Green Economists, 1993; Max-Neef, 1992).

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE

Sustainable development practice consists of development-focused interventions that seek to promote and enhance the social, political, and economic well-being of people within an ecologically sustainable context at all levels of social organization. Sustainable development practice assigns the highest priorities to those local, national, regional and international activities that: 1) ensure the satisfaction of at least the basic social and material needs of people everywhere; 2) promote increased social and economic justice; 3) minimize social oppression in all its forms; 4) enhance popular participation; 5) reduce violence; and 6) promote peace (Estes, 1992; Jones and Pandey, 1981; Meinert and Kohn, 1987; Sanders & Matsuoka, 1989; Van Soest, 1992).⁸

The fullest possible human development can be thought of as both the *means* and the *goal* of sustainable development practice (UNDP, 1992:13-25). As the "means" of practice, sustainable development refers to the processes through which people and institutions realize the self-renewing potentials that already exist within them, at least in a latent state. As the "goal" of practice, sustainable development refers to the establishment of new systems of personal and institutional renewal that are guided by the quest for peace, increased social justice, the satisfaction of basic human needs, and the protection of the planet's fragile eco-systems.

Sustainable development practice is multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral; it also requires both a near- and long-term perspective. Increasingly, governments and quasi-governmental organizations are providing national and international leadership in sustainable development (ESCAP, 1992c; UNCED,

⁸ An earlier version of this discussion appears in Estes, 1992:88-93.

1992; UNDP, 1992), albeit recognition exists that non-governmental actors are co-equal partners with governments in all aspects of sustainable development (Brown, 1992; Korten, 1990; ESCAP, 1991a, 1991b).⁹

The Theory and Skill Base

Sustainable development practitioners draw substantially for their practice theory base from *sociology* (esp. stratification theory, the sociology of mass movements, processes of regional development), *political science* (esp. power domains, political influence, and structures of political parties), *economics* (esp. theories of economic production, distribution, and consumption), *education* (esp. theories of adult learning), *philosophy* (esp. theories of justice and social ethics) and, in some cases, *religion* (e.g., "liberation theology"). Sustainable development practitioners also draw substantially from the scientific literatures in biology, zoology, biochemistry, and various other areas of the *environmental sciences* (including human ecology, toxicology, forestry, etc.). Sustainable development specialists educated in social work also draw heavily from *group work* and *community organization* practice for their skill base.

Levels of Sustainable Development Practice

Sustainable development practice consists of eight levels of professional activity (Hollister, 1977; Paiva, 1977; Bolan, 1987; Khinduka, 1987; Meinert and Kohn, 1987; Billups, 1990; David, 1991; Estes, 1992): 1) *individual empowerment*; 2) *group empowerment*; 3) *conflict resolution*; 4) *community-building*; 5) *institution-building*; 6) *nation-building*; 7) *region-building*; and 8) *world-building*.

Chart 3 provides a brief description of the major activities associated with each level of sustainable development practice. The chart also identifies a variety of authors whose writings are

⁹ Including national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), religious organizations, business, labor unions, voluntary social service organizations, civic groups, etc.

most associated with each.

Chart 3
Levels and Strategies of Sustainable Social Development Practice

Levels of Sustainable Social Development Practice	Major Purposes, Outcomes, or Processes Associated With Levels of Sustainable Social Development Practice
Individual and Group Empowerment	Through "conscientization," the process whereby individuals learn how to perceive and <u>act upon</u> the contradictions that exist in the social, political, and economic structures intrinsic to all societies (Breton, 1988; Costa, 1987; Friere, 1971, 1973, 1985; Gutierrez, 1986; Klandermans, 1989; Lee, 1988; Lusk, 1981; Rahman, 1993; Rose, 1992; Wignaraja, 1992)
Conflict Resolution	Efforts directed at reducing: (1) grievances between persons or groups; or, (2) asymmetric power relationships between members of more powerful and less powerful groups (Azar, 1990; Boucher et al., 1987; Chetkow-Yanoov, 1990, 1991; Van Soest, 1992)
Community-Building	Through increased participation and "social animation" of the populace, the process through which community's realize the fullness of their social, political, and economic potential; the process through which communities respond more equitably to the social and material needs of their populations (Alinsky, 1972; Cnaan & Adar, 1987; Colletta, 1982; Korten, 1990; Lusk, 1981; Price, 1987; Rahman, 1993; Rose, 1992; Shera, 1984; Wesley-King & Sanchez-Meyers, 1981)
Institution-Building	Refers both to the process of "humanizing" existing social institutions and that of establishing new institutions that respond more effectively to new or emerging social needs (Afshart, 1991; Brown, 1991; Cernea, 1987; Esman & Uphoff, 1984; Honadle & Van Sant, 1985; Korten, 1990; Rose, 1992; Tandon, 1987; Wignaraja, 1992)
Nation-Building	The process of working toward the integration of a nation's social, economic, and cultural institutions at all levels of political organization (Matthews, 1982; Paiva, 1977; Wignaraja, 1992)
Region-Building	The process of working toward the integration of a region's social, economic, cultural institutions at all levels of political organization (Brandon, 1992; ESCAP, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c; Midgley, 1992; Lusk, 1992; Seidman & Anang, 1992; Wignaraja, 1992)
World-Building	The process of working toward the establishment of a new system of international social, political, economic, and ecological relationships guided by the quest for world peace, increased social justice, the universal satisfaction of basic human needs, and for the protection of the planet's fragile eco-system (David, 1987, 1991; Ekins, 1992; Estes, 1988, 1990; Falk, 1992; Gore, 1992; Halperin et al. 1992; Henderson, 1991; Piel, 1992b).

TOWARD SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: AN EVOLVING AGENDA

The 14 principles that follow reflect my own evolving views concerning the prerequisites of an effective strategy of world sustainable development.¹⁰ These principles reflect the orientating values and goals of the sustainable development movement as well as its alternative "visions." The principles also suggest the comprehensive nature of the local, national, and international actions that are required to reverse the profound levels of social deterioration that are occurring in many areas of the world. approach.

1. *Efforts toward the establishment of a worldwide strategy of sustainable development must go forward with the recognition that the most fundamental problems confronting humanity are essentially political, social, and moral in nature.* More specifically, framers of the world development strategy (hereafter "WDS") must be clear that while profound limitations do exist with respect to the planet's "carrying capacity," the dramatic problems facing mankind are not strictly problems of resource supply or scarcity. Rather, ample evidence exists that the planet already possesses the material and technological resources needed to rid itself of the poverty, hunger and other forms of "mal-development" that engulf too many of the world's peoples.

2. *The WDS must assign the highest priorities to:* a) the unity of humanity and life on earth; b) the minimization of violence; c) the maintenance of environmental quality; d) the satisfaction of minimum world welfare standards; e) the primacy of human dignity; f) the retention of diversity and pluralism; and g) universal participation.

3. *The WDS must promote the three goals on*

¹⁰ These principles have been refined over a period of years, initially as a result of my research into worldwide social development trends (Estes 1984; 1988; 1990; 1992) and, more recently, in my regional development planning activities with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c).

which concerned people everywhere agree: a) war prevention; b) economic security; and c) social justice.

4. *A significant narrowing of the still widening gap in development between the world's richest and poorest nations must be a compelling near-term goal of the WDS* (Estes, 1984, 1988). In pursuing this goal, the WDS must articulate objectives that are both comprehensive and far-reaching; they must also be attainable within reasonable and designated time intervals.

5. *To be effective, the WDS must call for a significant shift from provincial and nationalistic attitudes and "ways of thinking" toward approaches that place increasing emphasis on regionalism and internationalism.*

6. *The WDS must encourage people everywhere to accept increasing shared responsibility for the well-being of others and for that of the planet and its fragile ecosystems.* Recent environmental and political catastrophes in Somalia, the Sudan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Philippines, Kuwait, Iraq, Kampuchea, Russia and elsewhere make all too clear the highly interdependent, and fragile, nature of contemporary social and environmental systems.

At the outset of a new century the world's comparatively rich countries can little afford to ignore the urgent and compelling needs of that vast majority of humanity living in the earth's developing countries. To attempt to do so will not only bankrupt us morally but will threaten the sustainability of the very life styles and consumption patterns of those already economically advanced countries that depend heavily on resources that can be obtained only from poorer countries.

7. *An effective WDS will require the speedier and more complete implementation of the far-reaching social, political, economic and ecological reforms outlined in "Agenda 21" and in other "visionary" models of world social development.* At a minimum, the WDS must emphasize: a) global cooperation rather than competition; b) global sharing rather than squandering; c) more generous and better sustained international subsidies and

programs of international development assistance to the world's poorer countries; and d) regional approaches to socioeconomic development that conserve the planet's dwindling natural resources and protects its fragile ecosystems.

8. *To be effective, the WDS must respect national sovereignty.* Hence, the strategy must: a) emphasize people working for and on behalf of themselves and for one another within the context of their own history, traditions, and national objectives; b) countries must decide for themselves what their needs are and how the satisfaction of those needs should best be pursued; and c) redefine the role of the international community vis-a-vis the efforts of developing countries and world regions to be that of "partners" in development, not decision-maker acting on what are perceived to be in "the best interests" of poorer, less developed, countries and regions.

9. *The existing system of governmental and quasi-governmental international institutions and organizations will need to be strengthened as part of a comprehensive WDS.* However, the legal basis of these international institutions--as well as the range of functions, roles, and responsibilities assigned to them--will need to be significantly recast in order to better reflect the social, political, economic and environmental realities that exist at the outset of a new century.

10. *New international and regional institutions will need to be created as part of the implementation machinery of the WDS.* Within the present decade, for example, more effective global institutions are needed to: a) promote global peace and cooperation; b) accelerate international efforts at permanent arms control; c) promote, monitor, and control the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes; d) promote and protect internationally-guaranteed human rights of individual citizens against oppressive governments; e) manage the global economy, especially in relation to the flow of development and other resources between the world's rich and poor nations; f) promote access on the part of all nations to the bountiful resources that exist in the earth's seas and oceans and, now, in space; and g) manage problems related to the preservation and conservation of the world's physical environment, especially those elements that are essential to human survival and continuity on this

planet.

11. *As recommended by the United Nation's Development Programme (UNDP, 1992:82) and other international bodies, a Development Security Council should be established either under the aegis of a substantially strengthened United Nations system, or other properly constituted world body.* The functions of the Development Security Council must include: a) development planning for all nations, not just those of the South; b) the establishment of a global policy framework in all key economic and social areas--including for food security, ecological security, development assistance, humanitarian assistance, debt, commodity price stabilization, technology transfers, drug control, women's issues, children's issues and human development; c) the preparation of a global development budget relating to the flow of all development resources; and d) providing policy coordination for the smooth functioning of international development and financial institutions.

In carrying out its work, the Development Security Council should seek to: a) foster mutual participation and cooperation among all the world's countries in co-equal partnerships focused on improving the adequacy of social provision for people everywhere; b) foster maximum self-reliance within countries and world regions for planning and implementing their own programs of national and regional development; c) encourage self-help and mutual aid as major strategies for promoting intra- and inter-regional cooperation between and among developing countries; and d) advance creative and flexible solutions to matters of sub-national, national, regional, and global social development.

12. *The WDS must contain a range of flexible funding mechanisms for ensuring its full implementation.* Ideally, funds in support of the strategy would be generated from sources that bear directly on the WDS larger goals and objectives. These include: a) the savings realized by each country as a result of reduced military spending and disarmament, i.e., the so-called "peace dividend" (UNDP, 1992:85-88); and b) the levying of "global taxes" on a broad range of activities that threaten either the earth's fragile eco-systems.

More specifically, consideration should be given to adoption of the following range of "global taxes" recommended by UNCED in *Agenda 21*, the UNDP, and others: a) a global "income tax" of approximately 0.1% of the GNP of every country (Von Weizsacker & Jesinghaus, 1992); b) a "fossil fuel consumption tax" on each unit of oil and coal consumed (Read, 1993); c) "pollution taxes" on carbon dioxide and other pollutants; d) a "greenhouse gas tax" levied in the form of permits that are leased or traded in international markets; e) a "global commons tax" on each country's usage of the oceans (for fishing, transportation or seabed mining), the Antarctic (for mining), or space (for communications satellites); f) an "international trade tax," especially on environmentally sensitive products such as tropical hardwoods; g) a global tax on "weapons," including on each country's defense expenditures and arms trading; and h) a tax on selected consumer products, but especially on energy consumer goods such as inefficient cars or household equipment.

The broad purposes of these global taxes are five-fold: 1) to establish a truer price on the cost of natural resource depletion, environmental degradation, and non-sustainable exploitation of the earth's resource capacity (Gore, 1992); 2) to redirect consumption into more environmentally sustainable paths (Von Weizsacker & Jesinghaus, 1992); 3) to stimulate the development of new technologies; 4) to provide incentives for environmental conservation and protection (UNCED, 1992); and 5) to generate the revenues that are needed to protect and, as possible, restore those critical areas of the environment that have been damaged as a result of mal-development (UNDP, 1992).

13. *The WDS must contain mechanisms for the timely review and, as needed, redirection of the strategy in light of new knowledge or in response to new technologies or emerging social, political, economic, or environmental realities.*

14. *Finally, the WDS must include mechanisms for the continuous and timely reporting to the world community concerning the strategy's successes and failures.*¹¹

¹¹ A number of comprehensive approaches to social reporting have been developed in recent years (Estes, 1988, 1993a, 1993b; UNDP, 1992); other promising approaches

PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

"Sustainable development" is an innovative and powerful concept with considerable unifying power for international development. Sustainable development grew out of the profound, and as yet unresolved, crisis concerning existing development paradigms. The crisis is particularly acute concerning the failure of existing models of development to offer effective and lasting solutions to recurrent--and worsening--problems of world poverty, environmental degradation, and the inability of most developing countries to achieve parity with economically advanced nations.

Sustainable development also reflects a crisis of *vision* in the goals and means of international development. More specifically, sustainable development offers a powerful challenge to conceptions of development that emphasize rapid, even ruthless, economic development for a few at the expense of economic, environmental, and even human destruction for the many. Sustainable development also challenges the highly sectoral nature of contemporary development practice, especially the willingness of governments and businesses to exchange long-term costs in some sectors for short-term improvements in others.

Sustainable development is also the product of the fundamental social changes and international political realignments that are occurring as a result of the collapse of communism. In a seemingly more chaotic and needy world, sustainable development offers at least general guidance to those newly emerging countries that are seeking to accelerate their development. For already economically advanced countries, sustainable development contains the possibility for the emergence of new patterns of international relationships based on mutual interests and humanitarianism. For the world's developing countries, but especially least developing countries (LDCs), sustainable development offers renewed hope for increased self-sufficiency, independence, and positive growth.

are still in the conceptual stage (Henderson, 1991). For examples of recent innovations in "environmental accounting" for sustainable development see: Ahmad et al., 1989; Bergstrom, 1990; King, 1990; Ward, 1982).

is to heap contempt on its Creator.

At an even more fundamental level, sustainable development can offer development specialists and lay persons alike the opportunity for beginning anew. This is possible inasmuch as the integrative power in sustainable development can help to ensure the satisfaction of both human and environmental needs without inflicting unnecessary harm on either. Indeed, sustainable development serves as the foundation for the fullest possible expression of human development.

In closing I will quote a section from Al Gore's impressive book, *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit*. In the book, Gore cites a response given by Chief Seattle in 1855 to a request from President Franklin Pierce who offered to buy the land of Chief Seattle's tribe (Gore, 1992:259):

How can you buy or sell the sky? The land? The idea is strange to us. If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them? Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every meadow, every humming insect. All are holy in the memory and experience of my people...

If we sell you own land, remember that the air is precious to us, that the air shares its spirit with all the life it supports. The wind that gave our grandfather his first breath also received his last sigh. The wind also gives our children the spirit of life. So if we sell you our land, you must keep it apart and sacred, a place where man can go to taste the wind that is sweetened by the meadow flowers.

Will you teach your children what we have taught our children? That the earth is our mother? What befalls the earth befalls all the sons of the earth.

This we know: the earth does not belong to man, man belongs to the earth. All things are connected like the blood that unites us all. Man did not weave the web of life, he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.

One thing we know: Our God is also your God. The earth is precious to Him and to harm the earth

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